

REDESIGNING ENLISTED PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION FOR THE  
21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AND BEYOND

A Thesis

by

WAYNE ALEXANDER SWITZER

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Chair of Committee,	Patrick Slattery
Co-Chair of Committee,	Jacqueline Stillisano
Committee Member,	Elizabeth Roumell
Head of Department,	Michael De Miranda

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study with phenomenological interviews was conducted to identify curriculum and instructional methods /theories, common to civilian universities of higher learning, that are missing from today's Marine Corps Enlisted Professional Military Education (PME) programs. Through research, this study was able to identify multiple areas in need of improvement, specifically with regard to meaningful curriculum and contemporary instructional methods and educational theories. It was also discovered that the Marine Corps is actively working to close the gap between the quality of education found in universities and those found in Enlisted PME Programs. Through phenomenological interviews, this study was able to share some of the personal lived experiences career Staff Non-Commissioned Officers have had while attending Enlisted PME. These participant interviews serve as a testament to the quality of education they believe they are receiving. The interviews explore the practicality and time constraints associated with attending PME courses. The interviews also examine whether or not these programs are advantageous to Marines' specific occupational specialties or if they are preparing them for the rigors of civilian institutions of higher learning.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis work to the women and men of the United States Marine Corps. This organization has instilled discipline and a thirst for achievement in myself and thousands of young Americans, who were searching for a home where they could serve others and be a part of something greater than themselves. I also dedicate this work to the pivotal Marine Corps leaders who encouraged me to continue striving for the next goal and to never accept mediocrity. Additionally, these Marines supported my application for the Advanced Degree Program at Texas A&M with letters of recommendation.

To Colonel Shane Conrad, who pulled me aside in Al Asad, Iraq while serving with Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 4 in 2005, and told me that I was going to drop an officer package because he knew I had what it took to succeed in positions of higher authority.

To Colonel Shane Basco, who pushed me outside the limits of my perceived capacity while serving at Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242 and deploying all over the Pacific Theater Area of Operations.

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## CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

### **Contributors**

This work was supervised by a thesis committee consisting of Professor Patrick Slattery and Professor Jacqueline Stillisano of the Department of Teaching Learning and Culture, and Professor Elizabeth Roumell of the Department of Education Administration & Human Resource Development, Texas A&M University.

The data for current Marine Corps instructional methods and current curriculum improvements analyzed for Chapter 2 was provided by the Squadron Intelligence Training Officer for the Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Marine Unit (CNATT MARUNIT), Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina and the Curriculum Development Officer, College of Enlisted Military Education at Marine Corps University, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia. The current military instructor class data analyses depicted in Chapter 2 is from:

- Navy Instructor Training Course, A-012-0077A (October 2013)
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Research Questions.....	3
Significance of the Study .....	3
Limitations of the Study.....	4
Organization of the Thesis .....	5
Primary Researcher Personal Educational Experience and Subjectivities.....	6
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	8
Adult Education.....	8
Civilian Teaching Methods and Theories .....	8
Experiential Learning.....	9
Transformative Learning.....	10
Embodied Learning.....	11
Discussion Groups.....	12
Critical Theory.....	13
Scaffolding .....	14
Cultural Inclusivity in Learning .....	15
The Teacher-Student Relationship .....	16
Importance of Feedback.....	18
Technology and Adult Learning.....	19
What the Marine Corps has Recently Written on Education .....	20
Current Methods Military Instructors are Learning.....	22
Current Changes in PME .....	25
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS .....	28
Methodology .....	28
Aims of Qualitative Research.....	28
Michael Quinn Patton on Phenomenology .....	29
Sharan B. Merriam on Phenomenology.....	31
Methods.....	32
Conduct of Interviews.....	32
Interview Questions .....	34
Analysis Methods .....	35

Computer Software.....	35
Other Analysis Methods.....	36
Data Management.....	39
RESULTS .....	40
Participants.....	40
Participant Vignettes.....	41
Emerging Themes from Interviews .....	41
Value of PME.....	42
Short-Term Value.....	42
Struggle to Balance Work With All Education .....	42
A Check in the Box.....	44
Poor Instructional Methods .....	45
Long-Term Value .....	47
Lack of Value in PME .....	47
Curriculum Changes Needed.....	48
Need for International Students in Enlisted PME.....	50
Anxieties With Regard to Time.....	51
Need for Equity / Fairness of PME.....	52
Photo Elicitations.....	55
CONCLUSIONS .....	57
Diversity of Instructional Methods.....	57
Resident PME.....	57
Resident Seminar.....	60
Gender and Culture Inclusivity Issues .....	60
Implications for Future Research .....	62
REFERENCES.....	64
GLOSSARY OF MILITARY TERMS AND JARGON.....	67
APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW REPORTS .....	70
APPENDIX B. MEMBER CHECKS.....	94
APPENDIX C. RESEARCHER BIOGRAPHY .....	101
APPENDIX D. MARINE CORPS RANK STRUCTURE.....	103
APPENDIX E. RECRUITMENT SCRIPT .....	104
APPENDIX F. VERBAL INFORMATION SCRIPT.....	105
APPENDIX G. MARINE CORPS IRB APPROVAL LETTER.....	106
APPENDIX H. INFORMED CONSENT.....	109

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Code Occurrence Report.....	37
Figure 1.2 Code and Quotation Report.....	38
Figure 1.3 Screen Shot of Andrew’s Fitness Report from Sergeant’s Course..	55



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Professional Military Education (PME) has been a topic of great importance to Marine Corps Leadership since the inaugural classes of Field Officers School, Company Grade Officers School, and The Basic School in the years 1920-1921 (The History of Marine Corps University, para 2). Marine Corps PME courses now begin at the rank of the enlisted Lance Corporal (E-3) and continue into the General Officer ranks (O-7 - O-10). Marines of all ranks have seen many iterations and changes over the years in an attempt to bring our antiquated style and doctrine of instruction into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Though many may see these improvements as valuable and “checking the box” in order to showcase our gains, the Marine Corps still lacks significant curriculum products and practices that are standard operating procedures in formal institutions of higher learning. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in our Enlisted PME programs. As noted by General David Berger, 38<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, (2019), “Specifically, many of our schools and training venues are firmly based in the “lecture, memorize facts, regurgitate facts on command” model of industrial age training and education” (Berger, 2019, p. 16). General Berger further mentions the need for more technology in the classrooms and better teaching methods. “What we need is an information age approach that is focused on active, student-centered learning using a problem-posing methodology where our students/trainees are challenged with problems that they tackle as groups in order to learn by doing and also from each other” (Berger, 2019, p. 16). This thesis contends that the United States Marine Corps must improve the quality of Enlisted Professional Military Education to better prepare our Marines emotionally and academically to further the likelihood of improved formal education success in

the realms of institutions of higher learning, while on active duty and as members of the civilian workforce.

My research began with works from keystone leaders in the field of education to identify important educational, instructional theories and methods that are absent from our focus area of concern. I have consulted articles and periodicals from both scholarly educational resources and top military publications that will highlight our current cultural, feminist, and minority inclusion in the classroom and from a faculty standpoint. I have compared and contrasted the quality of diversity, instruction, and facilitation between Enlisted PME and Officer PME. This has identified what we are doing right and where the vast majority of our efforts need to be focused.

In addition to academic research, I have conducted qualitative interviews with active duty Enlisted Marines in an effort to allow them to share their stories and experiences as students in PME programs and formal education settings. Their stories stand as a testament to the quality of education they are actually receiving beyond the quantitative numbers reported by Marine Corps entities.

This research is important for a myriad of reasons. First, the Enlisted Marines have the least number of advocates to affect change for their benefit. The bureaucracy and red tape that must be traversed to gain support of stake holders is immense. Secondly, the gap in the quality between Enlisted PME and Officer PME is substantial and has been slow to improve in many areas. Through this research, I have found tangible and meaningful evidence of the areas of study most at risk.

## **Research Questions**

- 1) How does Marine Corps Professional Military Education theories and doctrine of curriculum and instruction / practices and procedures compare to accepted philosophies and methods established by leading scholars in the realm of civilian education?
- 2) How do research participants describe their experiences with instructors and curriculum while participating in PME courses?
- 3) What themes emerge from active duty Marine interviews with regard to current cultural and gender diversity in Marine Corps PME courses?
- 4) What changes and additions are needed in Marine Corps PME in order to better prepare the individual Marine for future academic endeavors?

## **Significance of the Study**

Anytime professional educators can expose weaknesses in instructional methods or curriculum, benefits can be gained by the end user. In this scenario, that includes the men and women defending our nation as United States Marines. This study is not the first time an agency has researched the effectiveness of Marine Corps PME programs. However, through this research, no other case was found to look at PME through the lens of gaining information that may be used to change PME curriculum and instructional methods in order to better prepare Marines for success in civilian institutions of higher learning.

Additionally, this study appears to be the first qualitative research into this subject, where phenomenological interviews were utilized to gain a deeper insight into the actual lived experiences of Marine Staff Non-Commissioned Officers and how these career Marines view PME aside from what the data collected by Marine Corps entities may suggest.

## **Limitations of the Study**

This study is not unique in the respect that there are limitations associated with this research that must be mentioned.

1. As noted in other areas of this work, the primary researcher for this study is a prior Enlisted Marine Corps Officer. This creates inherent bias and subjectivity that must be mentioned. Though these biases have been controlled to the extent possible, a more perfect rendition of this study should be attempted by a truly unbiased outside agency.
2. Due to the relatively limited amount of documentation from Navy and Marine Corps sources, some of the information gathered is up to ten years of age. This means there are currently initiatives being explored to correct some of the deficiencies that are noted in the research. Some of these current initiatives will be identified in the body of this work.
3. Due to an exhaustive dual Institutional Review Board processes and time constraints associated with a mid-semester Masters Thesis defense, there may be items that were not identified or explored as completely as I would have liked.
4. The qualitative phenomenological interview participant sample size is small and only consisted of four Marines (two female and two male).
5. Due to the physical location of the research team and the active duty Marine participants being located across the United States, all interviews were conducted via Facetime video chat. As the Marines involved in this study had their own work and family obligations, this method caused delays with gathering informed consent,

reviewing interview reports, and gathering member checks via multiple email conversations.

6. Overall, time was the biggest enemy to this study. Time elapsed between each step and between each email transmission added up to an exorbitant amount of time lost that could have been used to improve on the overall importance of this research.

“Minutes mean hours and hours mean days.” This study should be revisited with no time constraints and more active duty Marine participants.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

This study began with a brief description of this work in the Abstract. Chapter 1 has discussed the rationale for the study, the statement of problem, research questions, the significance of the study, limitations of the study, and the personal educational experience / subjectivities of the primary qualitative researcher. Chapter 2 will discuss the what the literature has to say on this subject, to include: civilian teaching methods; what the Marine Corps and Navy has written on this subject; current methods military instructors are learning; the conduct of military PME today; and current changes in PME. Chapter 3 will cover the study methodology, goals of qualitative research, notable scholars from the field of phenomenology such as: Michael Quinn Patton and Sharan B. Merriam. This chapter will conclude with sections on study methods, interview conduct, and data management. Chapter 4 will focus on the interview results, significant emerging themes from the data, and highlights from the use of photo elicitation. Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions to be drawn from this research effort and will endeavor to clarify implications for future research.

## **Primary Researcher Personal Educational Experience and Subjectivities**

As the primary researcher for this study, it is important to be transparent with my own history, personal education experience, and possible subjectivities in regards to this the focus of this work. I was raised in the Mississippi Public School System and attempted college several times as a young man, but was not disciplined enough to dedicate the required efforts in my studies. At the age of 22, I decided to enlist in the United States Marine Corps in 2000 in order to enact a course correction in my life. As an Enlisted Marine, I have completed forty-four Marine Corps Institute (MCI) distance education courses. The subjects of these courses range from *Personal Finance* to *Aircraft Maintenance Work Center Supervisor*. Additionally, I have completed eighteen Service Schools, where I was required to travel to the school location and reside there anywhere from two weeks to seven months. Examples of these courses range from *Navy Instructor Training Course* to *Lean Sigma Six Green Belt Courses*. As an Enlisted Marine, I have completed all require PME Programs over the years for promotion to include: Sergeants' Course 2003; Staff Non-Commissioned Officer's Career Course 2005; and Advanced Staff Non-Commissioned Officer's Career Course 2007). I was a Service School Instructor for two years as a Staff Sergeant (E-6) and reached the rank of Gunnery Sergeant (E-7) before commissioning as an officer in 2011. As a Marine Corps Officer, I completed Expeditionary Warfare School PME in 2015 and I am currently enrolled in Command and Staff College PME with an expected graduation date of May 2021. I earned a Bachelor of Arts from The University of Mississippi in Psychology and History (double major) in 2011.

At the completion of my defense of this research, I will have successfully met all required obligations to earn a Masters of Science in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas A&M University. I have recently received orders to the Training and Education Command, where I

will be placed in the Enlisted Education section of Marine Corps University. I did undertake this subject in the hopes of identifying areas where I could begin immediately working to improve the learning experiences for Enlisted Marines. However, I have endeavored to remain as neutral as possible in the attempt to let the information gathered speak for itself, free and away from my own subjectivities.

CHAPTER II  
LITERATURE REVIEW

**Adult Education**

Professional Military Education is considered to be nonformal adult education.

Nonformal education could be described as an organized system of education activity conducted outside the boundaries and framework of traditional formal schools of higher learning. As noted by Ross-Gordon, Rose, and Kasworm (2017), “examples of nonformal education includes adult literacy programs, family planning, faith-based adult education, and military training and development programs” (Ross-Gordon, Rose, & Kasworm, p. 7). Because adults have different needs in a classroom than children, different methods and approaches have been proven to achieve better results than those traditionally associated with childhood education. It is important to discuss and identify methods that educational scholars have proven to be effective in civilian formal schools for adults and contrast those with what may or may not be utilized in today’s Marine Corps PME Schools.

**Civilian Teaching Methods and Theories**

Before this study could identify areas in which Enlisted Marine Corps PME needed to be improved, it was important to showcase what is being taught today in the Education Department of universities across the United States. By identifying “what right looks like” this study is better situated to contrast and compare between PME and civilian education. This section will examine several of today’s instructional methods and theories that are common practice and expected in civilian classrooms.



## Experiential Learning

One commonality between adult learners from all backgrounds is a certain amount of experience. As children grow into adolescents and then into adults, life happens. Throughout that process most people will have their first job, then their second, maybe a third. When one combines all of the learning that occurs during these steps and combines those with informal learning through life and formal learning in the classroom, she or he is left with a litany of experiences that shape their personal views, skills, and personalities.

It is upon this base that we have the opportunity to use experiential learning to our advantage. As educators, it is important to take advantage of these well-established synaptic patterns in adult students. As noted by Taylor and Marienau (2016), “The more often a given pattern is reactivated, the more efficient it gets, because as the synaptic spaces shrink, that route requires less energy” (Taylor & Marienau, 2016), p. 43).

There is a very tangible example in the above cited text that truly establishes this premise to the lay person. If one were to think of new learning experiences as a lattice work of crisscrossed streets, experiential learning would be the Broadway or highway that goes straight through or over those streets as a direct and well-established thoroughfare. “Although the brain is plastic and constantly changing, deeply rooted patterns become not just the Broadways but the Grand Canyons of neural networks, where the rivers of experience have cut deeply into the bedrock”. (Taylor & Marienau, 2016), p. 44). By engaging their students, developing proper rapport and developing a general interest in student’s histories, instructors can use experiential learning to advance student progress much faster than without it. Educator and philosopher, John Dewey, also spoke at length about the importance of recognizing this phenomena in education. As noted in his 1938 work, *Experience and Education*, he states “What he (one) has

learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations that follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue” (Dewey, 1938, p. 44).

### **Transformative Learning**

One area in which Marine Corps training absolutely contributes to positive learning opportunities is through transformative learning. Transformative learning occurs when a person undergoes a significant and to an extent, life-altering learning experience. This has been defined by Clark (1993), “Transformational learning shapes people; they are different afterward, in ways both they and others can recognize” (Clark, 1993, p. 47). It would be easy for most to draw the connection between transformational learning and the changes one undergoes while attending Marine Corps Recruit Training, Officer’s Candidate’s School, or even Sergeant’s Course. The change in appearance and demeanor is undeniable and should be forever. However, the Marine Corps does still focus on what they call “maintaining the transformation” in order to impress upon Marines the importance of continued honor, values, and esprit de corps.

On the civilian side, transformative learning can take on a more complex definition which is important to explore, as well. Mezirow (1991) describes transformative learning as

Involving an enhanced level of awareness of the context of one’s beliefs and feelings, a critique of their assumptions and particularly premises, and assessment of alternative perspectives, a decision to negate an old perspective in favor of a new one or to make a synthesis of old and new, and ability to take action based upon the new perspective, and a desire to fit the new perspective into the broader context of one’s life (p. 161).

This definition takes a more holistic view of transformative learning. As students enter college classrooms for the first time, they are met with alternative perspectives, social views, cultures

different than their own, and in some cases new understandings and appreciation for other religions. This, too, is transformative as students engage in discussions on these topics, their eyes are opened, some for the first time, to the world and perspectives that they may have never considered in their previous lives. Transformative learning opportunities like these can be a lot to absorb and can cause deep self-reflection, which is paramount in growing into a socially conscious individual.

### **Embodied Learning**

Another type of learning that is very closely tied to experiential and transformative learning is embodied learning. The concept here is when learning a new skill or information, learning is not just happening in the mind, but rather through a concert of senses and emotions. Some have linked embodied learning to kinesthetic learning. Amann (2003) states, “movement in action often yields lessons about discipline, diligence, dealing with stress, or solving problems” (Amann, 2003, p. 28). This may sound complex, but the majority of this is happening throughout our daily lives and when we learn any new skill, especially when using our hands.

Think about the action of learning to change a tire. An individual would most likely be learning from an authority figure. The learner can hear instructor’s voice as they listen to directions. The smell of dirt, brake dust, and grease is in the air. The feel of cold tools are on the learner’s hands. Their muscles work and strain to turn the lug nuts and lift the flat tire off of the hub. There may be a feeling of pride and accomplishment upon completion of the task, and a feeling of closeness towards the person who instructed this lesson. This is embodied learning and it is powerful. As embodied learning often taps into our emotions, it could also be described as a type of spiritual learning. This does not necessarily have anything to do with religion, but rather learning through or with our emotions in mind. As noted by Tisdell (2007),

Spirituality is one of the ways people construct knowledge and meaning. It works in consort with the affective, the rational or cognitive, and the unconscious and symbolic domains. To ignore it, particularly in how it relates to teaching to personal and social transformation, is to ignore an important aspect of human experience and avenue of learning and meaning-making (p. 3).

What Tisdell was trying to convey is embodied and spiritual learning experiences happen throughout our daily lives and to understand this is to understand the connections that create meaningful development in our personal identities and how we construct understanding.

