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14. ABSTRACT
While the Force Preservation Council and Human Factors Council Programs are beneficial tools to leaders in identifying junior enlisted Marine personal issues, they have shortcomings. As Marine Corps senior leadership continues to stress the importance of taking care of junior enlisted Marines, shortfalls exist with current force preservation initiatives. Implementation of a Peer Evaluation Program effectively augments the service's force preservation inadequacies by incorporating bottom-up, peer feedback on areas to include: socializing, alcohol consumption, social media use, spending habits, relationships, and health and lifestyle. The Peer Evaluation Program identifies and aligns at-risk Marines with assistance resources sooner, benefiting the individual Marine and Marine Corps.

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**THE PEER EVALUATION PROGRAM: STRENGTHENING JUNIOR ENLISTED
MARINE FORCE PRESERVATION WITH PEER EVALUATIONS.**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: The Peer Evaluation Program: Strengthening Junior Enlisted Marine Force Preservation with Peer Evaluations.

Author: Major Kevin M. Soeder, United States Marine Corps.

Thesis: Incorporating a Peer Evaluation Program into the existing Force Preservation Council Program and Human Factors Council Program approaches will identify at-risk junior enlisted Marines sooner, align them to the proper assistance resources, and enable them to overcome their individual challenges, benefitting both the individual Marine and the Marine Corps.

Discussion: While the Force Preservation Council and Human Factors Council Programs are beneficial tools to leaders to identify junior enlisted Marine personal issues, the current system has shortcomings. As Marine Corps senior leadership continues to stress the importance of taking care of junior enlisted Marines, noticeable shortfalls exist with current force preservation initiatives. Implementation of a Peer Evaluation Program effectively augments existing monthly Force Preservation Council Program and Human Factors Council Program inadequacies by closing the current gap that exists with these top-down formats. The Peer Evaluation Program approach incorporates bottom-up, peer-to-peer feedback on areas of personal importance to include the following: socializing, alcohol consumption, social media use, spending habits, relationships, and health and lifestyle. This is beneficial as frequently a Marine's peers are more in tune with his or her problem areas than officer and Staff Non-Commissioned Officer leadership. Ultimately, the Peer Evaluation Program identifies and aligns at-risk Marines with assistance resources sooner, benefitting the individual Marine, unit, and Marine Corps as a whole.

Conclusion: Review of regular correspondence from Marine Corps senior leadership, to include current and previous Commandant Planning Guidance documents, identifies a trend in directed focus on junior enlisted Marine-related issues. This tendency is due to the insufficiencies associated with the Marine Corps's only existing service-wide regular evaluation standards – the Force Preservation Council and Human Factors Council Programs – both of which do not adequately address the variety of junior enlisted Marine problem areas. By augmenting the existing Force Preservation Council Program and Human Factors Council Program with the benefits of a regular peer evaluation system, known as the Peer Evaluation Program, the uptick in junior enlisted Marine issues will be reduced.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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List of Tables

Table 1: 2015 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention / Binge Drinkers..... 10

Table 2: 2019 Pew Research Center / Social Media Platform Use..... 11

List of Figures

Figure 1: Behavior Assessment Matrix Worksheet Part 1 and Part 2..... 14

Figure 2: Behavior Assessment Matrix Worksheet Part 3..... 14

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... i

MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE DISCLAIMER..... ii

LIST OF TABLES..... iii

LIST OF FIGURES..... iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS..... v

PREFACE..... vi

INTRODUCTION..... 1

BACKGROUND..... 1

PART 1: Analysis of Existing Junior Enlisted Evaluation Tools..... 3

PART 2: Existing Military Peer Evaluation Processes..... 5

PART 3: Benefits of the Peer Evaluation Program..... 7

PART 4: Peer Evaluation Program Implementation Challenges..... 16

PART 5: Peer Evaluation Program Case Study..... 17

CONCLUSION..... 25

APPENDIX 1: List of Acronyms..... 26

END NOTES..... 27

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 29

Preface

The Peer Evaluation Program (PEP) construct discussed in this paper is intrusive in nature. Use of such a program encroaches on the existing chain-of-command responsibilities to identify and act on junior enlisted Marine problem areas; however, I believe that PEP use can be a valuable tool in identifying at-risk junior enlisted Marines earlier, reducing the likelihood of small problems manifesting into large issues that negatively impact at the individual Marine and unit levels. Although the PEP benefited me during 15-months of command at Marine Helicopter Squadron One (HMX-1) Security Company, my after-action data points are limited due to the relatively short duration of use.

I am appreciative of the tremendous assistance that I received in drafting this paper. Specifically, I am thankful to the HMX-1 command team during my tenure at the squadron. Colonel Garrett Hoffman, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Volkert, and Sergeant Major Sean Cox entrusted me in developing a PEP construct that was used with great benefit. Much credit is due to the HMX-1 Security Company leadership during my time as company commander for bringing the PEP methodology to fruition, specifically Master Gunnery Sergeant John Alen, and Captains Kevin Mills and Joshua Cook. Ultimately the program's success resulted from the trust in the process by the junior enlisted Marines, and PEP oversight from the company's platoon commanders and platoon sergeants. My academic mentors, Colonel Seth Ocloo and Dr. Paolo Tripodi, from the Lejeune Leadership Institute, provided considerable guidance to transform my idea into a structured thesis and paper. And lastly, my wonderful wife, Maria, and children, Olivia and Lucas, were beyond understanding of the ample time that I spent researching and writing to meet the demanding Master of Military Science degree requirements. I am grateful for their continued support towards my military career.

Introduction

The Marine Corps bears an increased challenge from external factors that negatively impact at the individual Marine level. These trials include the realms of socializing, alcohol consumption, social media use, spending habits, relationships, and health and lifestyle. Specifically, junior enlisted Marines continue to make poor decisions in these identified areas, that when left not addressed by their chain-of-command (COC), often result in long-term harm to themselves, and possible career-impacting administrative action, to include dismissal from the service.

To identify areas of concern in the lives of a unit's junior enlisted Marines, the Marine Corps uses monthly formal standards known as the Force Preservation Council (FPC) Program and the Human Factors Council (HFC) Program. Unfortunately, the top-down format of both programs requires and assumes that officers and Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCO) within the COC are aware of specific challenges in the lives of their junior enlisted Marines, which often is not the case. Incorporating a Peer Evaluation Program (PEP) into the existing FPC Program and HFC Program approaches will identify at-risk junior enlisted Marines sooner, align them