### **Discussion Groups**

Utilizing discussion groups in learning is a powerful method to give students an opportunity to talk about issues related to subject material and share thoughts and opinions in a less intimidating environment, as opposed to asking questions and talking in front of an entire class. Discussion groups are also instrumental to students becoming better acquainted with those of different cultural backgrounds. Sometimes knowledge is better achieved by learning how others view the material and how they came to their particular understanding. However, educators must be aware of the potential power dynamics in discussion groups and take steps to ensure power is equally shared by all in order to achieve a meaningful learning experience for participants. As noted by Brookfield (2013),

I have urged that teachers of adults need to intervene to create conversational structures that require attentive listening and that prevent articulate or egomaniacal participants from dominating the conversation and setting a premature agenda. I believe teachers of adults should use their power to create periods of reflective silence, to institute

opportunities for everyone to speak early on, and to require people to build on previous contributions (p. 86).

When properly conducted and facilitated, discussion groups are also excellent avenues for building a “class team” mentality, breaking-down preconceived barriers, and finding common ground with fellow classmates that can grow exponentially as the class progresses.

### **Critical Theory**

One of the more important learning theories that many have zero exposure to prior to stepping-into a classroom is critical theory. There are few revelations found in the process of achieving a college education more important and, to some, shockingly uncomfortable than the realization that the hegemony of accepted truths may have been wrongly shaped, yet accepted by society because of the dominant group has deemed them so. Merriam and Bierema (2014) states, “The American Dream, the idea that anyone can be economically successful here with hard work and determination - is accessible to all. The reality is that certain groups have more access to this opportunity if they are privileged in terms of race, social class, education level, or gender” (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 214). For some, this can be a difficult concept to understand and accept. Given our subject matter, the use of a United States Marine seems appropriate. The average Marine has sacrificed literal blood, sweat and tears for all that they have. They have spent years away from loved ones, either across the country at their duty station or across the globe on deployments. They have missed births, anniversaries, deaths of loved ones, and a multitude of other life events in service of their country. How can these individuals be considered “privileged?” However, this is a narcissistic view of the idea of privilege. Society must stop viewing privilege in regards to how it affects them, and instead view life as how an absence of a privilege might affect those different than oneself. Through critical theory, we are

asked to view the world through the eyes of those with different backgrounds in an effort to fully understand the specific struggles and obstacles they may have faced that others have not.

In critical theory we strive to recognize how unjust dominate ideologies are intertwined in everyday life, in an effort to introduce positive social change. Only through the understanding of the inequities in our society can we begin to redesign the system to create more access to opportunities for all. Critical theory can be applied to numerous areas to include: *feminist pedagogy*, which seeks to create learning situations where individuals can critique and explore social conditions and gain a better understanding of how class, gender, sexuality, or race affects their personal, professional, and social lives; *critical race theory*, which challenges society to confront the role of law regarding white supremacy and has become a movement in other disciplines to promote understanding of the social and experiential context of racism; *queer studies*, which is a field that explores power relations as they relate to gender identity and sexuality with a focus on the LGBTI community; and *multiculturalism*, which is the perspective that instead of viewing our society as the “melting pot,” where many cultures are combined into one, multiculturalism appreciates the unique contributions and identities of each individual and the culture from which they come (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 217-220).

### **Scaffolding**

This is a technique with which many are unfamiliar until they reach a college classroom or might have not realized their teachers were using throughout their educational journey. The idea behind scaffolding is that an instructor will utilize levels of temporary support in order to assist students build comprehension of complex learning requirements. An example might be to teach a class what countries were involved in WWII and where their theater of operations were focused. Once the class had a nice grasp of those concepts, the teacher might begin discussing

specific campaigns, then specific battles. The more new knowledge is accepted and absorbed, the more details and complex ideas can be added. Without scaffolding, jumping straight into the battle of Guadalcanal (Operation Watchtower) without understanding why the U.S. was in the Pacific, might be confusing and cause students to tune-out. As noted by Taylor and Marienau (2016),

If you have ever watched a new building construction, you have probably seen scaffolding at work. After a foundation is laid, walls start to go up, but even before the first level is complete, initial framing begins on the next level. Scaffolding gives workers a secure place to operate as they extend their reach into unfinished construction above. It is a temporary add-on that will be removed or repositioned when the newly built areas are solid enough for adults to continue their tasks without it. Given that the brain learns by elaborating new pathways in and between neural networks, the role of scaffolding in fostering deeper understanding and greater complexity makes perfect sense (pp. 109-110).

Additionally, scaffolding is an excellent method to bridge learning gaps for students. Learning gaps could be explained as the distance between what students have learned thus far, and what they are expected to have learned by a specific point in time in the semester / course of study.

### **Cultural Inclusivity in Learning**

As educators, it is important to ensure and we are creating a nurturing learning experiences and environments that are open and welcoming to students of all cultural backgrounds. Students of minority / foreign backgrounds may not innately feel comfortable asking questions and participating in discussions without the explicit efforts of instructors to help them feel comfortable doing so. As noted by Maxine Green (1995),

We must learn how to enable the diverse young to join the continually emergent cultures ongoing conversation. I think we, in education, have a particular responsibility to bring renewal to that conversation, to do what we can to include within the voices of the long silent or unheard in this country: women's voices, newcomers voices, Hispanic, Asian, African, Arab and Indian voices (p. 56).

Students' comprehension is greatly enhanced when they have the opportunity to learn from those with different backgrounds and discuss the issues that may arise in a classroom with those from other cultures. Seeing the world and societal concerns through a new lens is essential to gaining a more diverse social world view and can only bring about a better understanding of our sisters and brothers from other cultures. Maxine Greene further explained what she perceives as the issue of self-fulfilling prophecies with immigrant students. Greene stated, "many of the alienated or marginalized are made to feel distrustful of their own voices, their own ways of making sense, yet they are not provided alternatives that allow them to tell their stories, shape their narratives or ground new learnings in what they already know" (Greene, 1995, pp. 110-111). This also speaks to the importance of diversity of instructors and the relationships that teachers have with their students.

### **The Teacher-Student Relationship**

The relationship between the teacher and students can greatly affect the knowledge gained and productivity of discussions in a classroom. As adults, most understand the power dynamics in a classroom. The instructor, at the very least, has positional authority in the classroom and as such should be afforded respect. Additionally, this could be combined with actual rank seniority in a military PME classroom. This too, is understood by most, if not all, of the students in a military classroom. However, what the teacher does with that power / authority



is most important. For teachers to be most effective, they need to develop a solid rapport with students and a work to build mutual respect in order create environments where students want to learn and share their opinions with fellow classmates. Hattie and Yates (2014), noted,

students value being helped to achieve independence and autonomy, and appreciate teachers who can connect the new with the familiar, can convey complex notion's in simple terms, who actively recognize that students learn at different rates, and need varying levels of guidance, feedback, and instruction. Such teaching must take place in a climate of trust, affection, and fairness (p. 31).

Educators must recognize the power they have to control the performance of their students by how they interact with those students and whether or not students believe the teacher cares about them and truly wants to help them achieve their educational goals. Teachers also fill multiple roles within adult education. In addition to the role of lecturer and discussion facilitator, teachers must also be prepared to fill the role as a mentor to students. As noted by Ross-Gordon, Rose and Kasworm (2017),

Mentoring is viewed as a developmental relationship that provides potential benefits for both the mentor and mentees. These benefits are likely to be enhanced when the adult educator acting in the role of mentor is able to interact effectively across differences of gender, race, and culture and understands that different forms of support are appropriate at different points in the mentorship relationship (p. 86).

It is in this mentoring role that educators have an opportunity to closely relate to their students and showcase their interest in the individual student's life and personal goals. Teacher /student relationships built on mutual trust and respect are more conducive for positive learning experiences.

## **Importance of Feedback**

Instructors must understand the connection between feedback and success. Students need to know where they are doing well and where they are not. Without feedback, there can be no course corrections made. This is true for paper corrections, test results, and classroom discussion involvement, among a litany of others. What is also important for instructors to understand is the science behind why feedback can be such a powerful ally in the learning process. As Taylor and Marienau (2016) explain,

Feedback is a social interaction, and the brain is hard-wired to care deeply about how people respond to us. Positive feedback floods the brain with pleasure inducing dopamine. Negative feedback can trigger a pain-like response” (p. 228).

Understanding how the teacher’s responses and actions can affect the students under their charge can aid in correcting poor instructional and classroom management issues. Realizing that social pain can interfere with cognitive performance and memory formation, and that social reward can have a lasting and positive affects is paramount to keep in mind while teaching adults.

(Lieberman, 2013, as cited in Taylor & Marienau 2016, p. 228).

The act of receiving feedback is instrumental for the student to close the gap between her or his current performance and where the instructor would like them to be. As noted by Hattie and Yates (2014), “feedback enables the individual to move forward, to plot, plan, adjust, rethink, and thus exercise self-regulation in realistic and balanced ways” (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 66). In the end, feedback is essential to student achievement and they deserve timely and appropriate advice and criticism to ensure their continued growth.

## **Technology and Adult Learning**

In today's classroom, educators' ability to effectively utilize technology can be a major deciding factor in how successful their instruction is and how well their students can learn the required material. We now have adults in the classroom that have been raised with iPads, iPhones, and every other type of technology easily available and at their fingertips. This changes the dynamics in a classroom and has proven to challenge those stuck in antiquated methods of instruction. "Technology is not just a device that is utilized as a tool. Rather, technology has infused every aspect of society to essentially change the thought process in learning" (Parker, 2013, p. 55).

Because technology has become such an extension of ourselves in our lives, educators must design instructional methods that are able to harness the students' needs and desire for that type of instruction. This goes beyond the use of PowerPoint slide shows or watching videos in class. Students are now familiar with and enjoy utilizing classroom quiz games like Kahoots, IClicker, Quizlet, and Gimkit. Through tools like these, learning becomes interactive and engaging. The learning isn't happening to the student, but rather the student has a certain amount of control. Because the student is reading, listening, using their device to participate, and most likely talking a bit about what is going on with classmates, this becomes embodied learning, as well.

These new technologies also have the ability to connect people and classrooms across the globe through computer-mediated communication (CMC). As noted by Joosten (2012),

Computer mediated communication illustrates communication taking place through a technology enhanced medium that has the ability to traverse time and space and extend communication to more people who are sending and receiving messages. This is viewed

as potentially creating a more egalitarian and democratic learning experience for diverse learners on a global basis particularly because it's open free and accessible to most individuals (p. 11).

Imagine how interesting learning would be if a classroom connected to another across the globe once a week to have a discussion. What new perspective and synapse pathways might be established through methods such as these?

### **What the Marine Corps has Recently Written on Education**

There is a common perception among Marines that our current PME programs are not a valuable use of their time and the curriculum covered does not enhance their abilities to lead Marines or prepare them for future academic ventures in civilian institutions of higher learning. To begin my research into this subject, I wanted to identify what the Marine Corps leadership had to say about the state of Enlisted PME, what deficiencies they identified, and in what direction they would like to move. One recent example of a critical review and proposed changes to Enlisted PME was from a hearing before Congress by the Service Chiefs in 2010. This document provides clear guidance on where Marine Corps leadership sees problems and how they want to address these issues. The hearing was under oath, so we can be assured that the information found within was as close to the truth as they could arrive at that point in time. As noted by Colonel James Minick, USMC (2010), "We empowered our Marines to be able to adapt and think critically and move on a changing battlefield, at the same time being able to act decisively. We believe developing and executing a professional education program provides a means to achieve that strategic corporal that our 31st Commandant, General Krulak, envisioned in the late 1990s" (Minick, 2010, Congressional Hearings on Enlisted PME).

Here we begin to see a bit of the problem. The Marine Corps was and is focused on keeping all of our PME curriculum solely in the arena of military excellence, as opposed to breaching other paradigms that might benefit the individual Marine in the long run. This is an issue with which all Marines must contend. How do they prepare themselves for formal education, when they are forced to undergo months of PME, reading selections from the Commandant's Reading List, learning their Military Occupational Specialty, working twelve hour days, and deploying? The short answer is, in many cases, they don't.

Another issue affecting the meaningful experience of Enlisted PME is a lack of diversity of students and instructors. We will first discuss the faculty issue as it affects not only Enlisted, but Officer PME alike. To cut right to it, there is a lack of female instructors at resident PME courses. Female Instructors comprise between five and nine percent of all PME faculty (Johnson-Freese, Harling & Ulrich, 2014, p. 59). Taking into account that the Marine Corps has the lowest ratio of females out of any service branch, this still needs to be addressed. As noted by Alex Pentland (2014),

The collective intelligence of a community comes from idea flow; we learn from the stream of outside ideas as well, then the individuals in the community make better decisions than they could on their own. Diversity of viewpoint and experience is an important success factor when harvesting innovative ideas (p. 59).

Diversity and learning from individuals with differing life experiences is paramount in developing a well-rounded education and a more appropriate and socially conscious world view.

While investigating the theme of diversity, we have seen examples of Officer PME doing things right and leaving Enlisted PME without the same learning opportunities. When one considers all Officer PME, to include Marine Corps Officer Candidates School and The Basic

School at Marine Corps Base Quantico, we have over “8000 international military officers training alongside our Marine Corps Officers” (Thacker and Lambert, 2014, p. 70). This is important to note because as we have previously learned diversity in a classroom breeds better socially productive learning experiences. As stated by Thacker and Lambert (2014), “Arguably, the most important outcome of PME programs is the strength of relationships formed between the international officers and their classmates, sponsors, or other contacts here in the United States” (Thacker and Lambert, 2014, p. 71). Here we see another pivotal aspect of developing bonds between those of differing backgrounds. Meanwhile the Enlisted Marines are completely missing this opportunity and unless we do something to change course, they will not have the opportunity to learn from other cultures until they enter a formal college education setting.

### **Current Methods Military Instructors are Learning**

In order to ascertain how Marine Corps instructors learn their craft, this research team contacted a Marine Corps schoolhouse and spoke directly with the Squadron Intelligence Training Officer for the Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Marine Unit (CNATT MARUNIT), Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina. They were kind enough to share their instructional course books. The curriculum for new instructors is still very lecture-based. They do breach other paradigms such as: role-playing; gaming; case study; facilitation; storytelling; and scaffolding (which they equate with on-the-job training). However, when asked the question, “Where do the instructor trainers focus the majority of their efforts, the Squadron Intelligence Officer said that “it was still very lecture focused.” The below descriptions of instructional methods come from the Navy Instructor Training Course A-012-0077A. It is important to note that I discussed copyright permission with the Squadron Intelligence Officer for CNATT MARUNIT, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina and he stated

that as these instruction manuals are locally created and printed, there is no copyright associated with these manuals:

1. Lecture  
Is an efficient way to introduce a new topic of study or present background material students need for future classes. A lecture allows instructors to present factual information to a large audience because they use no visuals and there is no interaction between the students and the instructor.
2. Role-Playing  
Students act out predefined situations, Students develop and revise their understanding and perspective of others, or Instructors may be required to participate.
3. Gaming  
Students compete and form social communities or Students engage in simulation, role-playing, immersion, and physical games.
4. Case Study  
Students research and study, workplace, training, and theoretical problems or Students may look for solutions, define the problem better, or determine the cause.
5. Facilitation  
Instructor guides students through a series of open-ended questions.
6. Storytelling: Sea Stories  
The creation of stories to learn content or Topics can include biographies, virtual field trips, photo collection galleries, and mapping projects.
7. Scaffolding: On-the-Job Training  
Involves the instructor modeling the skill and thinking for the students and as the student increases in knowledge and understanding, the instruction allows the student to take on more responsibility for the learning.

**(Navy Instructor Training Course, A-012-0077A (October 2013), (pp.75-76).**

1. Importance of Effective Communication
  - a. Receivers interpret and understand intended messages from senders.
  - b. Receivers provide feedback to confirm correct message was received.
2. Effective Communications Model
  - a. Communication  
Exchange of thoughts, opinions, and information through speech, writing, nonverbal cues, signs, and images.  
Instructors not only communicate, but they ensure that the message they send is understood as they intended it to be understood.
  - b. Sender  
Formulates the message, considers possible barriers to the message, encodes the message and chooses a delivery method and sends the message.
  - c. Message

Is the information being conveyed and can be verbal or nonverbal.

d. Delivery Vehicle

The delivery vehicle is the method you choose to deliver the message. The delivery vehicle should be suitable to your audience and your content.

e. Receiver

Hears and/or sees the sent message, has external and internal barriers that affect the message, decodes the message using mental images, and interprets the message.

f. Feedback

Provides essential information about your success in communicating the message and validates that the message is received correctly.

a. Hear

Concentrate on the speaker, pay attention to nonverbal cues, wait until the speaker has finished before you think about your response and encourage the speaker to speak.

b. Understand

Provide clear feedback, acknowledge valid points, rephrase key points to ensure understanding, ask questions if the message is unclear.

c. Activity: Active Listening

Follow your instructor's directions.

4. Managing Nervousness and Activity

The goal to overcoming nervousness is to accept nervousness, harness its energy, and use it to increase your enthusiasm and energy for the presentation.

a. Controlling Nervousness Prior to the Training

There are five steps to aid you in managing your nervousness.

(1) Be positive, (2) Be receiver-oriented (be willing to actively listen), (3) Be prepared (practice, practice, practice), (4) Be organized. Have your lesson plan prepared and your activity items ready; make sure your student's support material is available, and (5) Rehearse. Use the materials, visual aids, and equipment in your lesson to ensure a smooth training session.

b. Harnessing Nervousness in the Learning Environment Role-Play

Do you pace when you are nervous? Instead of walking back and forth in front of the class, move into the classroom and engage your students directly. Try these other things to help you harness nervousness: Prepare thoroughly; Slow your speech; Control the use of pause words (such as "um," "uh," "like," etc.); Do not acknowledge your nervousness; Have a drink of water nearby; and Control gestures.

5. Verbal and Nonverbal Communications

a. Voice, Eye Contact, Gestures, and Attitude (VEGA): You will be expected to master **VEGA skills**.

**V:** Voice: Articulation; force, tone, and volume; rate; emphasize key points

**E:** Eye Contact: Most influential, nonverbal facet; communicate feelings

**G:** Gestures: Use effective gestures: open hand, smile. Avoid inappropriate gestures.



A: Avoid distracting mannerisms. Our body language, namely our arm gestures, can cause distractions as we try to communicate with others. Here are some gestures to avoid when teaching a class.

**(Navy Instructor Training Course, A-012-0077A (October 2013), (pp.22-26).**

The above curriculum is common to all initial instructor courses throughout the Navy and Marine Corps. Though they do cover some of the required basics, you won't find any classes on true scaffolding techniques, cultural issues, gender issues, or new technology methods in the classroom. That being said, this is considered a journeyman training course and is not meant to create Master Training Specialists (MTSs). The Navy does have a process to acquire this qualification and it takes upwards of 18 months of active engagement with intense teach-backs to achieve.

### **Current Changes in PME**

The idea of modernizing Enlisted PME is not a new and groundbreaking idea. There have been many waves of changes over the last couple decades. As computer accessibility has improved, the Marine Corps has placed much of annual training and Non-Resident PME courses on the Marinenet server. To many, this has been a blessing as they could now technically be considered "PME complete" without leaving the command. However, as most educators would assume (and rightly so) distance education without a facilitator invites shortcuts and less than ideal learning experiences.

The Marine Corps has adopted new methods and has recently outlined a new "Campaign Plan" with five "Lines of Effort" and seven "Critical Tasks" that must be accomplished to meet the need of today's Enlisted Marines (Williams, Murray, & Hamm, 2018, p. 77). Some of the more notable changes include: redesigning curricula to reflect a university format; introduce a contemporary learning environment at the academies (wi-fi, cloud storage, etc.); and the

implementation of Resident Seminar Programs for Sergeant's Course and Advanced School to allow Marines to get "Resident" credit without travelling away from their command and daily responsibilities (Williams, Murray, & Hamm, 2018, p. 77).

The more impressive of these ideas is that the Marine Corps is looking to design a system that more closely resembles a university format where the curriculum would reflect semesters and use of language that might assist universities in awarding college credit for classes completed. Additionally, the Enlisted College has recently invited several civilian schools and universities to examine the changes to the new curriculum in order to aid in the determinization of the type and number of college-level credits that will be offered (Williams, Murray, & Hamm, 2018, p. 78). Some may view this with some amount of hesitation, as Marines have been told for years that Marine Corps Institute (MCI) correspondence courses earned one college credit per the American Council on Education (ACE). This has always appeared to be true as service members could download their ACE / SMART Transcript and according to that, one could have earned a lot of college credit for military training and courses taken. However, what is also true is trying to get college credit for those classes from a reputable four-year university is highly unlikely. It is encouraging to hear leadership focusing on these issues, but cautious optimism is recommended here.

This research team also contacted the Curriculum Development Officer, College of Enlisted Military Education at Marine Corps University, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia. After speaking with this professional, it was clear that the Marine Corps is working feverishly to hire highly qualified Officers to work on improvements for Enlisted PME. The current Curriculum Development Officer was an established educational professional (teacher) for years before joining the Marine Corps and holds multiple Masters degrees in the field of education and

curriculum development. Hires like these and the establishment of the Advanced Degree Program for 8802 Education Officers, speaks directly to the seriousness with which Marine Corps leadership is actively working to improve PME opportunities. Among others, they have recently developed a Master Faculty Advisor Program to

develop faculty advisors in facilitation techniques, classroom management, and active teaching methods. All School Staff Non-Commission Officers in Charge SNCOICs and School Chiefs are required to be, at the minimum, a Senior Faculty Advisor (SFA) to ensure billet holders have the experience to conduct quarterly evaluations and participate as a member of the Initial Certification Board (ICB) (Program Handout, p. 1).

Another item that is currently in-work is improving on the student award system at Enlisted PME courses to include those more common at Officer PME. Some of these awards include: Honor Graduate Award, which requires a top 10 percent academic average and a high first class Physical Fitness Test (PFT); Academic Excellence Award, which requires the top GPA in the class; Distinguished Graduates' Award, which requires a top 10 percent GPA; and Gung-Ho Award, which is awarded to the student that best displays esprit de corps and is voted as such by her or his peers. Extrinsic motivators like these can feed students' drive for excellence in required areas and encourage positive collaboration among students.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

#### **Methodology**

This qualitative study was designed to identify to showcase multiple sides of the same experience (Enlisted PME). This was to be accomplished by examining what the literature had to say on what proper instructional practices and procedures are acceptable from a civilian educational perspective and compare and contrast those with Marine Corps PME instructional methods and doctrine. Though this comparison is instrumental in identifying possible weaknesses and areas in need of improvement with regard to Marine Corps PME, the most important aspect of this study was to be the conduct of interviews with active duty Marines to hear their opinions and personal stories on the conduct and value of Marine Corps PME.

The methodological framework of this study is based on phenomenological inquiry where I interviewed Enlisted Marines in order to discuss their involvement with PME programs in an effort to better understand the “meaning, structure, and essence of this lived experience” / phenomenon. (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 98). Phenomenological Inquiry best suited my needs by allowing me to have conversations with Enlisted Marines to deeply understand their personal lived experience as PME students. Additionally, through this type of research, I have had the opportunity to gain perspectives into the interviewees’ language (jargon), culture, and the historical context of their experiences.

#### **Aims of Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that it does not intend to prove something right or wrong. It does not intend to gather data that can be generalized across a population. Rather, as noted by Bhattacharya (2017), “Qualitative research aims to work within

the context of human experiences in ways in which meaning is made out of those experiences” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 6).

For many, understanding why there is value in qualitative research can be difficult to explain. If you can't prove your research through data and repeatability, how is that valuable? This study is a good example of this. The Marine Corps is spending a lot of time and energy to improve PME for the Marines. That has been proven through the research in this thesis. However, do the end users (the Marines) find those changes and new additions to be in areas that are meaningful for them? Their lived experiences and stories about PME may greatly differ from what Marine Corps leadership thinks is important. That is the beauty of qualitative research, both sides of this story can be correct. Patton (1985) explained qualitative research as

An effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there, the understanding is an end in itself, so that is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting - what it means for the participants to be in that setting, and what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are and what the world looks like in that particular setting (p. 1).

There are several common types of qualitative studies to include: ethnography; autoethnography; case studies; narrative inquiry; grounded theory; oral history; and for our purposes, phenomenological studies.

### **Michael Quinn Patton on Phenomenology**

Michael Patton is one of the preeminent scholars on phenomenology and qualitative research and has been conducting qualitative research for over forty years. He is highly published and has won many awards to include Lazarsfeld Award for Lifelong contributions to

Evaluation Theory and the Lester F. Ward Award for Outstanding Contributions to Applied Sociology (Patton, 2015, p. xvi). It is due to his accolades and knowledge, that study would like to showcase what he has said on the subject of phenomenology.

Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences anything that presents itself to consciousness is potentially of interest to phenomenology, what the object is real or imagined, empirically measurable or subjectively felt. Consciousness is the only access human beings have to the world. Or rather, it is by virtue of being conscious that we are already related to the world. Does all we can ever know must present itself to consciousness (Patton, 2015, p. 115).

Patton continues a little later in the text to give the reader a bit more of an explanation of what it means to become a phenomenologist. As noted by Patton (2015),

Phenomenologists focus on how we put together the phenomenon we experience in such a way as to make sense of the world and, in doing so, develop a worldview. There is no separate (or objective) reality for people. There is only what they know their experience is in means. The subject of experience incorporates the objective thing and becomes a person's reality, thus the focus on meaning-making as the essence of human experience (p. 116).

This is why qualitative research and phenomenology is important. It provides a completely different view of reality, away from what the data tells us. For example, let's say the Marine Corps produces X number of Staff NCO Academy Courses per year. They have X number of graduates. The Marine Corps promotes the required number of Staff Sergeants to Gunnery Sergeant in Fiscal Year 2019 because enough Staff Sergeants passed Staff NCO Academy PME

in order to qualify for promotion. That sounds like a success. However, when you listen to / read the interviews from career Staff NCOs that have attended these schools, their actual lived and shared experiences sound completely different than the report the Marine Corps is sharing. Who is right and who is wrong? That is the point.

### **Sharan B. Merriam on Phenomenology**

Another outstanding resource in the field of qualitative research is Sharan Merriam. She has a much more approachable and narrative style of writing that make learning from her a joy. Because of her style, it was interesting to see her notions of phenomenology and how she sees that research. As noted by Merriam (2002),

Phenomenology and symbolic interactionism also inform interpretive qualitative research. From phenomenology comes the idea that people interpret every day experiences from the perspective of the meaning it has for them. What phenomenologists emphasize, then, is the subjective aspects of people's behavior. They attempt to gain entry into the conceptual world of their subjects in order to understand how and what meaning they construct around events in their daily lives (p. 37).

She also speaks about the importance of the rapport between the interviewer and participants. This can be a rewarding experience if the researcher allows themselves to connect with the participants and the subject material and life experiences being shared.

In phenomenological research you are striving to access the experience with individuals. A trusting relationship, where both are committed to better understanding the experience. My co-investigators reported that the interview was enjoyable, rewarding, insightful, almost therapeutic (Merriam and Associates, 2002, p. 140).

As researchers, we need to strive for this type of connection with our participants to fully understand the feelings and emotions in their experiences.

### **Methods**

Though a thorough literature review of related subjects in the field of instructional theories and methods has been conducted for background information and to set the stage for this study, it is important to keep in mind that as this is a qualitative research study, the main focus was on garnering a deep understanding of the lived experiences of the participants with Enlisted Marine Corps PME. \*With being said, these Marines are sharing their stories and these are their opinions and emotions. They do not speak for the Marine Corps, as a whole, and their comments are not intended to be representative of all Marines across all military occupational specialties.

### **Conduct of Interviews**

While conducting the required dual Marine Corps and Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board approval process, I established that each interview would be completed in between 45 – 70 minutes. I was able to keep to these times lines for all interviews. Prior to starting each interview, I began with several minutes of rapport-building to develop / reestablish trust and create an open and safe environment in which the interviewees would feel comfortable sharing. I wanted to let the participants know the research we are doing together could allow me to positively affect future PME opportunities for them and their Marines in my next position at the Training and Education Command (TECOM). I interviewed four Enlisted Marines (two female and two male) who have experience with Enlisted PME in order to ascertain their feelings and emotions throughout this process and to determine if they believe there are methods we can employ to better serve their educational needs. Because my physical location was thousands of miles away from my participants, all of my interviews were conducted



via Facetime or other video chat opportunities. I conducted two sets of interviews per Marine. I was to analyze the first data set to determine what other areas may need to be explored prior to the second interview. This would also allow me to make any minor course corrections needed while giving me an early quality check on the research, at that point. I then conducted the second interviews, coded and analyze the data.

In order to ensure a varied scope of answers, I utilized a mix of questioning styles to include the following in addition to other / follow-on questions: grand tour questions, contrast questions, descriptive questions, structural questions, and task-related questions. I directly transcribed the interviewees' comments in real time, during our conversations. Because I was typing in real-time, I utilized shorthand and made many small clerical errors. However, once the individual interview was over, I went over each report very thoroughly to correct all clerical errors and to ensure I had captured the participant's story as accurately as possible. I then emailed my corrected version of the interview report to each participant and asked that they inspect the report to ensure that I had not mischaracterized any of their statements and that the words utilized were theirs, not mine. Once I had confirmation that each report was an accurate representation of our conversations, I sent each participant a copy of a member check document I created and that had been approved by both the Marine Corps and Texas A&M University Institutional Review Boards. This was required and accomplished in order to establish trustworthiness in this study and to have a written record of each participant acknowledging that the words utilized in the reports were their own.

I started with a pool of 16 questions that I could ask each of my participants. However, I also allowed time for follow-on questions when the need arose. Below I have included sample questions from our interviews:

## Interview Questions

1. Can you describe a typical day in your life as a Marine and how Professional Military Education (PME) fits into that day?
2. What were some of the fears or emotions you may have experienced over the years with regard to PME?
3. Tell me about your thoughts on the conduct and facilitation of Enlisted PME in today's Marine Corps.
4. Can you describe the type of relationship and/or rapport you typically find with your past PME instructors?
5. Can you describe what it is like to balance required PME with your job and other academic ventures?
6. What were some of the fears or emotions you may have experienced with regard to civilian education?
7. How has Enlisted PME prepared you for civilian academic ventures?
8. If you believe there are areas of Enlisted PME that need to be improved, where would you focus and why?
9. What are some of the items with which you had to contend to ensure you completed your required PME on time / in time for promotion?
10. Can you talk about some of the positive and negative emotions and attributes you have found while participating in Enlisted PME?
11. Tell me about your thoughts on what the Marine Corps should be doing differently to ensure Marines are better prepared for the rigors of civilian institutions of higher learning.
12. Tell me about your thoughts on the Marine Corps' ability to ensure gender and cultural inclusivity in PME programs.
13. Can you describe what it means to you to have Marine Corps PME Instructors that understand you from a gender or cultural stance?
14. Can you describe how it feels to NOT have Marine Corps PME Instructors that understand you from a gender or cultural stance?
15. Tell me about your thoughts on the idea of including international students in Enlisted PME like the Marine Corps has for years in Officer PME?

16. Describe how it would feel to know that Enlisted PME was preparing you for civilian education in addition to enforcing military proficiency doctrines.

Photo Elicitation is another method I have utilized during this qualitative study. Photo elicitation can create an external trigger that is meaningful and can aid in the development of powerful dialog between the researcher and participants (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 52). I asked each of my participants to select one or two photos that reminded them of their time with Enlisted PME. I then asked them to describe what this photo made them think about? Where were their emotions? In most cases, this photo elicitation method produced outstanding and vivid recollections of the participants' time with PME. Additionally, I believe these photos bring a better depth of understanding of what Marine Corps PME is understood to be to those unfamiliar with this portion of military life.

The photo elicitation section of the study was not conducted perfectly. Although I asked several times for each participant to select at least one photo for the photo elicitation, I still had one participant from whom I never received a photo for the study. As most qualitative researchers could most likely attest, research is a messy business and in the end, these participants are busy active duty Marines, who were doing this research team a favor by participating. So, this is a failure on the part of the primary researcher and is considered to be the cost of doing business.

### **Analysis Methods**

#### **Computer Software**

After having been exposed to coding software in the past, I was convinced of its value in qualitative research. Utilizing ATLAS.ti software, I was able to upload all participant interview documents into the program. Through this program, one is able to select individual quotations

and assign a custom-made code to each. As the researcher moves through each document, the program tracks all codes and links each individual quote with each code. As one adds new codes, the system saves each of those for easy access via drop-down window. Once the coding for all interview reports had been accomplished, there are several tools accessible for organizing the data.

Through this process, I was able to identify 54 individual codes and linked those to 325 individual quotations. Then, by utilizing the “Project Explorer” tab, was able to identify the top 16 occurring codes (codes with at least ten occasions). This made the data analysis process much quicker. Additionally, by utilizing this coding software, I was able to quickly identify and reference any codes or quotations at any given time. The software also served as an outstanding tool for storage without the mess and cumbersome nature of pen and paper.

### **Other Analysis Methods**

Once the software had created a listing of all my codes and number of occurrences, I was able to print a report, highlight, and rank each code in order to identify where my energy needed to be focused. See *Figure 1.1 Code Occurrence Report* below.

Codes (54)	
◇ A Check in the Box	13
◇ Acknowledged difference between Officer and Enlisted PME	2
◇ Apprehension Towards Civilian Education	4
◇ Appropriate (civilian) Grading Feedback	6
◇ Challenges with Civilian Education	4
◇ Curriculum Changes Needed	22
◇ Daily Responsibilities	11
◇ Difference in Treatment due to Gender	29
◇ Importance of Civilian Education	7
◇ Importance of Female Instructors	2
◇ Importance of Joint Service PME	3
◇ Lack of College Prep through PME	6
◇ Lack of Cultural Diversity	6
◇ Lack of Gender Diversity	1
◇ Lack of support due to Gender of Instructors	3
◇ Lack of Value in PME	23
◇ Males not Responsible for Same Knowledge (Female Regs)	8
◇ Manpower Shortfalls Affect PME	7
◇ Need for Civilian Ed Prep in PME	20
◇ Need for International Students in PME	15
◇ Need for Leadership Training	2
◇ Need for Social/Networking Skills	10
◇ Need to take care of junior Marines	2
◇ Neutral Gender / Cultural Experiences with PME	10
◇ Neutral Gender Experiences at PME.	0
◇ No Value to Primary Occupational Specialty	4
◇ Neutral Gender Experiences at PME	0
◇ PME Can Teach Leadership Skills	1
◇ PME had Group Work	2
◇ PME Instructor / Student Rapport	7
◇ PME Instructor Quality	4
◇ PME is Professionally Conducted	9
◇ PME Lack of Applicability to Non-Infantry Related MOS	20
◇ PME Lack of Discussion / Feedback	3
◇ Poor Instructional Methods	10
◇ Positive Gender and Cultural Experiences at PME	4
◇ Positive Gender Experiences at PME	6
◇ Resident Lack of Civilian Professional Development	1
◇ Resident Lack of Seat Availability	4
◇ Resident Less Student Teacher Rapport	2
◇ Resident Loss of Work Productivity	22
◇ Resident too Inconvenient	10
◇ Resident too PT Focused	7
◇ Seminar Better Discussions	2
◇ Seminar Better for Productivity	10
◇ Seminar More Appropriately Focused	5
◇ Seminar More Civilian-Professional	3
◇ Seminar MOS Mix was Positive	1
◇ Seminar Smaller Class Size	2
◇ Sister Services Doing a Better Job with Curriculum	1
◇ Struggle to Balance Work with All Education	45
◇ Value of PME	10
◇ Value only to Infantry Related MOS	9
◇ Worries About Civilian Preparation	3

Figure 1.1 Code Occurrence Report

At that point, I was able to examine the quotations linked to these important codes via a code occurrence table that had been filtered for a specific code. This is depicted in *Figure 1.2*.

Filter quotations, which are coded with code <b>Curriculum Changes Needed</b>				
#	Name	Text Content	Document	Codes
1:52	We really need to revisit the curriculum	We really need t...	Participant 1 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
1:53	What is the most important things they...	What is the mos...	Participant 1 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
1:54	If we are trying to learn how to lead an...	If we are trying t...	Participant 1 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
1:62	The need audio visual experience.	The need audio...	Participant 1 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
1:63	(In my college experience) Everything i...	(In my college e...	Participant 1 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
1:64	Use of MyDrive for Google Groups, Top...	Use of MyDrive...	Participant 1 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
1:65	We took exams online. Nothing is on p...	We took exams...	Participant 1 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
1:72	Are our topics hitting home? Do I care...	Are our topics hi...	Participant 1 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
1:74	However, will this make me a better lea...	However, will thi...	Participant 1 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
2:34	I'd focus on the content.	I'd focus on the...	Participant 2 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
2:35	It is too focused on the ground-side.	It is too focused...	Participant 2 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
2:36	That's important, but they would have...	That's important...	Participant 2 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
2:37	Things like that are applicable across al...	Things like that...	Participant 2 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
3:31	So, the first thing I would change is the...	So, the first thin...	Participant 3 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
4:37	Okay, so I would say from my exposure...	Okay, so I would...	Participant 4 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
4:42	Psychology – We are supposed to know...	Psychology – W...	Participant 4 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
4:43	There appears to be a generational gap...	There appears t...	Participant 4 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
4:44	Me being a dinosaur, I have to bring my...	Me being a dino...	Participant 4 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
4:45	If we had some psychology courses in...	If we had some...	Participant 4 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
4:48	It is more likely that I will never have to...	It is more likely t...	Participant 4 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
7:10	Other branches (Army, Navy, Airforce)...	Other branches...	Participant 4 Int...	Curriculum Cha...
7:26	However, someone with preconceived i...	However, someo...	Participant 4 Int...	Curriculum Cha...

*Figure 1.2 Code and Quotation Report*

As I made my way through each of these major codes, I began the process of grouping them into major themes and categories, by hand. I categorized them as either positive, negative, or mixed emotions. I then developed the codes into the following over-arching themes of : Short-Term Value of PME; Long Term-Value of PME, Need for Equity/Fairness of PME; and Anxieties with Regard to Time.

Once I had completed coding, categorizing, and developing themes for my research, I connected my laptop to a second screen, and pulled-up all four initial interview reports at the

same time. I then combed through every question for each report at the same time, in order to identify themes that might be more apparent when looking at them in context, away from the charts and reports, themselves. As I began to build the narrative for the results of the interview process, I wanted to utilize specific quotes from the participants to ensure their words help tell the story of this study's findings. As I was conducting this side by side comparison, I endeavored to discover yet to be identified themes that I might have missed, thus far. I continued to examine the data multiple times until I felt I had reached my culminating point with a complete saturation of information. These steps were again repeated for the second round of interviews. It is important to note, that due to operational commitments and scheduling issues that arose with one of my participants, I could only conduct a second interview with three of my four active duty Marine participants.

### **Data Management**

Throughout the course of this study, from the beginnings of the institutional review board to the data collection/analysis procedures, all data records pertaining to the study have been managed and kept safe on a Duo authenticated and password-protected computer. Additionally, these items have been kept under lock and key while at my personal residence. Upon completion of this research and successful defense of this Masters Thesis, all records and applicable data will be safely stored under lock and key at Texas A&M University, Harrington Tower Room 308A for three years as required by Texas A&M Institutional Review Board policies and procedures.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Participants**

As previously mentioned, my participants were comprised of two female Marines and two male Marines, all of which have made a career in the Marine Corps. Though gaining permission to contact these Marines through the appropriate channels and with the approval of the Marine Corps Institutional Review Board was a lengthy process, once I had that permission, I knew a fairly small group of Marines to whom I wanted to send my participant recruitment emails. It is important to note that all the participants in this study currently work in Marine Corps aviation-related Military Occupational Specialties (MOS). The importance of this fact will become more evident as the discussion of the emerging themes progresses.

I have been careful to protect the identity of my participants in order to ensure they are never in danger of any reprisal for their participation in this study and to encourage more honest answers during the interview process. To accomplish this, each participant was given a pseudonym. Additionally, the only items created that could tie these individuals' identity to this study are the member checks and the informed consent documents. The latter of which was not required because this study has a "Not Human Research" determination, but I have included as best practices for qualitative research. I have partially redacted both sets of documents for the participants' identity protection. The participants in this study were also carefully chosen to ensure they were not disgruntled, first-term Marines with an "axe to grind," but those who have dedicated their lives to the Marine Corps and want to see it succeed. I believe the stories and opinions shared by these individuals to be a frank and honest representation of their true feelings on the subjects covered.



## **Participant Vignettes**

Andrew is a 32 year old career Marine with over 13.5 years of service. His primary MOS is in the aviation maintenance field and he has also completed his bachelor's degree. He is known to be a high performer in his field. He is married with children and has been stationed across the United States and Japan.

Casey is a 40 year old career Marine with 20 years and 8 months of service. She is preparing for her upcoming retirement from the Marine Corps. She also has completed her bachelor's degree. She has held multiple military occupational specialties in her career and has an outstanding work history. She is engaged and has children in the home.

Patti is a 41 year old career Marine with over 17 years of service. Her primary MOS is in the aviation supply field and she is well respected by her juniors and seniors alike. She has yet to complete her college degree. She plans to retire at 20 years of service and start college at that time. She is also engaged and has children in the home.

Robert is a 37 year old with over 17 years of service. His primary MOS is also in the aviation maintenance field and he has almost completed his bachelor's degree. He is also known to be a high performer in his field and is the head of a Division with 64 Marines under his charge. He is married with children and has been stationed across the United States.

## **Emerging Themes from Interviews**

Before the specific emerging themes are discussed, I wanted to highlight the fact there were many subjects breached that this study did not intend to discover. There were surprises. However, that is why qualitative research is important. The researcher must let the data from the interviews tell the participant stories as they are, not as we would like them to appear. Though this study did find plenty of correlation between what the literature has shown as areas in Marine

Corps PME in need of attention, adjustment, or updating, there have also been other revelations that need and deserve to be examined. It should also be stated that career Marines who want to be promoted and continue their service must be self-driven. In order to succeed they must maintain a high quality of performance of their duties, manage their work centers, and balance family life. The following themes that were exposed through this research appear to consistently echo these personal and professional concerns.

## **Value of PME**

### **Short-Term Value**

#### **Struggle to Balance Work With All Education**

Through the data analysis of these qualitative interviews, 325 individual quotations were linked to 54 separate codes. The most common code among all was the “Struggle to Balance Work with All Education,” to include PME. As the researcher, I could see and hear how stressful this was for them by their mannerisms and inflection. All of the participants understand the need to complete their PME for various reasons. They must have it complete in order to be competitive for promotion, they need to set the example for their junior Marines, and they recognize that there is some value to the PME itself. However, trying to find the time to accomplish this requirement when working in high tempo military occupational specialties, working upwards of 12 hour days, while taking care of their family, it becomes a source of anxiety. As noted by Andrew, “At one point, I was taking two college courses, taking PME, and running my actual duties at my command. I was up every day at 0400 to read and then go to work” (Andrew, Question 4, p. 2). Not all Marines have the capacity, talent, or drive to work this hard in order to complete PME and work towards a degree. In fact, it is more likely that

many would just have to choose and put college off until they leave the service. When asked what it was like to balance required PME with their job and other academic ventures, Casey said,

In a word, “difficult.” As you become more senior and in positions of leadership, it is tough to get away from your requirements. Meanwhile (if you do go to PME), your job in the rear doesn’t stop and you still have to find a way to manage to ensure that everything is being carried-out effectively in your absence. You still have inspections and deadlines that need to be met. By the time you make it back home, you have to play catch-up (Casey, Question 4, p. 2).

Some of the participants recognized that PME is only a benefit to them while in the Marine Corps and have put their civilian education ahead of their Marine Corps education requirements. They see more intrinsic value in civilian education. Robert specifically mentioned this and stated, “PME is important. However, my time in the Marine Corps is limited to 20-30 years. So, I did place more emphasis on college as opposed to PME, as it will benefit me outside the Marine Corps. I have a family to support” (Robert, Question 4, p. 2). This is a decision with which all Marines must contend. Many feel the need to choose either civilian education or Marine Corps education because their particular MOS and command operational tempo does not allow for a typical Marine to accomplish both. Some military occupational specialties enjoy a much lighter workload than others and over the course of a 20 year career, that can mean the difference between retiring with no degree or a doctorate. Patti has struggled to find the time for college at all during her 17 years of service.

I haven’t started college, but if I have PME that needs to get done, it has to be either before or after work. There is no way to get this done during work hours. I’ll proctor my Marine’s PME exams. It’s a team effort but there is no way I could have time for

that. I can't even afford to let my Marines go to Resident PME due to our operational tempo. So, they have to go to a Resident Seminar most times (Patti, Question 4, p. 2).

### **A Check in the Box**

While all of the participants made it clear that they understood PME is important for networking, camaraderie in some cases, and to reestablish Marines' appreciation for Marine Corps doctrines, the idea that PME was mostly just a "check in the box" for promotion, was also held by all.

The Sergeant's Course formatting and curriculum felt like a check in the box. They crammed a bunch us into a class and they were covering things which 60% percent didn't apply to our primary MOS. You're in a class of 70 - 80 Marines and less than 10-12 of those were Infantry. However, the majority of what we are learning is infantry-focused. Warfighting roots, tactics, call-for-fire, land navigation and yet no applicability to leading Aviation Marines, none of it really focused on being a better overall leader (Andrew, Question 2, p. 1).

The idea that every 3-4 years career Marines in specialties outside of infantry have to drop what they're doing to go learn ground tactics again, appears multiple times. These Marines understand that this is the way of the Marine Corps, but that understanding doesn't change the fact they have to learn infantry tactics to promote in their MOS that has nothing to do with infantry. Yet, Infantry Marines do not need to know anything about their aviation MOS to promote. As Patti noted, "Resident is all ground-side training and there is very little that benefit me as a Airwing Staff Non Commissioned Officer" (Patti, Question 2, p. 1). She later expounded a bit more on this subject,

It seems there is too much time spent trying to learn ground-side, as opposed to approaching other MOSs and covering things that we all deal with: awards and uniform regulations. I still do not have a single male Marine that can inspect female uniforms. Because they don't know hair regulations or nail regulations (Patti, Question 5, p. 2).

When I asked Casey what emotions she experienced with PME over the years, she flatly said, Honestly, "contempt." It made me angry that I had to balance PME with my career knowing that I would not learn anything that would better my career or make me a stronger, more effective Marine leader. But in order to be promotion eligible, I had to get the 'check in the box' requirement of PME (Casey, Interview 2, Question 1, p. 1).

To be fair, Casey went on to mention that she did enjoy the break from her responsibilities and the camaraderie found at Resident PME, as there were also a lot of good networking opportunities to be found. So, it must be made clear that these Marines were not completely negative about their PME experiences. However, they all expressed similar concerns over curriculum that will be addressed in the conclusion section of this thesis.

### **Poor Instructional Methods**

Instructional methods were a topic that arose somewhat organically without any prompting or mention of that subject. These comments came out while discussing what the Marine Corps could be doing to better prepare Marines for the rigors of civilian education. Patti explained,

They (PME Instructors) give you specific things that you're going to have to learn via the training guide. Don't forget this sentence (foot stomp), ... It may be on the test. But they don't really teach you anything. Public Speaking for example: They tell you to go learn this subject in an hour. Then go give a public speech on it. Then, they just tell you

what you did wrong and they move on. There was no teaching. Just checking boxes (Patti, Question 7, p. 3-4).

The “foot stomp” is something with which every Marine who has attended PME is familiar. It tends to almost be a Marine colloquialism of sorts. It is essentially the “pay attention, this is a test question” move that is shared by many Marine Corps instructors. When asked about student / teacher rapport, Robert said, “For the most part, in my experience it is sit down and regurgitate. The instructors are preaching and we are to regurgitate” (Robert, Question 3, p. 2).

The lecture method is and has been a valuable tool in education for thousands of years, however, with so many methods available to educators today, this should definitely not be the sole / predominate method in all situations. This is not to say that all instructors are blindly going through the motions and it is also important to state that these participants last attended PME a few years ago. As this study has previously mentioned, there are many changes underway and more planned for the future, but these experiences with instructional methods were shared by most of these participants.

Robert did have some positive things to say about his instructors. He went on to mention, “If a student has an actual question, the instructors will stop and answer questions. The instructors seem to get more job satisfaction out of their jobs through this interaction with the students” (Robert, Question 3, p. 2). As Robert pointed-out, student / teacher rapport is important and the back-and-forth discussions can bring a much more rewarding experience for all involved, as opposed to recitation and regurgitation.

## **Long-Term Value**

### **Lack of Value in PME**

Lack of long-term value in the PME experience was something that concerned the participants across the board. To them, it appears they are learning curriculum that will not benefit them in their occupational specialties in the Marine Corps, nor will it benefit them once they leave the Marine Corps for their second career. As three of the four participants are quickly approaching retirement, the culmination of all these years with PME was becoming clear.

When asked about what the Marine Corps could be doing differently to prepare them for the rigors of civilian education, Patti said,

I couldn't tell you one thing I learned from PME. My Corporal just finished Corporal's Course. I asked them what they remembered. "I learned nothing but how to do PRO and CONs (Proficiency and Conduct Marks)" After six weeks, that was the only thing she could tell me she learned. (3 weeks ago). We could have learned everything we needed in three weeks (at Staff NCO Advanced Career Course). We were just wasting money and time (Patti, Question 7, p. 3).

Time is another theme that will be discussed later in this report, but the time lost to Resident PME that could have been better spent with the participants' actual job and responsibilities was echoed numerous times throughout the interviews. Robert mentioned his frustration with the lack of long-term value of PME, "I have a family to support. Staff Academy isn't going to do me any good after I retire. So, I placed a large emphasis on off-duty education" (Robert, Question 4, p. 2). He went on to mention that if there were more applicability in his daily routine, he would have sought PME more aggressively.

For example there are topics that I wish we discussed such as the Total Force Structure Concept. How does manning get funded? Who is in charge of creating the Table of Organization (TO&E), Staffing Goals? Currently, my section operates at a 19 Marine deficit. It becomes hard to understand why we are forced to operate so short-handed. If we better understood total force structure it would help us better understand when these Marines are coming and when units “stand-down” how does this effect the occupational field structure for manning requirements (Robert, Question 6, p. 3).

This comment leads this thesis to the next issue that arose numerous times. The need for curriculum changes in PME

### **Curriculum Changes Needed**

In order for Marines to appreciate potential long-term value in PME, the curriculum must be updated and changed to address more than just another round of infantry-based doctrinal lessons. The curriculum needs to have inherent value that applies to the leadership roles these Marines currently hold and should be preparing them for other educational endeavors. Andrew describes this situation.

I don't think that PME prepares you in any way for success in a civilian education.

PME is tailored to only make you a sharper Marine. It doesn't carry over to civilian workforce and civilian life. We are spending time learning a doctrine that has long since been put in place. There is no room for questioning. No back and forth in regards to the principles behind it. There is no room for dialog (Andrew, Question 5, page 2).

This is a concern for many career Marines. They need to complete PME to be considered a proficient Marine who is ready for promotion, but shouldn't they be learning skills that also advance their life goals outside the Marine Corps? Andrew later noted,



We were not teaching Marines how to be professional citizens / civilians, only Marines. Maybe this is just short-sighted. When our time is over, what's left? I would wonder what the success rate is for a two-term, 10 year Sergeant or Staff Sergeant when they get out. I would venture that most First-Term Marines get out to go to college, but aren't prepared to professionally present themselves in an academic environment (Andrew, Question 5, p. 3).

Andrew was not alone with his concerns with regard to curriculum. When asked if she believed there are areas of PME that need to be improved, Casey responded with,

I'd focus on the content. It is too focused on the ground-side. That's important, but they would have better use of their time teaching us Command Profile, leadership, how to navigate MCTFS, basic Microsoft classes, excel classes, learning how to pull reports from multiple sources and present that data. Things like that are applicable across all MOS's (Casey, Question 6 p. 2).

While discussing these issues with Robert, he made a few points that really sums-up the need for civilian teaching methods and more exposure to what is to be expected when Marines step into a civilian college classroom. As noted by Robert,

I think college should play a bigger part of promotion. It plays a big part in exposing the Marines to the expectations of the civilian sector. Case in point, I have juniors sign-up for a college class, but they don't understand APA, MLA for a paper. They are starting at ground zero. PME should be developing these skills. Bibliographies, References and the like (Robert, Question 8, page 4).

Ample further examples can be found throughout the interviews to showcase the participant's feelings that there are more important subjects that should be added to the curriculum or that

should replace some of the tactical knowledge that is currently the focus of Marine Corps Terminal Learning Objectives (TLOs) and Enabling Learning Objectives (ELOs).

### **Need for International Students in Enlisted PME**

To be fair, this theme did arise due to a questions directly relating to international students in Enlisted PME. However, the responses were notable and important for this discussion. When asked their thoughts on including international students in Enlisted PME, all four participants had positive feedback in regard to this. Andrew noted, “I think that’d be Brilliant! We need to. Our ability to interact and understand someone else’s culture is important and we are failing at that” (Andrew, Question 9, p. 4). When discussing this with Casey, she said “I think it’s a good idea to have foreign nationals, as well. If you’ve had experience with another culture, when deployed to their country, that would be greatly helpful” (Casey, Question 9, p. 3). I think Casey saw this as also another networking opportunity, which as was pointed-out during the literature review for this thesis.

Having been overseas several times, Robert also saw this as a way to better prepare Marines in understanding other cultures, so they could / would conduct themselves more appropriately while on deployments.

Absolutely, this would be great for cultural awareness. Marines are very narrow-minded and into their own culture. There is a complete disconnect between the civilian and the international sector. You see this when you go overseas. There is a lack of understanding of cultural differences and this sometimes results in international incidences (like in Okinawa, Japan) (Robert, Question 9, p. 4).

## **Anxieties With Regard to Time**

As one could surmise by reading between the lines in some of the other comments by the participants, the loss of time due to attending Resident PME, specifically has been breached several times. The time lost for PME is also time taken from family in order to travel to the academy sites and the four to eight weeks spent there. This time is taking them away from their already “short-handed” work centers, away from inspections / deployment preparations, and time that could be spent learning skills that could help them in their current specialty or future career outside the Marine Corps. As Andrew put it,

The Resident course puts (brings) everything to a screeching halt. You are no longer in your specialty and someone else has to take-up your slack. You only focus in on the PME stuff (Andrew, Question 4, p. 2).

These participants were all very dedicated to their jobs and the performance of their units. That was clear to see / hear as they described why Resident PME was so inconvenient. It wasn't that they didn't want to prepare physically or that they just didn't feel like going. They knew that they're juniors and leaders would struggle to make mission in their absence. Casey described it as such,

You always have to fight tooth and nail to get a seat allocation and permission to be away from your squadron for several weeks. Meanwhile, your job in the rear doesn't stop and you still have to find a way to manage to ensure that everything is being carried out effectively in your absence. (Casey, Question 4, p. 2).

As a Division Chief with several different work centers and over 60 Marines under his charge, Robert was very concerned about leaving his responsibilities on the shoulders of his Marines so he could attend another Resident PME. Robert noted,

If I went to Resident Course I had to know that my duties were able to be accomplished by my subordinates, and was sure that my work center didn't fail and that we could be ready for deployments... This would be on my shoulders as I am culpable for my Division and work centers (Robert, Question 7, p. 3).

The take away from this section is that if the Marine Corps is going to make PME a requirement for promotion, it needs to be applicable enough and convenient enough for the end user (Marines) so they can complete it satisfactorily and still manage to maintain effective mission support in high tempo occupational specialties.

### **Need for Equity / Fairness of PME**

Throughout the conversations with the participants, it was easy to see that these individuals were professional and did not want to be perceived as complaining, but rather wanted to help improve the conduct and outcome of Enlisted PME for future generations. When the discussion of gender or culture issues arose, there were mixed responses. As it is important to share all perspectives, this thesis will endeavor to do that here.

When asked to describe the type of rapport she typically found with her past PME instructors, Patti said,

I liked the instructors, but I was the only female in Staff NCO, period. There was a difference in the way I was treated. They tiptoe about projects that were scheduled for after-hours PME. I would get the "Oh we got this, you don't have to go." There was definitely a separation between myself and the others. That was coming from both students and staff. Even with PT, there was no one my size, so I just didn't participate in certain events. They'd tell me to just go for a run because they were going to be doing fireman carries or buddy drags (Patti, Question 3, p. 1-2).

The situation described here is sure to be a fairly common one. The instructor cannot be held directly responsible for the fact that there was only one female in the class and that there was no male close enough to her size for her to have a partner for specific events, but the school should have been aware. Perhaps there should always be an even number of female students to ensure this type of situation doesn't occur. If there had been a female instructor, perhaps she could have been her partner. However, these are the types of issues female Marines deal with that male Marines do not. This is not to say that the male Marines or Instructor intentionally left Patti out, but this is exactly why studies like this on a larger scale are needed.

Casey had a different experience with PME, but had seen gender issues in her daily life as a Marine.

I have experienced double-standards in previous duty assignments and almost Requested Mast over it. Standards that applied to females didn't seem to apply to males that were part of the 'good ole boy network,' so long as you had the personal approval of one or two individuals in positions of power, but that was never the case in PME (Casey, Question 2 Interview 2, p. 1).

Casey's experience with PME was positive and professional but over the years had seen issues outside of PME. She also mentioned another story that was found to be interesting and important to explain how gender issues can swing the other way and further implies the importance of more female faculty at PME courses.

I did have a female instructor in Sergeant's Course. I felt like her presence was good for the male instructors. Because no matter what, you are going to have those females (meaning students in this capacity) that are going to use their sexuality to try and get ahead of / over on male Marines. One of the female students went to a male instructor

and said she could not go on the run because she was on her period. He didn't know any better, so she didn't have to run. Which is ridiculous and gave the rest of the females in the course a stigma – yet another reason for male Marines to think we don't belong in the USMC. So, I do believe that it's important to have them (female instructors) there in every school, not only to protect the females in the class, but to protect the male instructors (Casey, Question 3, Interview 2, p. 1).

The issue of cultural diversity and gender diversity was breached with the all the participants. Robert, who is a person of color, had some insights that are important to examine. When asked about how the Marine Corps is doing with cultural inclusivity and if it's important to have instructors that understand students from a cultural perspective, he responded with the following.

You don't see as many Marines from different cultural backgrounds. These Marines with a Muslim last name, and who practice a Muslim religion, just aren't around much. I would put my cultural differences behind me. However, because I have a last name that looks to be Muslim, sometimes they ask questions that could be misconstrued as insensitive, but I don't see it that way. To me, it doesn't matter who the hell the instructor is.. I'm a Staff NCO and I can learn from anyone. Maybe some students may bring their own ignorance to the classroom, but to me it doesn't matter (Robert, Question 2 Interview 2, p. 1).

This Thesis discovered many other less notable themes and I encourage those who read this thesis to take the time to read through the actual interview reports for more details into the lived experiences with PME of these career Marines.

## Photo Elicitations

<b>B. BILLET DESCRIPTION</b> -Pass all performance evaluations in military studies. -Pass all performance evaluations in leadership studies. -Fall all performance evaluations in warfighting studies.
<b>C. BILLET ACCOMPLISHMENTS</b>

*Figure 1.3 Screen Shot of Andrew's Fitness Report from Sergeant's Course*

### Andrew Photo 1

#### **What memories does this photo bring up? What were your feelings during this moment?**

So, looking at this photo of the Sections B and C comments of my Fitness Report, all it says is passed, no accomplishments listed. All it says is passed...the epitome of a check in the box, whereas with the blended program, we stayed at the unit on Wednesday nights and started about 1730-1800 for three hours. We spent time talking about leadership struggles we're having. It was real-time applicable to what we were doing in our current jobs. It also allowed me to apply anything we learned the next day at work. It was a more holistic system. I think one of the biggest constraints with PME was trying to send Marines away for 4-8 weeks when we were already short-handed. So, we were able to keep the Marines there while ultimately being able to provide a better product and not just a check in the box.

### **Casey Photo 1**

**Photo Removed to Protect PII**

**What memories does this photo bring up? What were your feelings during this moment?**

Pain. We had just finished a Pinnacle Physical Training exercise. We ran the Obstacle Course twice, had a run through the woods, low crawls, fireman carries, and litter carries. It was meant to be a team-building event, but it was so painful. It was not team-building and I was just glad it was over.

### **Casey Photo 2**

**Photo Removed to Protect PII**

**What does this photo make you think about? Where are your emotions?**

Looking at the photo is the pinnacle of getting through the PME experience. This is the graduation photo and I was very happy to be going back to my squadron.

### **Patti Photo 1**

**Photo Removed to Protect PII**

**What memories does this photo bring up? What were your feelings during this moment?**

This was right before we were going to compete our final Combat Fitness Test. So, like always, there was a lot of anxiety about the pain and discomfort to come.



## CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS

This research was conducted to explore the quality of Enlisted Professional Military Education and to identify areas that might be in need of redesigning in order to better prepare Enlisted Marines emotionally and academically to further the likelihood of improved formal education success in the realms of institutions of higher learning, while on active duty and as members of the civilian workforce. Over the course of this study, several areas of interest have been identified as most in need of attention through research into the literature and the conduct and analysis of four phenomenological interviews with career Marine Staff Non Commissioned Officers.

### **Diversity of Instructional Methods**

One of the first items was the need for more diversity in instructional methods. As noted in the excerpt from the Navy Instructor's Course, the majority of classes are taught through the lecture method and that is absolutely where instructor schools focus their attention. This was echoed by the participants as well. Robert, specifically noted, "The instructors are preaching and we are to regurgitate" (Robert, Question 3, p. 2). The lecture method is not without its merits, but instructors cannot blindly build lesson plans where they lecture for 50 minutes, give a 10 minute bathroom break, then repeat all day. There needs to be more engaging methods to keep adults interested and ready to learn.

### **Resident PME**

Every one of the participants had negative things to say about Resident PME. They are all division leaders with many Marines under their supervision. They have the responsibility to

ensure the success of not only their divisions, but the success of every one of their Marines. This is daunting and time-consuming. With Marines in Airwing military occupational specialties, it becomes incredibly difficult to balance the operational tempo and long hours associated with a successful division, with a family and civilian education. When they add 6-8 weeks of Resident PME on top of that, something is going to fall through the cracks. The fear of who was going to cover their responsibilities while they were out, was palpable.

The biggest complaint, aside from time away from their actual duties while at PME, was about the content of the curriculum. These career Marines understand that the Marine Corps is different and grasp the notion that “every Marine is a rifleman.” However, is it still necessary for career non-infantry Marines to learn ground-side tactics every two – four years their entire career? I believe this was the most frustrating item discussed.

Throughout a career, non-infantry Marines will be exposed to and tested on ground-side training at: Recruit Training; Marine Combat Training; Lance Corporal’s Seminar; Corporal’s Course; Sergeant’s School; Staff NCO Academy; and Advanced Staff NCO Academy just in their first fifteen to twenty years. That is upwards of 35 to 40 weeks of ground-side tactical training for Marines that have less than a 1 percent chance of ever firing a weapon at an enemy. They understand that these schools can be good for camaraderie and networking. Some even mentioned that they enjoy the break from the high tempo of their usual responsibilities. However, maybe it’s time to have a frank discussion about the value of these classes for career Marines in non-infantry related military occupational specialties.

There are many options to tweak the curriculum to better suit all Marine MOSs. Perhaps after Sergeant’s School, Staff NCO Academies could be more focused on business leadership, program management, Microsoft proficiency, communication skills, inter-office political

landscapes, team collaboration, or introduction to psychology. As mentioned by Robert, psychology would better prepare Marine leaders for dealing with this new generation of Marines. The audience for Staff NCO academies are individuals who are already in management and need to be gaining skills that will also benefit them outside the Marine Corps. Imagine the excitement and fervor with which these Marines would engage with Staff NCO academies if they knew they were going to be learning business skills that they could implement immediately in their current profession and beyond, as oppose to another ground-side / PT (physical training) academy.

If the Marine Corps is going to put their division productivity and mission support at risk to send these leaders to Resident PME, it has to be worth their time away from family and responsibilities. If the Marine Corps is not going to change the curriculum from solely infantry-based training, then it should be shortened. If these Marines are going to be forced to attend another tactical refresher course, then there should be a shortened (executive) version for those who have non-infantry specialties.

Lack of scaffolding and discussions was also mentioned among the participants. In Resident it appears that keeping to the schedule was paramount and that there were missed opportunities for learning. As previously mentioned by Patti,

Public Speaking for example: They tell you to go learn this subject in an hour. Then go give a public speech on it. Then, they just tell you what you did wrong and they move on. There was no teaching. Just checking boxes (Patti, Question 7, p. 3).

This is where proper scaffolding could have aided this student in understanding proper public speaking, but there wasn't time on the schedule for that. The lack of discussion time at Resident course was also noted by Andrew, "There is no room for questioning. No back and forth in

regards to the principles behind it. There is no room for dialog. Seminar did a better job of that” (Andrew, Question 5, p. 3).

### **Resident Seminar**

Resident Seminar PME was very well received and it appears that if the Marine Corps is intent on Resident PME still being considered as “more valuable than Non-Resident,” then the Resident Seminar is a good happy medium for all involved. The participants liked the fact that the Seminar could be accomplished after work hours and at home. There was no travel involved and no weeks away from the office and family, so the Marine Corps is saving manhours and money while keeping Staff NCO’s happy in the process. The discussions in the Seminar were also of value to our participants and allowed them to discuss current issues they are facing with those of different occupational specialties, so they could see their problems and solutions through a different lens.

Additionally, the participants liked the Seminar for the business casual attire. Even though they knew the instructor was a First Sergeant, because she or he was dressed in business attire, they felt less intimidated, more welcome to ask questions, and really got into the group discussions at hand. All of that to say, the more available the Marine Corps can make these Resident Seminars, the better.

### **Gender and Culture Inclusivity Issues**

This study did ask a couple direct questions about gender and cultural issues. Some of the feedback was surprising and some not. One of the female participants mentioned that even as late as 2015, she was still treated differently at Staff NCO academy because she was a female. This could be due to the fact that she was the only female, she had no female instructors, or just

insensitivity and lack of attention to details by the school staff. Either way, she left Staff Academy feeling like she wasn't part of the group and wasn't able to participate in certain physical training events due to her small stature. One would hope this is the exception these days. However, it is paramount that Marine Corps leadership is ensuring that they are doing all that can be done through planning and supervision to never let this type of situation affect other female Marines.

Another female participant identified no issues at Staff Academy due to her being female, but that the lack of female instructors had caused male Marine instructors to make bad decisions in regard to female issues. It is due to both of these situations that the Marine Corps must assign female instructors to each PME Academy. I was not able to retrieve an accurate number of females currently employed as PME instructors, but even if we are matching the actual ratio of females in the Marines Corps (5% to 9%), we might need to increase that number to "right this ship."

All of the participants saw the value in and wanted to have international students added to Enlisted PME courses. They understood the advantages of having the ability to learn with and from those of a different culture and background. They also thought the networking opportunities would benefit international relations. I was able to obtain the current number of international students attending Enlisted PME from the Curriculum Development Officer at the College of Enlisted Military Education, Marine Corps University and she said "To date for Fiscal Year 2020, we have had (1) International student at Camp Lejeune Career School class 1-20." That's (1) international student enrolled since September 2019. Though this is a very low number, it does appear that the Marine Corps is beginning to look seriously at this subject, which is encouraging.

## **Implications for Future Research**

This study was able to identify several issues that should be addressed to improve Enlisted PME for the Marines it is designed to train. Some of the proposed changes are not going to come easy. There are Marine Corps leaders who will not consider the idea of less infantry training for non-infantry Marines because “that’s what makes Marines different.” However, I would wager that the Marine Corps loses quality Marines every year due to this line of thinking. If the Marine Corps was designing Staff NCO training specifically with a business model in mind, we could also see efficiency and performance increase. In order to make arguments like these remotely palatable for those with the power to affect change, we need more research. This study was dramatically limited by a lengthy dual Marine Corps and Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board process on one side and a mid-semester Thesis Defense on the other.

The Marine Corps needs to sponsor a much larger version of this study to reach more career Staff NCOs from many other military occupational specialties, for phenomenological interviews, with unlimited time to investigate more thoroughly civilian instructional methods and theories. Additionally, this type of study should be conducted by a non-military entity with zero bias towards the subject. This would enhance trustworthiness and would therefore make a stronger argument to Marine Corps leadership. With that being said, I do believe these results would be replicated to a large extent.

This study was not and is not intended to be perceived as negative publicity or “a bad news story” in regards to Marine Corps Education. I did my best to create an environment where I would acquire real, honest answers and opinions from career Marines who love the Marine Corps. Yes, there are things the Marine Corps will always do because “we are different and we

like it that way.” However, the perspectives of these Marines should not be overlooked or devalued. Make no mistake, these participants are not alone in their emotions and estimations with regard to Enlisted PME. They are representatives of the backbone of Enlisted Leadership. This study should not be viewed as an outlier to be ignored, but an opportunity to open the lines of communication for investigating avenues of approach to make meaningful adjustments to PME that would better benefit career Marines. These participants, and thousands of those like them, are whom the Marine Corps hopes to retain. I’d wager to bet that venture would be more successful if the Marine Corps took their opinions and feelings into account when designing curriculum and instructional methods that affect their daily lives and future educational endeavors.

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## GLOSSARY OF MILITARY TERMS AND JARGON

### Nomenclature for Acronyms:

ADP	Advanced Degree Program
AFADBD	Armed Forces Active Duty Base Date
ALSS	Aircrew Life Support Systems
AMO	Aircraft Maintenance Officer
CCLEB	Commandant's Career Level Education Board
CFT	Combat Fitness Test
CNATTU	Center for Aviation Technical Training Unit
DCTB	Date Current Tour Began
DOB	Date of Birth
DOR	Date of Rank
EA-6B	EA-6B Prowler Anti-Radar / Electronic Countermeasures Aircraft
EAS	End of Active Service (Date)
EWS	Expeditionary Warfare School
Fitness Report	Performance Evaluations that Determine Promotion Competitiveness
Ground Side	Refers to Infantry and Infantry Adjacent Specialties
GSE	Ground Support Equipment
MALS	Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron
MCAS	Marine Corps Air Station
MCRD	Marine Corps Recruit Depot
MECEP	Marine Enlisted Commissioning Education Program
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
6002	Aircraft Maintenance Officer
8802	Education Officer
MCT	Marine Combat Training
MCU	Marine Corps University
OCS	Officer Candidate's School
PFT	Physical Fitness Test
PME	Professional Military Education
POB	Place of Birth
Powerplants	Jet Engine Maintenance Work Center
PSAB	Prince Sultan Air Base
PT	Physical Training
Staff NCO	Staff Non-Commissioned Officer (E-6 – E-9)
TAD	Temporary Assigned Duty
TBS	The Basic School (Six month Officer Training Course)
TECOM	Training and Education Command
VMAQ-4	Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 4
VMFA(AW)-242	Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242

## **Definitions:**

**Airwing** – refers to all aviation related military occupational specialty fields or areas of service

**Call for Fire** – The ability to call tactical aircraft and artillery and give them coordinates for firing missions against enemy units

**Commandant of the Marine Corps** – The most senior Marine in the Marine Corps

**Command Profile** – is a website that allows leaders with specific qualifications to examine junior Marines profiles to identify: classes completed, awards received, training information (PFT/CFT scores), etc.

**Duty Station** – where a Marine spends a tour of duty, usually three years

**Land Navigation** – The ability to traverse land and understand topography in order lead ground missions

**Marinenet** – USMC website where Marines can access multiple annual training classes and Non-Resident PME classes.

**MCTFS** - Marine Corps Total Force System (MCTFS). Primary Purpose- Continuously records, processes, and maintains personnel and pay data for all active, reserve, and retired personnel. Sub-Functions MCTFS is an integrated personnel and pay system, utilizing Unit Diary/Marine Integrated Personnel System (UP/MIPS), On-Line Diary System (OLDS) and Automated Recruit Management System (ARMS) as the major input tools to update information contained within the database (<https://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/library/reports/2001/compendium/mctfs.htm> )

**Non-Resident PME** - Resident Non-Resident is typically done online through Marinenet.com and is done on their own time after work hours.

**Request Mast** – a formal process through which a Marine can by-pass sections of her/his chain of command in order to record and search for resolution of a specific grievance.

**Resident PME** - PME is typically conducted in a more formal setting away from one's current job and the Marine is assigned there on Temporary Assigned Duty (TAD) for upwards of eight weeks.

**Resident Seminar** - requires the Marine to meet on their home base, after work hours, for a few hours each week. They hold discussions and go over assigned readings and assignments that are issued throughout the week.

**Staffing Goals** – refers to the number of Marines each individual MOS needs to have per rank

**Stand-Down** – refers to when a squadron or adjacent unit shuts-down or is de-commissioned.

**Tactics** – Marine tactical warfighting strategies and doctrines

**Total Force Structure** – refers to all of the Marine Corps' personnel and manning plans

## APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW REPORTS

### Phenomenological Interview 1

#### General Information and Rapport Building

**Andrew**

**Date:** 2/11/2020

**Time:** 1730

**Age:** 32

**Years in the Marine Corps:** 13.5

**Married?:** Yes

**Children:** Yes

#### Interview Questions and Answers

1. **Can you describe a typical day in your life as a Marine and how Professional Military Education (PME) fits into that day? (GTQ)**

PME primarily fits into daily life because some the subjects PME covers helps to sharpen our abilities to lead Marines. Whether it is through paperwork or other means our primary job as SNCOs is to take care of Marines, and some of the skills we learn and hone while in PME help us to take care of Marines in the best way possible.

2. **Tell me about your thoughts on the conduct and facilitation of Enlisted PME in today's Marine Corps. (DQ)**

Two fold, Sergeant's Course (Resident) and Career Course in Blended Seminar (Non-Resident). The Sergeant's Course formatting and curriculum felt like a check in the box. They crammed a bunch us into a class and they were covering things which 60% percent didn't apply to our primary MOS. You're in a class of 70 - 80 Marines and less than 10-12 of those were infantry. However, the majority of what we are learning is infantry-focused. Warfighting roots, tactics, call-for-fire, land navigation and yet no applicability to leading Aviation Marines, none of it really focused on being a better overall leader. It was a check in the box at the Sergeant's Academy. Contrary to that, when we were at the Blended Seminar, we were in a smaller group. There were only a dozen Marines or so. The instructor was a Marine First Sergeant from the Drill Field. We did it in a small classroom setting. You could wear the uniform of the day or proper civilian attire. The instructor always showed-up in professional civilian attire so it wasn't a rank influenced discussion. All our discussions were very back and forth in small groups. So, we were able to tailor things down to what we needed as we went along. We were from multiple MOS's. You had some Airwing, you had some Motor T, Air-Ground, Administration, and everyone was able to have a valued opinion. I definitely liked the Blended Seminar better because we could explain what we do and bridge the gap between our MOS's

**3. Can you describe the type of relationship and/or rapport you typically find with your past PME instructors? (SGTQ)**

That's pretty easy, the Resident course instructors were assigned to squads. They were the only instructor we had consistent contact with. Outside of that, I couldn't tell you who the other instructors are now because I didn't have any relationship or contact with them outside of them teaching a course subject in front of the entire class. They were more worried about checking the boxes. I do still keep in contact with the instructor from the Blended Seminar course. That was a relationship that was built and maintained. All the students at the resident course were of the mentality that the Marine Corps expects me to get this done for Staff Sergeant, so we were doing it. Some folks call the Resident Course a Physical Training (PT) academy. I'm not sure I would fully agree with that but, we do spend too much time on PT that did not have a positive effect on what we need to learn for our actual profession. Little value added. You also weren't going to receive an award unless you were a high Physical Fitness Test (PFT) Marine, no matter how smart, or how outstanding your grades were. It all comes down to being decent in school, but you had to be that high PFT guy. It's frustrating in that the guys with the high PFT don't necessarily make the best leaders nor are they the best at their Military Occupational Specialty.

**4. Can you describe what it is like to balance required PME with your job and other academic ventures? (TRGTQ)**

The Resident course puts everything to a screeching halt. You are no longer in your specialty and someone else has to take-up your slack. You only focus in on the PME stuff. The Seminar is not like that. You are able to go to work every day and take care of PME a few hours per week. At one point, I was taking two college courses, taking PME, and running my actual duties at my command. I was up every day at 0400 to read and then go to work. Becoming a Staff NCO, your job is now about taking care of the Marines. I didn't mind the longer hours on those days because the mission was still being accomplished while PME was occurring.

**5. What were some of the fears or emotions you may have experienced with regard to civilian education?**

I didn't start doing college until after Sergeant's Course. To be honest, I was a little nervous because it had been so long since I had been in a classic classroom. I don't think that PME prepares you in any way for success in a civilian education.

**What do you think that is the case?**

Because the PME is tailored to only make you a sharper Marine. It doesn't carry over to civilian workforce and civilian life. We are spending time learning a doctrine that has long since been put in place. There is no room for questioning. No back and forth in regards to the principles behind it. There is no room for dialog. The Seminar did a better job of that. Specific items here are indicators: when the instructor was in civilian attire, it presents a professional face that speaks to professionalism outside our uniform. Why is this important

for Officer PME, but not for Enlisted PME? So, you know, the Sergeants course has two days throughout an 8 week course where you were required to wear civilian attire. Everything else was still so embedded in Marine Corps roots, we were not teaching Marines how to be professional citizens / civilians, only Marines. Maybe this is just short-sighted. When our time is over, what's left? I would wonder what the success rate is for a two-term, 10 year Sergeant or Staff Sergeant when they get out. I would venture that most First-Term Marines get out to go to college, but aren't prepared to professionally present themselves in an academic environment.

**6. If you believe there are areas of Enlisted PME that need to be improved, where would you focus and why?**

The class size and availability. The resident PME was recently cut in half. If we are going to make it a requirement for promotion, we have to have enough seat availability just to cover the spread. How many Sergeants do we have? Do we have enough quotas to cover them? The Blended Seminar was birthed out of the idea that we can't let that guy go, he'd too important to the shop. You can't afford to give up key pieces of your work center for 8 weeks. We need to be able to get the PME, without pulling them out of their job. I think the seminar does a good job of that. We really need to revisit the curriculum. What is the most important things they need to know for their actual job: taking care of Marines? If we are trying to learn how to lead and take care of Marines, we need to revisit the curriculum in that regard.

**7. What are some of the items with which you had to contend to ensure you completed your required PME on time / in time for promotion? (SQ)**

The Sergeants Course side was family life, The reality of having a family and children. Pulling the Marine away for 8 weeks when it's not a deployment. I had to travel to MCAS Okinawa, Japan when my family was on the mainland in Iwakuni, Japan. If you are a Sergeant in the Marine Corps, you are a valuable asset to your command. "Well this summer there is this PME class, but the command has an inspection and an exercise to support.." So, many Marines don't get to go to PME because they are too important to let go. Again, this is why the Seminar is better.

**8. Tell me about your thoughts on what the Marine Corps should be doing differently to ensure Marines are better prepared for the rigors of civilian institutions of higher learning.**

The need audio visual experience. (In my college experience) Everything is done by computers and some are done by cell phones. They need to learn how to create presentations in PowerPoint, Excel, Microsoft Access. These are what's expected. Use of MyDrive for Google Groups, Top Hat, and Kahoots. We took exams online. Nothing is on paper. Technology is a must. If it's going be a course, it can't be strictly pass or fail, we need some grading scale. There is NO FEEDBACK. We received grades in both courses, but nobody was worried about failing for academic performance. The only ones that fail these course get



dropped for initial PFT, Weigh-in, DUIs etc. What's the motivation to do well or above average? Few are going to truly attempt their best. Are our topics hitting home? Do I care if I can write an Operations Order? Did we discuss the "what's in it for me" (WIIFM)? This is typically accomplished through the tie-in. However, will this make me a better leader for my Marines or better prepared for college?

**9. Tell me about your thoughts on the idea of including international students in Enlisted PME like the Marine Corps has for years in Officer PME?**

I think that'd be Brilliant! We need to. Our ability to interact and understand someone else's culture is important and we are failing at that. The Senior Enlisted Joint PME is designed for all of our other services (Army, Navy, Air Force) and those of other countries. Our required Enlisted PME should be open to all of the services if possible, and certainly with international students. The Air Force is more professionally developed than we are. They are much more versatile. Their classes actually count for something outside the service.

**10. Describe how it would feel to know that Enlisted PME was preparing you for civilian education in addition to enforcing military proficiency doctrines.**

I'd be much happier and I'd be even more happy if it was concurrent. We should be fetching college credit for it. Teaching it in a proper civilian education style with an actual grading scale would be much more valuable, as well. The courses should be aimed at making us better professionals, both military and civilian wise.

**Anything else you'd like to add?**

I have little belief that there is any value added in Enlisted PME. It's a check in the box. Nothing is challenging enough to keep Marines from going back and drinking every night as long as they can make it to Physical Training in the morning. The Commandant of the Marine Corps said "that we don't retain the best and the brightest, we retain the most loyal." I'm not sure if that's a good thing or a bad thing. Maybe both.

**Interview Length of Time: 70 minutes**

**Interview Format: Web Conference (Facetime)**

**Question Key:**

**GTQ:** Grand Tour Question

**CQ:** Contrast Question

**DQ:** Descriptive Question

**SQ:** Structural Question

**TRGTQ:** Task-Related Grand Tour Question

**SGTQ:** Specific Grand Tour Question

## Photo Elicitation

### Photo 1:

B. BILLET DESCRIPTION
-Pass all performance evaluations in military studies. -Pass all performance evaluations in leadership studies. -Pass all performance evaluations in warfighting studies.

C. BILLET ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**What memories does this photo bring up? What were your feelings during this moment?**

So, looking at this photo of the Sections C and D comments of my Fitness Report, all it says is passed, no accomplishments listed. All it says is passed...the epitome of a check in the box, whereas with the blended program, we stayed at the unit on Wednesday nights and started about 1730-1800 for three hours. We spent time talking about leadership struggles we're having. It was real time applicable to what we were doing in our current jobs. It also allowed me to apply anything we learned the next day at work. It was a more holistic system. I think one of the biggest constraints with PME was trying to send Marines away for 4-8 weeks when we were already short-handed. So, we were able to keep the Marines there while ultimately being able to provide a better product and not just a check in the box.

**A copy of my transcript was supplied to my interviewee and they confirmed that my transcript was an accurate representation of our conversation. I have included a copy of a member check where this was confirmed by the interviewee**

## Phenomenological Interview 1

### General Information and Rapport Building

**Casey**

**Date:** 2/9/2020

**Time:** 1700

**Age:** 40

**Years in the Marine Corps:** 20 years 8 Months

**Married?:** Engaged

**Children:** Yes

### Interview Questions and Answers

**1. Can you describe a typical day in your life as a Marine and how Professional Military Education (PME) fits into that day? (GTQ)**

So, it would start out getting to work, going to the maintenance meetings, sitting down with the Marines to go over production, taking care of daily tasks, meetings with leadership. Most Marines are very young when they join. Leadership is not something you're born with. You have to learn how to interact with and lead people. To get juniors to do what you need them to do. PME utilized effectively can teach you how to be a manager, be a leader. It can be useful if it's put together correctly. There is value in "every Marine is a rifleman." However, the focus of most PME is on how to Physically Train, sand table exercises, fields of fire. I don't think those things are important for me and my job as a manager of Marines in my Military Occupational Specialty. It would be more beneficial to Airwing Marines if more of the course of instruction is geared towards learning objectives that will actually be useful to us in our day to day requirements. Sure it's important that we know how to shoot and be familiar with how to execute a hasty skirmish. But ground tactics/ art of war shouldn't be the only focus of today's PME.

**2. Tell me about your thoughts on the conduct and facilitation of Enlisted PME in today's Marine Corps. (DQ)**

The last time I was in PME, it was Advanced Course. It was very professional. There was a definitive line between us and the instructors. The way the curriculum was set-up was conducive for learning. We did a lot of group projects. This was in 2015 and it was for about 7 weeks. We had the entire syllabus so we knew what was coming. We were able to form a group and plan for what was coming.

**3. Can you describe the type of relationship and/or rapport you typically find with your past PME instructors? (SGTQ)**

I've only been to Sergeants Course Resident and Advanced Resident, in 2004 and 2015 at Camp Lejeune. The quality of the instructors remained the same. Instructor to student

interaction was professional at all times. The instructors were also supportive. I knew that if I had a professional/career issue to be addressed that I could go to any of my faculty advisors. In fact, I would even go as far as saying that the PME instructors (in my experience) are more professional than instructors you would find in school houses for initial accession Marines.

**4. Can you describe what it is like to balance required PME with your job and other academic ventures? (TRGTQ)**

In a word, “difficult.” As you become more senior and in positions of leadership, it is tough to get away from your requirements. You can lean on your juniors in some aspects but not all jobs can do that. The more senior you are, the tougher it is. You always have to fight tooth and nail to get a seat allocation and permission to be away from your squadron for several weeks. Meanwhile, your job in the rear doesn’t stop and you still have to find a way to manage to ensure that everything is being carried out effectively in your absence. You still have inspections and deadlines that need to be met. By the time you make it back home, you have to play catch-up.

**5. What were some of the emotions you may have experienced with regard to civilian education?**

I enjoyed it. It was difficult for me some of this time. I took these courses because it is what our society expects. I picked a BS in Management with a concentration in Human Resources, because I wanted to find something that wasn’t directly related to aviation. Management is pretty general. I’m a single parent, so it was difficult to balance my job and raising my children against earning my degree and it was emotionally exhaustive. But it was something I knew I had to accomplish if I wanted to be more marketable post Marine Corps.

**6. If you believe there are areas of Enlisted PME that need to be improved, where would you focus and why?**

I’d focus on the content. It is too focused on the ground-side. That’s important, but they would have better use of their time teaching us Command Profile, leadership, how to navigate MCTFS, basic Microsoft classes, excel classes, learning how to pull reports from multiple sources and present that data. Things like that are applicable across all MOS’s.

**7. What are some of the items with which you had to contend to ensure you completed your required PME on time / in time for promotion? (SQ)**

School seat availability, squadron availability, exercises, Aviation Logistics Support Ship exercises, operational tempo, competing with rifle ranges.

**8. Tell me about your thoughts on what the Marine Corps should be doing differently to ensure Marines are better prepared for the rigors of civilian institutions of higher learning.**

I do think that the PME is pretty solid. The curriculum is presented differently. You have rubrics, have syllabi, you know what's going to be expected. You need to have enough responsibility to structure your time for tasks. We do teach the importance of timeliness and structure, and discipline.

**9. Tell me about your thoughts on the idea of including international students in Enlisted PME like the Marine Corps has for years in Officer PME?**

I think it's a good idea. What I think would be a better idea is to make more joint PME opportunities with our sister services. The Air Force had a few with us and they were rigorously screened to be able to meet our standards. I think it's a good idea to have foreign nationals, as well. If you've had experience with another culture, when deployed to their country, that would be greatly helpful. However, we should focus with cross-service training first. This would help greatly for networking purposes in both cases.

**10. Describe how it would feel to know that Enlisted PME was preparing you for civilian education in addition to enforcing military proficiency doctrines.**

I don't think I would view it any differently. I went to PME because it was required. I don't believe it made me any better prepared for college. Conversely, I think college better prepared me for PME. I had a lot of resources already from attending college as a young Marine. So, I already knew all the Microsoft suites because I needed those skills for my college degree.

**Anything else you'd like to add?**

Not at this time.

**Interview Length of Time: 42 minutes**

**Interview Format: Web Conference (Facetime)**

**Question Key:**

**GTQ:** Grand Tour Question

**CQ:** Contrast Question

**DQ:** Descriptive Question

**SQ:** Structural Question

**TRGTQ:** Task-Related Grand Tour Question

**SGTQ:** Specific Grand Tour Question

## **Photo Elicitation**

### **Photo 1:**

**Photo Removed to Protect PII**

**What memories does this photo bring up? What were your feelings during this moment?**

Pain. We had just finished a Pinnacle Physical Training exercise. We ran the Obstacle Course twice, had a run through the woods, low crawls, fireman carries, and litter carries. It was meant to be a team-building event, but it was so painful. It was not team-building and I was just glad it was over.

### **Photo 2**

**Photo Removed to Protect PII**

**What does this photo make you think about? Where are your emotions?**

Looking at the photo is the pinnacle of getting through the PME experience. This is the graduation photo and I was very happy to be going back to my squadron.

**A copy of my transcript was supplied to my interviewee and they confirmed that my transcript was an accurate representation of our conversation. I have included a copy of a member check where this was confirmed by the interviewee**

## Phenomenological Interview 1

### General Information and Rapport Building

**Patti**

**Date:** 2/8/2020

**Time:** 1100

**Age:** 41

**Years in the Marine Corps:** 17 years, 3 Months

**Married?:** Divorced; Engaged

**Children:** Yes

### Interview Questions and Answers

1. **Can you describe a typical day in your life as a Marine and how Professional Military Education (PME) fits into that day? (GTQ)**

We do reports, order parts for aircraft, award writing to reward Marines more often. Leadership, I have anywhere between 10-15 Marines that fall under me at any given time. PME would always have to be in my own time. Especially in the Airwing due to our tempo., and that goes for my Marines, as well. I can't afford to send my Marines to the Resident courses, only the Non-Resident / Seminars due to our operational commitments and tempo.

2. **Tell me about your thoughts on the conduct and facilitation of Enlisted PME in today's Marine Corps. (DQ)**

I think the way PME is handled is very rushed. Not unprofessionally, but more of a "if you don't understand it, here's the answer, and we're going to move on." More of a check in the box. For the PMEs I've done, I get more out of the MarineNet (Non-Resident) courses than the Resident courses. As far as what applied to what I do in the Marine Corps. An example is how to conduct a PFT or CFT, they didn't break down how to do that. In online Non-Resident courses, they do.

**As far as valued time, which one gives you more bang for the buck?**

Non Resident, Resident is all ground side training and there is very little that benefits me as an Airwing Staff Non Commissioned Officer.

3. **Can you describe the type of relationship and/or rapport you typically find with your past PME instructors? (SGTQ)**

I liked the instructors, I was the only female in Staff NCO, period. There was a difference in the way I was treated. The experience was different for me. They tiptoe about projects that were scheduled for after-hours PME. I would get the "Oh we got this, you don't have to go." There was definitely a separation between myself and the others. That was coming from both students and staff. Even with PT, there was no one my size, so I just didn't participate in

certain events. They'd tell me to just go for a run because they were going to be doing fireman carries or buddy drags. There was no one within 40lbs of my weight. They actually had to recruit someone from another unit for me to fireman carry for my final CFT. This experience was for 7 weeks.

**4. Can you describe what it is like to balance required PME with your job and other academic ventures? (TRGTQ)**

I haven't started college, but if I have PME that needs to get done, it has to be either before or after work. There is no way to get this done during work hours. I will proctor my Marine's PME exams. It's a team effort but there is no way I could have time for that. I can't even afford to let my Marines go to resident PME due to our operational tempo. So, they have to go to Non-Res most times, as well.

**5. If you believe there are areas of Enlisted PME that need to be improved, where would you focus and why?**

So, the first thing I would change is the information / curriculum. For me, ground-side Marines are trained at their MOS school, but that's the same things they teach at PME. It seems there is too much time spent trying to learn ground-side, as opposed to approaching other MOSs and covering things that we all deal with: awards and uniform regulations. I still do not have a single male Marine that can inspect female uniforms. Because they don't know hair regulations or nail regulations. So, if you have a female out of regulations, a male Marine isn't going to say anything. I get the "Why would I ever inspect a female Marine, you're here." This is especially true now that females are in Ground / Infantry units.

**6. What are some of the items with which you had to contend to ensure you completed your required PME on time / in time for promotion? (SQ)**

Work tempo. When I went to PME, I was married, so I didn't have to worry about my kids. However, my Master Sergeant didn't want me to go to Okinawa from Iwakuni for the 7 weeks required. I had just gotten there and there were senior Staff NCOs that needed PME. However, all of them were avoiding it and trying not to go. So, why not let me go? I almost had to Request Mast to get to attend Advanced PME. I went around my chain of command to get into Resident PME. I went straight to the Sergeant Major and he signed my paperwork and I went.

**7. Tell me about your thoughts on what the Marine Corps should be doing differently to ensure Marines are better prepared for the rigors of civilian institutions of higher learning.**

Definitely, PME is strictly a check in the box. You spend more time talking about things than actually learning. There is a lot of dead time. In an actual school structure, you're in a classroom where you are learning, then you're actually tested on things. They (PME Instructors) give you specific things that you're going to have to learn via the training guide. Don't forget this sentence (foot stomp), meaning don't forget this. It may be on the test. But



they don't really teach you anything. Public Speaking for example: They tell you to go learn this subject in an hour. Then go give a public speech on it. Then, they just tell you what you did wrong and they move on. There was no teaching. Just checking boxes. Aside from that experience, I couldn't tell you one thing I learned from PME.

My Corporal just finished Corporal's Course. I asked them what they remembered. "I learned nothing but how to do PRO and CONs (Proficiency and Conduct Marks)" After six weeks, that was the only thing she could tell me she learned. (3 weeks ago). We could have learned everything we needed in three weeks (at Staff NCO Advanced Career Course). We were just wasting money and time. So, I was out of my job for weeks when I didn't have to be. Additionally, they have a set amount of time you have to be there every day. On an average 8 hour day, we had no more than 4 hours of instruction.

**8. Tell me about your thoughts on the idea of including international students in Enlisted PME like the Marine Corps has for years in Officer PME?**

I think this would be a great idea for the different perspectives.

**9. Describe how it would feel to know that Enlisted PME was preparing you for civilian education in addition to enforcing military proficiency doctrines.**

I have a couple Marines who are taking college courses and I think they would find it very helpful. My fiancé just retired and he had to take a break because he was frustrated because he had been had been taught to learn and dump for so long, that he had a hard time retaining the information. There just isn't enough building blocks in PME. Again, a check in the box.

**Anything else you'd like to add?**

No, I think so.

**Interview Length of Time: 50 minutes**

**Interview Format: Web Conference (Facetime)**

**Question Key:**

**GTQ:** Grand Tour Question

**CQ:** Contrast Question

**DQ:** Descriptive Question

**SQ:** Structural Question

**TRGTQ:** Task-Related Grand Tour Question

**SGTQ:** Specific Grand Tour Question

## **Photo Elicitation**

### **Photo 1:**

**Photo Removed to Protect PII**

**What memories does this photo bring up? What were your feelings during this moment?**

This was right before we were going to compete our final Combat Fitness Test. So like always there was a lot of anxiety about the pain and discomfort to come.

**A copy of my transcript was supplied to my interviewee and they confirmed that my transcript was an accurate representation of our conversation. I have included a copy of a member check where this was confirmed by the interview participant.**

## Phenomenological Interview 1

### General Information and Rapport Building

**Robert**

**Date:** 2/16/2020

**Time:** 0800

**Age:** 37

**Years in the Marine Corps:** 17 years, 4 months

**Married?:** Yes

**Children:** Yes

### Interview Questions and Answers

#### 1. Can you describe a typical day in your life as a Marine and how Professional Military Education (PME) fits into that day? (GTQ)

For me, it would be, report-in at 0730, start running administrative reports, start double-checking my light duty and limited duty Marines. Making sure my morning reports are printed in a timely fashion. Looking at the plan of the week to ensure any Marines with legal issues are meeting timelines set forth by the schedule. Roll into the Daily Division Chief turnover binder to ensure daily requirements are being met, make sure all pertinent information is passed to personnel pertaining to dental/ medical appointments and any hot topics or trends that need to be addressed during morning formation. The formations are pivotal to the daily routine. Being in the Airwing, you have to be very flexible due to the ever changing mission requirement. The Formations and Physical Training (PT) sessions create a structure to the madness. We always have Division PT, it gives me the opportunity to get face time with the Marines and ensure Esprit De Core is present in the section. Accountability part is important. That accountability, or lack thereof, has reared its head and we had to make clear the crucial importance of that. So, in all honestly, we make time for PME, but it does come at a price. Usually, we will slot their time for PME, when that “alligator is closest to the boat.” Our Division is deficit 19 Marines at the moment, so that shortfall becomes difficult to prioritize which Marine gets the training. Non-resident PME or EPME is much easier for personnel to attend and accomplish as it doesn't put the division in the imposition of losing personnel from the work spaces, they can still discharge their regular duties while completing their PME requirements. Resident courses are much more difficult particularly when personnel would be in a different geographical area to complete those PME requirements. The PME Seminars are much more beneficial as they are highly sought after for Sergeant and Staff Sergeant Courses. With regards to reading from the Commandants reading list generally our schedule is so tasked saturated that there is very little time to physically read at work during down time; however the troops have capitalized on the NAVY NKO site that checks out Audio Books to personnel for 2 weeks at a time and I have walked in on personnel listening to PME audio books while working. Once complete then we have them write a book report to ensure they understand essence of what was being conveyed to the listener/reader.

**2. Tell me about your thoughts on the conduct and facilitation of Enlisted PME in today's Marine Corps. (DQ)**

The reports I get back from the Marines, they do not want to go to a Resident Course. This is because there is very little value added to their daily lives. They end-up liking the course for the experience itself. They enjoy the break-away from the unit and get to know Marines from other areas in the Marine Corps and learn a bit about their jobs. There is a lot of networking opportunities. The networking part is a pretty good outcome from these schools.

**3. Can you describe the type of relationship and/or rapport you typically find with your past PME instructors? (SGTQ)**

For the most part, in my experience it is sit down and regurgitate. The instructors are preaching and we are to regurgitate. However, if a student has an actual question, the instructors will stop and answer questions. The instructors seem to get more job satisfaction out of their jobs through this interaction with the students.

**4. Can you describe what it is like to balance required PME with your job and other academic ventures? (TRGTQ)**

Okay, I would say, I have been enrolled in college and I'm close to my BA in Business Admin. **Balancing my PME and off duty education.** I would say that PME is as important. However, my time in the Marine Corps is limited to 20-30 years. So I did capitalize on the civilian education benefits while in the Marine Corps. I did place more emphasis on college as oppose to PME as it will benefit me outside the Marine Corps. I have a family to support. Staff Academy isn't going to do me any good after I retire. So, I placed a large emphasis on off-duty education.

**5. What were some of the emotions you may have experienced with regard to civilian education?**

Well, I would say I had my reservations because I started so late in my career with civilian schools. I needed to ensure my core military obligations were met, first. Because I couldn't let myself fail at my actual job. This would cause the Command to scrutinize my educational endeavors. I did take a break at one time when I noticed the quality of my work was being effected. This was especially true leading up to unit inspections, Maintenance Program Assessments (MPAs), Aviation Logistics Maintenance Assist Team Inspections ALMAT), etc. It was imperative for me to execute good judgment here and put college on-hold to ensure my job was getting done satisfactorily. I had to take care of the mission at-hand. Not all Marines will be able to make that judgment call when the time arises, you have to a level of maturity to sacrifice something you want for something you need and in my case that was completing the mission. In other instances I has seen personnel burned out from so much schooling and stressed from possibly having to pay their Tuition Assistance (TA) back if they weren't able to finish their classes on time with passing marks. This is a situation I hope never to find myself.

**6. If you believe there are areas of Enlisted PME that need to be improved, where would you focus and why?**

Okay, so I would say from my exposure with Enlisted PME we are not being taught topics that would benefit us with our day to day operations. For example there are topics that I wish we discussed such as the Total Force Structure Concept. How does manning get funded? Who is in charge of creating the Table of Organization (TO&E), Staffing Goals? Currently my section operates at a 19 Marine deficit. It becomes hard to understand where these Marines are and why we are forced to operate so short-handed. If we better understood total force structure it would help us better understand when these Marines are coming and when units stand down how does this effect the Occupational field structure for manning requirements

Psychology – We are supposed to know our Marines and employ them to their capabilities. There appears to be a generational gap. These young Marines are very intuitive with technology. Me being a dinosaur, I have to bring myself up to speed in order to understand their personalities that are greatly influenced by technology and social media. If we had some psychology courses in PME, we might better understand this, which would help us to better employ these Marines and shape their minds.

I was actually looking for a more MOS specific PME. Being in the Marine Corps, I get the fact that we are all supposed to be a basic rifleman and all, but the current concept is outdated. It is more likely that I will never have to grab Marines and conduct a hasty ambush. I understand this is a dangerous concept because it is counter to basic warfighting tactics in the Marine Corps as a force in readiness construct. I would say that these tactics being taught are necessary, but maybe we should look at a supplemental PME that is more MOS or Occ field specific. That appears to be a consensus among Staff NCOs. Learning to read the Aircraft Maintenance Status Readiness Reports (AMSRR) would be more important than tactics for my Occupational Field. A secondary MOS specific PME should be offered. Additionally, from the ground guys I talk to, PME is a total waste of their time. They learned all this as a Lance Corporal, Corporal or Sergeant, doing their daily jobs Marines in ground side elements. For them this is just a vacation for them.

**7. What are some of the items with which you had to contend to ensure you completed your required PME on time / in time for promotion? (SQ)**

Family obligations being one of them. If I missed a seminar, I had to contend with the fact I now had to go to a Resident Course and be away from my family. If I went to Resident Course I had to know that my duties were able to be accomplished by my subordinates, and was sure that my work center didn't fail and that we could be ready for deployments. On the administration side, some of my junior Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) aren't spooled up on how daily reports and other administrative items and would drop the ball somewhere and we might fail to meet a requirement. This would be on my shoulders as I am culpable for my Division & Work Centers.

**8. Tell me about your thoughts on what the Marine Corps should be doing differently to ensure Marines are better prepared for the rigors of civilian institutions of higher learning.**

I think that the current Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps has a really good mindset on this. He wants SNCOs to get their degrees in order to be eligible for promotion. I think that is a great idea to explore.

**How do you see that working? Do you think we would lose career Marines due to this?**

I don't think we would lose career Marines. It would be phased, so there would be grandfathering involved. I think college should play a bigger part of promotion. It plays a big part of exposing the Marines to the expectations of the civilian sector. Case in point, I have juniors sign-up for a college class, but they don't understand APA, MLA for a paper. They are starting at ground zero. PME should be developing these skills. Bibliographies, References and the like.

**9. Tell me about your thoughts on the idea of including international students in Enlisted PME like the Marine Corps has for years in Officer PME?**

Absolutely, this would be great for cultural awareness. Marines are very narrow-minded and into their own culture. There is a complete disconnect between the civilian and the international sector. You see this when you go overseas. There is a lack of understanding of cultural differences and this sometimes results in international incidences (like in Okinawa, Japan). This is also a networking thing, as well. At VMFAT - 501, we had a New Zealander, he went through an Aircraft Maintenance course that we offer through Mobil Training Teams (MTTs). It was enlightening to be able to ask questions about how his organization does things and it was very interesting to see how they approach different issues.

**10. Describe how it would feel to know that Enlisted PME was preparing you for civilian education in addition to enforcing military proficiency doctrines.**

I would say that if I knew that PME was preparing me for college, I would be mentally more prepared and eager to master all the curriculum and concepts that were being taught.

**Anything else you'd like to add?**

Not at this time.

**Interview Length of Time: 55 Minutes**

**Interview Format: Web Conference (Facetime)**

**Question Key:**

**GTQ:** Grand Tour Question  
**CQ:** Contrast Question  
**DQ:** Descriptive Question  
**SQ:** Structural Question  
**TRGTQ:** Task-Related Grand Tour Question  
**SGTQ:** Specific Grand Tour Question

**A copy of my transcript was supplied to my interviewee and they confirmed that my transcript was an accurate representation of our conversation. I have included a copy of a member check where this was confirmed by the interviewee**

## Phenomenological Interview 2

### General Information and Rapport Building

**Casey**

**Date:** 2/14/2020

**Time:** 1400

**Age:** 40

**Years in the Marine Corps:** 20 years, 8 months

**Married?:** Engaged

**Children:** Yes

### Interview Questions and Answers

#### 1. What were some of the emotions you may have experienced over the years with regard to PME?

Honestly, “contempt.” It made me angry that I had to balance PME with my career knowing that I would not learn anything that would better my career or make me a stronger, more effective Marine leader. But in order to be promotion eligible, I had to get the ‘check in the box’ requirement of PME. However, I enjoyed the break and camaraderie with Marines from other MOS’s. There was a lot of good networking opportunities. These points of contact made us a lot of money in the long run in regards to my day to day job. Definitely value added, having networked with Marines in other MOS’s that could provide guidance or workarounds to any logistical issues we may have encountered.

#### 2. Tell me about your thoughts on the Marine Corps’ ability to ensure gender and cultural inclusivity in PME programs.

Absolutely, in my 21 year, PME has always been professional across all aspects. I have experienced double-standards in previous duty assignments and almost Requested Mast over it. Standards that applied to females didn’t seem to apply to males that were part of the ‘good ole boy network’ so long as you had the personal approval of one or two individuals in positions of power. but that was never the case in PME. They were gender and culturally sensitive and inclusive. To the point that I didn’t feel ostracized by the fact that I am a female. The treated all Marines the same.

#### 3. Can you describe what it means to you to have Marine Corps PME Instructors that understand you from a gender or cultural stance?

Personally it didn’t matter to me. Having a female instructor didn’t affect my training in anyway, male instructors were just as effective. I say this because when the environment is a professional one, we are all Marines and that is that. Color, gender, cultural beliefs etc don’t come into play in mission accomplishment. We all focus on the task at hand and not much else matters. I just wanted to be treated like every other Marine and I was. I did have a female



instructor in Sergeant's Course. I felt like her presence was good for the male instructors. Because no matter what, you are going to have those females (meaning students in this capacity) that are going to use their sexuality to try and get ahead of / over on male Marines. One of the female students went to a male instructor and said she could not go on the run because she was on her period. He didn't know any better, so she didn't have to run. Which is ridiculous and gave the rest of the females in the course a stigma – yet another reason for male Marines to think we don't belong in the USMC. So, I do believe that it's important to have them there in every school, not only to protect the females in the class, but to protect the male instructors.

**Anything else you'd like to add?**

**Interview Length of Time: 30 minutes**

**Interview Format: Web Conference (Facetime)**

**A copy of my transcript was supplied to my interviewee and they confirmed that my transcript was an accurate representation of our conversation. I have included a copy of a member check where this was confirmed by the interviewee**

## Phenomenological Interview 2

### General Information and Rapport Building

**Patti**

**Date:** 2/14/2020

**Time:** 1100

**Age:** 41

**Years in the Marine Corps:** 17 years, 3 Months

**Married?:** Divorced; Engaged

**Children:** Yes

### Interview Questions and Answers

**1. What were some of the emotions you may have experienced over the years with regard to PME?**

PME is a check in the box, so its dreaded. It's a waste of time, mostly. Instead of feeling like you accomplished something, you feel more like "now I'm going to have to drop everything to go to PME." Then you have to come back and catch-up 6-8 weeks' worth of work: inspections, audits, preparations for deploying squadrons." We are also supposed to put our junior Marines first. You aren't going to get promoted if you don't go to PME, but neither will you junior Marines. You can't both go, so what do you do??

**2. Tell me about your thoughts on the Marine Corps' ability to ensure gender and cultural inclusivity in PME programs.**

I know that they try but they are not at all successful. They need to revamp. There is still "segregation" of sorts. I was taught that I had to know both female and male standards, but they only needed to the male standards. They are trying to push all these new equal requirements for females to be like the males (Pull-ups), but the males don't need to know our requirements.

**3. Can you describe what it means to you to have Marine Corps PME Instructors that understand you from a gender or cultural stance?**

I don't think that would have made a lot of difference. They did bring a female in to discuss female body taping and uniform regulations. I think the mentality for the majority of the class (males) was like "I don't need this."

**4. Can you describe how it feels to NOT have Marine Corps PME Instructors that understand you from a gender or cultural stance?**

I don't think it would have mattered. Once the class realized I could hold my own and could keep up with them on a run, I was good to go for the most part.

**Anything else you'd like to add?**

**Interview Length of Time: 20.**

**Interview Format: Web Conference (Facetime)**

**Question Key:**

**GTQ:** Grand Tour Question

**CQ:** Contrast Question

**DQ:** Descriptive Question

**SQ:** Structural Question

**TRGTQ:** Task-Related Grand Tour Question

**SGTQ:** Specific Grand Tour Question

**A copy of my transcript was supplied to my interviewee and they confirmed that my transcript was an accurate representation of our conversation. I have included a copy of a member check where this was confirmed by the interviewee**

## Phenomenological Interview 2

### General Information and Rapport Building

**Robert**

**Date:** 2/16/2020

**Time:** 0850

**Age:** 37

**Years in the Marine Corps:** 17 years, 4 months

**Married?:** Yes

**Children:** Yes

### Interview Questions and Answers

**1. What were some of the emotions you may have experienced over the years with regard to PME?**

I would say the first and foremost is apprehension, trying to find time where I could fully throw myself into PME. Manpower constraints always play a part in whether or not I can send myself or my Marines to these schools.

**2. Tell me about your thoughts on the Marine Corps' ability to ensure gender and cultural inclusivity in PME programs.**

I know the Marine Corps is always trying to promote and show diversity, I think it comes down to the fact that there are just more male Marines than female Marines. There are some perceptions that if you were to talk to a female Marine, she would say that they have to work twice as hard as their male counterparts. I've talked to a lot of female Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and they view their male counterparts as scrutinizing their performance more so than male counterparts. Cultural diversity, you don't see as many Marines from a different cultural backgrounds. These Marines with a Muslim last name, and who practice a Muslim religion, just aren't around much. In the Navy you do see a lot of sailors with a Filipino background, you don't see a lot of Pacific Islanders in the Marine Corps. I think this has to do with "the first to fight" ideals of the Marine Corps. We are the "tip of the spear." We may have civilian candidates that are female or of a different background and they just don't think their talents can benefit the Marine Corps. Other branches (Army, Navy, Airforce) have better options and more occupations that might be more appealing to other cultures, (Vets, Doctors, etc. ). Cyber warfare may be changing this some. The Marine Corps has always advertised as "Infantry centric" and that might not appeal to some females and other cultures.

**3. Can you describe what it means to you to have Marine Corps PME Instructors that understand you from a gender or cultural stance?**

I would say that this could be a tricky question. What is a Marine? We don't tie Marines to anything but warfighters. This is an abstract concept. Is there inherent differences that maybe we

would learn better from the same sex? They may be more likely to ask questions, but it's all just a mental factor.

**4. Can you describe how it feels to NOT have Marine Corps PME Instructors that understand you from a gender or cultural stance?**

I would say because it ties into the previous, because the instructor is most likely going to be male. I would put my cultural differences behind me. However, because I have a last name that looks to be Muslim, sometimes they ask questions that could be misconstrued as insensitive, but I don't see it that way. To me, it doesn't matter who the hell the instructor is.. I'm a Staff NCO and I can learn from anyone. Maybe some students may bring their own ignorance to the classroom, but to me it doesn't matter. However, someone with preconceived issues, that might be a problem.. again, this is why I think psychology classes would be beneficial.

**Anything else you'd like to add?**

Not at this time.

**Interview Length of Time: 20 minutes**

**Interview Format: Web Conference (Facetime)**

**Question Key:**

**GTQ:** Grand Tour Question

**CQ:** Contrast Question

**DQ:** Descriptive Question

**SQ:** Structural Question

**TRGTQ:** Task-Related Grand Tour Question

**SGTQ:** Specific Grand Tour Question

**A copy of my transcript was supplied to my interviewee and they confirmed that my transcript was an accurate representation of our conversation. I have included a copy of a member check where this was confirmed by the interviewee**

APPENDIX B. MEMBER CHECKS

Qualitative Interview Member Check

Interview Report: 1 / 2 (circle one)

1. Does the indicated report mirror your statements and overall interpretation of the interview to the best of your recollection?

YES / NO (circle one)

2. Is there anything you would like to change or restate for clarity?

YES / NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

3. Is there anything else you would like to let the researcher know about this interview / PME experience?

YES / NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

By signing the below I confirm that the interview report produced by the researcher from my interview is an accurate representation of my account and contains no mischaracterizations:

Print Name: [REDACTED] Date: 13 Feb 2020

Signature: [Signature] [REDACTED] Date: 13 Feb 2020

Qualitative Interview Member Check

Interview Report  1 /  2 (circle one)

1. Does the indicated report mirror your statements and overall interpretation of the interview to the best of your recollection?

YES /  NO (circle one)

2. Is there anything you would like to change or restate for clarity?

YES /  NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

3. Is there anything else you would like to let the researcher know about this interview / PME experience?

YES /  NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

By signing the below I confirm that the interview report produced by the researcher from my interview is an accurate representation of my account and contains no mischaracterizations:

Print Name:

[Redacted]

Date:

2/13/2020

Signature:

*Stanreed*

Date:

2/13/2020

Qualitative Interview Member Check

Interview Report 1 / 2 (circle one)

1. Does the indicated report mirror your statements and overall interpretation of the interview to the best of your recollection?

YES / NO (circle one)

2. Is there anything you would like to change or restate for clarity?

YES / NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

3. Is there anything else you would like to let the researcher know about this interview / PME experience?

YES / NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

By signing the below I confirm that the interview report produced by the researcher from my interview is an accurate representation of my account and contains no mischaracterizations:

Print Name: [REDACTED] Date: 2/13/2020  
Signature: Stanreed Date: 2/13/2020



Qualitative Interview Member Check

Interview Report: 1 / 2 (circle one)

1. Does the indicated report mirror your statements and overall interpretation of the interview to the best of your recollection?

YES / NO (circle one)

2. Is there anything you would like to change or restate for clarity?

YES / NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:


see annotation on paragraph 4

3. Is there anything else you would like to let the researcher know about this interview / PME experience?

YES / NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

By signing the below I confirm that the interview report produced by the researcher from my interview is an accurate representation of my account and contains no mischaracterizations:

Print Name: 

Date: 19 Feb 2020

Signature: 

Date: 19 Feb 2020

Qualitative Interview Member Check

Interview Report: 1 /  2 (circle one)

1. Does the indicated report mirror your statements and overall interpretation of the interview to the best of your recollection?

YES / NO (circle one)

2. Is there anything you would like to change or restate for clarity?

YES /  NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

3. Is there anything else you would like to let the researcher know about this interview / PME experience?

YES /  NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

By signing the below I confirm that the interview report produced by the researcher from my interview is an accurate representation of my account and contains no mischaracterizations:

Print Name:

[REDACTED]

Date:

19 Feb 2020

Signature:

Jan Kent

Date:

19 Feb 2020

Qualitative Interview Member Check

Interview Report:  1 /  2 (circle one)

1. Does the indicated report mirror your statements and overall interpretation of the interview to the best of your recollection?

YES /  NO (circle one)

2. Is there anything you would like to change or restate for clarity?

YES /  NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

3. Is there anything else you would like to let the researcher know about this interview / PME experience?

YES /  NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

By signing the below I confirm that the interview report produced by the researcher from my interview is an accurate representation of my account and contains no mischaracterizations:

Print Name:

[REDACTED]

Date: 2020 02 17

Signature:



Date: 2020 02 17

Qualitative Interview Member Check

Interview Report: 1 / 2 (circle one)

1. Does the indicated report mirror your statements and overall interpretation of the interview to the best of your recollection?

YES / NO (circle one)

2. Is there anything you would like to change or restate for clarity?

YES / NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

3. Is there anything else you would like to let the researcher know about this interview / PME experience?

YES / NO (circle one)

If so, please state that here:

By signing the below I confirm that the interview report produced by the researcher from my interview is an accurate representation of my account and contains no mischaracterizations:

Print Name:

[Redacted]

Date: 20200217

Signature:

*[Handwritten Signature]*

Date: 20200217

## APPENDIX C. RESEARCHER BIOGRAPHY

**NAME:** Wayne Alexander (Alex) Switzer

**RANK:** Captain                      **MOS:** 6002 / 8802

**DOR:** 01 Feb 2016    **AFADBD:** 02 Oct 2000    **EAS:** INDEF

**DCTB:** 30 July 2018    **POB:** Jackson, MS

**Rotation/ Expected Assignment:** Summer 2020 / TECOM

**LOCAL ADDRESS:** 3210 Salzburg Court  
College Station, TX 77845

**LOCAL PHONE NUMBER:** 360-969-1731

**T/O BILLET TITLE:** Advanced Degree Program Student



### CIVILIAN EDUCATION

<u>DATES ATTENDED</u>	<u>DEGREE OBTAINED</u>	<u>NAME OF SCHOOL</u>
2008-2011	BA Psychology and History (Double Major)	University of Mississippi
2018-2020	MS Curriculum & Instruction (May 2020)	Texas A&M University

### MILITARY SERVICE SCHOOLS / COURSES ATTENDED

2000	Recruit Training
2000-2001	MOS Schools
2003	Sergeant's Course
2005	Staff NCO Career Course
2007	Staff NCO Advanced Career Course
2008	MECEP Prep
2009	Officer's Candidate's School
2011-2012	The Basic School
2012	Aircraft Maintenance Officer School
2013-2015	Expeditionary Warfare School
2019-2021	Command and Staff College

Wayne Alexander (Alex) Switzer was born in Jackson, MS on 27 June 1978. He was raised and worked in the Clinton, MS area until he enlisted in the Marine Corps and attended Recruit Training at MCRD San Diego in 2000. After completion of Recruit Training, MCT, "A" School, "C" School, and Plane Captain's Course, PFC Switzer was assigned to VMAQ-4 as a Powerline Mechanic. While serving at VMAQ-4, Alex Switzer earned Plane Captain, CDI, CDQAR,

QAR, Low-Power Turn, and Aircraft Confined Space Entry Authority qualifications. He deployed to: PSAB Saudi Arabia in 2002 in support of Operation Southern Watch, Iwakuni, Japan in 2004, Talil and Al Asad, Iraq in 2004 / 2005, and to Iwakuni, Japan in 2007.

Sergeant Switzer was selected to become an instructor for EA-6B Powerplants and Related Systems at CNATTU Whidbey Island in April of 2007. He arrived as a newly promoted Staff Sergeant in May of that year. While instructing at CNATTU, he was qualified to instruct EA-6B Powerplants and Related Systems for both, Initial and Career levels, Aircraft Confined Space Entry Authority, and Low-Power Turn class in the Simulator. He was also qualified as a member of the Base Auxiliary Security Force and was the Regional Military Funeral Honors Program Director for a four county area.

SSgt Switzer was selected for the MECEP Program in May of 2008, attended MECEP Preparatory Course that summer, then began classes at Ole Miss in August of 2008. GySgt Switzer graduated with a double major in Psychology and History in August of 2011. Within two weeks, he was attending The Basic School in Quantico (TBS), VA. 2nd Lt Switzer graduated TBS in March of 2012 and then attended AMO School at Whiting Field, where he graduated in June of 2012.

2nd Lt Switzer attached to MALS-12 in July of 2012 and held the billets of Assistant PCO, Airframes/ALSS, and GSE Division Officer. He has been the MALS-12 Detachment OIC for exercises Cobra Gold 2013 and Forager Fury 2013. 1st Lt Switzer completed Expeditionary Warfare School and taught the Benefits and Career Opportunities Class at Iwakuni's Corporal's Course for two years.

1st Lt Switzer attached to VMFA(AW)-242 in April of 2014 and held the Billets of Assistant Aircraft Maintenance Officer, Maintenance Material Control Officer, and Material Control Officer. He deployed to Guam, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines during this tour. He has been the Program Manager for the Maintenance Training Program, Support Equipment Training and Licensing Program, Support Equipment Planned Maintenance System and the Tool Control Programs. He also served as a Panel Member for the new Benefits and Career Opportunities Class at Corporal's Course at MCAS, Iwakuni.

1st Lt Switzer attached to MALS-31 in July of 2015 and held the Billets of Airframes/ALSS Divisions Officer, and Assistant Aircraft Maintenance Officer, as a Captain. Captain Switzer was selected to the Advanced Degree Program through the FY2018 CCLEB Board and is now attending Texas A&M University full-time in pursuit of a MS in Curriculum & Instruction with a graduation date of May 2020. He will then receive a secondary MOS of 8802 Education Officer.

Personal Awards include: The Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (3), The Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (3), and The Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal.

Alex married the former Casey Garay of Garland, TX on 1 April 2004. They have a daughter, Emma Mackenzie, born October of 2004 and a son, Brody Alexander, born July of 2006.

## APPENDIX D. MARINE CORPS RANK STRUCTURE

Enlisted	Junior enlisted			Non-commissioned officers (NCOs)		Staff non-commissioned officers (SNCOs)						
Title (Abbreviation)	Private (Pvt)	Private First Class (PFC)	Lance Corporal (LCpl)	Corporal (Cpl)	Sergeant (Sgt)	Staff Sergeant (SSgt)	Gunnery Sergeant (GySgt)	Master Sergeant (MSgt)	First Sergeant (1stSgt)	Master Gunnery Sergeant (MGySgt)	Sergeant Major (SgtMaj)	Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps (SMMC)
US DoD Pay Grade	E-1	E-2	E-3	E-4	E-5	E-6	E-7	E-8		E-9		
NATO Code	OR-1	OR-2	OR-3	OR-4	OR-5	OR-6	OR-7	OR-8		OR-9		
Insignia	no insignia											
Warrant Officers												
Infantry Weapons Officer "Marine Gunner"	Warrant Officer (WO)			Chief Warrant Officer-2 (CWO2)		Chief Warrant Officer-3 (CWO3)		Chief Warrant Officer-4 (CWO4)		Chief Warrant Officer-5 (CWO5)		
US DoD Pay Grade	W-1			W-2		W-3		W-4		W-5		
NATO Code	WO-1			WO-2		WO-3		WO-4		WO-5		
Officer	Company-grade officers			Field-grade officers			General officers					
Title (Abbreviation)	Second lieutenant (2ndLt)	First lieutenant (1stLt)	Captain (Capt)	Major (Maj)	Lieutenant colonel (LtCol)	Colonel (Col)	Brigadier general (BGen)	Major general (MajGen)	Lieutenant general (LtGen)	General (Gen)		
US DoD Pay Grade	O-1	O-2	O-3	O-4	O-5	O-6	O-7	O-8	O-9	O-10		
NATO Code	OF-1		OF-2	OF-3	OF-4	OF-5	OF-6	OF-7	OF-8	OF-9		
Insignia												
Marine Service Uniform Insignia												

## APPENDIX E. RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Good morning / afternoon / evening,

I am contacting you to inform you about a study I am conducting and to inquire if you would be interested in participating. As part of my Master's Thesis, I am conducting research into the current state of Marine Corps Enlisted Professional Military Education. This study intends to identify multiple areas that need to be improved and redesigned in order to better prepare our Marines emotionally and academically to further the likelihood of improved formal education success in the realms of institutions of higher learning, while on active duty and as members of the civilian workforce.

Upon completion of this study and subsequent graduation from Texas A&M University, I will be assigned to the Enlisted PME section of the Training and Education Command in Quantico. This study will lay the groundwork for my efforts once I arrive there this summer. So, this is a unique opportunity to have a direct impact on the future of Enlisted PME.

Your participation would include two separate interviews where I would be asking 5-10 open-ended questions with the option for some probing or follow-on questions, as well. The intent is to acquire a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Enlisted Marines with PME. These qualitative interviews will give us the human insight behind PME beyond the quantitative data and numbers that can drive or hinder future improvements. These interviews will take between 45-70 minutes to complete and can be accomplished via FaceTime or other video chat opportunities.

This study does not offer any financial compensation. The only cost to you is your time. There is no pressure to participate, but I wanted to give you the opportunity if you have the time and interest to do so.

Participants in this study will be assigned pseudonyms to protect anonymity. There is no risk of reprisal of any sort due to your participation in this study. All study data and materials will be kept on a Duo authenticated computer or in a locked file cabinet in Harrington Tower Room 308A. After the mandatory retainment period of three years, all files and data will be destroyed.

To be eligible for this study, one must be an Active Duty Enlisted Marine Staff Non Commissioned Officer or Prior-Enlisted Commissioned Officer with less than 12 months as an Officer. The intent is that the participants are career Marines with a depth of experience with Enlisted PME. This will allow for a more thorough view of the state of today's Marine Corps Enlisted PME.

To accept this offer to participate or to inquire about any questions or concerns you may have, please contact:

**Wayne Alexander (Alex) Switzer**  
**Phone:** (360) 969-1731  
**Address:** 3210 Salzburg Court  
College Station, TX 77845

**Texas A&M University**  
**Teaching Learning & Culture Dept**  
308 Harrington Tower  
College Station, TX 77843-4232  
**Phone:** (979) 845-8384  
**Fax:** (979) 845-9663



## APPENDIX F. VERBAL INFORMATION SCRIPT

### **Verbal Script of the Information Provided Orally to Participants**

Good morning / afternoon / evening, as mentioned in the recruitment script, this study is being conducted to explore the current state of Marine Corps Enlisted Professional Military Education. This study intends to identify multiple areas that need to be improved and redesigned in order to better prepare our Marines emotionally and academically to further the likelihood of improved formal education success in the realms of institutions of higher learning, while on active duty and as members of the civilian workforce.

Before we begin, I want to remind you that your participation is greatly appreciated and is voluntary. You may decide to withdraw from this study or ask for clarity to address any questions or concerns you may have at any time. I will be transcribing your words in real time via keyboard and utilizing some shorthand. Once we are interview complete, I will clean-up the report and correct any spelling / grammar mistakes I have made.

At that point, I will send you a copy of the report. I will need you to review the report to ensure I captured your words, (not mine) and that I have not mischaracterized any of your statements. At that point, I will send you a member check document that I will need you to sign. The member check is created to document that you agree I have not mischaracterized your statements and that the words used are yours. Once you have signed that document, I will need you to scan and send me a copy for my records. We will do this after both interview sessions. Do you have any questions or concerns at this time? If not, we will begin the interview.

## APPENDIX G. MARINE CORPS IRB APPROVAL LETTER



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
3300 RUSSELL ROAD  
QUANTICO, VA 22134-5001

3900  
C 4623  
6 Feb 20

**From:** Human Research Protection Official, U.S. Marine Corps (Attention: Ms Leah Watson), 2079 Barnett Avenue, Quantico, VA 22134  
**To:** Dr. George P. Slattery, Principal Investigator, Texas A&M University, 400 Bizzell St, College Station, TX 77843  
Mr. Wayne Alexander Switzer, Texas A&M University, 400 Bizzell St, College Station, TX 77843  
**Subj:** HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM U.S. MARINE CORPS ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OF PROPOSED STUDY: "REDESIGNING ENLISTED PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AND BEYOND"  
**Ref:** (a) DoDI 3216.02  
(b) SECNAVINST 3900.16D  
(c) MCO 3900.18  
(d) U.S. Marine Corps Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) Policy and Procedures (20 May 19)  
(e) Texas A&M University Federalwide Assurance 00000092  
(f) Email Major Brandon Bowman, USMC Survey Officer/Wayne Switzer, Student Investigator of 24 Jan 20  
(g) MCO 5300.18 Marine Corps Survey  
**Encl:** (1) Texas A&M University IRB Application  
(2) Switzer Investigator Protocol  
(3) Switzer Thesis Proposal  
(4) Study Recruitment Script  
(5) Verbal Script of the Information Provided Orally to Participants  
(6) Texas A&M University HRPP Informed Consent Document  
(7) Qualitative Interview Questions  
(8) Qualitative Interview Member Check  
(9) CG EDCOM ltr 3900 CG of 4 Feb with Capt Switzer's ltr requesting support of 24 Jan 20, with Military Biography  
(10) Texas A&M University IRB ltr of 4 Feb 20 Re: 2020-0015 (NHSR Submission)  
(11) CITI DON Supported Extramural Performer Course  
(12) E-mail between Capt Switzer and Col Girard of 3 Feb 20, Command granting support of research  
(13) E-mail between Maj Raines and Capt Switzer of 4 Feb 20, Command granting support of research

1. Per references (a) through (e), I have performed an Administrative Review, on behalf of the U.S. Marine Corps Human Research Protection Program (USMC HRPP), of the research titled "Redesigning Enlisted Professional Military Education for the 21st Century and Beyond." As outlined in your thesis proposal, the objective of this research is to provide support for the contention that the United States Marine Corps must improve the quality of Enlisted Professional Military Education (PME) to better prepare Marines emotionally and academically to further the likelihood of improved formal education success, while on active duty and as members of the civilian workforce. This research is being conducted as partial fulfillment of academic requirements Mr. Switzer as a Masters candidate at Texas A&M University, College Station, TX.

2. The Texas A&M University IRB Application at enclosure (1) provides a summary of documents submitted to Texas A&M University IRB. As reflected at

Subj: HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM U.S. MARINE CORPS ADMINISTRATIVE  
REVIEW OF PROPOSED STUDY: "REDESIGNING ENLISTED PROFESSIONAL MILITARY  
EDUCATION FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AND BEYOND"

enclosures (2) through (8), these documents include the Investigator Protocol, the consent document, recruitment scripts, interview questions and a Qualitative Interview Member Check that will be used to provide participants with an opportunity to provide feedback on the interviewer notes. This office reviewed all enclosures to ensure compliance with Department of Defense and USMC HRPP regulations and policies

3. As outlined in the research protocol enclosure (2), the Investigator will seek voluntary participation from four active duty enlisted Marines, (2) males and (2) females, who have experience with the enlisted PME program at Marine Corps Base Quantico. Using social media (Facebook Messenger), participants will be recruited to take part in a voluntary qualitative interview to examine their personal lived experience with PME. Enclosure (9) provides support for your research from the Commanding General, Marine Corps University/Education Command (CG EDCOM).

4. Reference (e) is Texas A&M University Federalwide Assurance (FWA00000092) with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which authorizes Texas A&M University to conduct human subject research. The Texas A&M University FWA expires 28 March 2023. As reflected at enclosure (10), the Texas A&M University IRB reviewed this research proposal and found that the proposed activities are not research involving human subjects as defined by 45 CFR 46.102 (1), based on the research not being designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.

5. Enclosure (11) is the certificate of completion of research ethics training, to include the course for "DON Supported Extramural Performers" as provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Enclosures (12) and (13) provide the approval of the immediate Commanding Officers of the Marines that will be contacted as potential participants in this research.

6. Review by the Texas A&M University IRB, the CG EDCOM approval, and the proof of completion of research ethics training, satisfy Marine Corps HRPP review requirements for this study. Based on this review of the enclosures and the Performer provided documentation, I find that the Texas A&M determination appears to be in compliance with DoD component and USMC HRPP policies. I concur with Texas A&M University determination that this activity does not meet the definition of Human Subject Research. No further HRP program review is required for these interviews

7. Based on the determination that this study does not meet the definition of human subject research, there is no requirement to obtain informed consent however you are encouraged to follow best practices regarding voluntary participation. In addition, because you are conducting your research with a military population, the requirement for Commanding Officer approval prior to contacting members of the command still applies.

8. Reference (f) provides email confirmation from the Marine Corps Survey Officer that there is not requirement for Survey Office review and approval under reference (g) based on the number of interview participants being fewer than ten.

Subj: HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM U.S. MARINE CORPS ADMINISTRATIVE  
REVIEW OF PROPOSED STUDY: "REDESIGNING ENLISTED PROFESSIONAL MILITARY  
EDUCATION FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AND BEYOND"

9. If you have any questions or require further information, please don't  
hesitate to contact me at (703) 432-2566, e-mail leah.watson@usmc.mil. I  
wish you success with your study and appreciate your compliance with the USMC  
HRPP review and approval process.

*L. B. Watson*

L. B. WATSON

Copy to:  
USMC Survey Officer  
EDCOM IRB Vice Chair

## APPENDIX H. INFORMED CONSENT

**Informed Consent was not required as this study was considered “Not Human Subject Research,” but was conducted as a best practice.**

**Informed Consent Documents Removed to Protect PII.**

**They are stored in a secure location.**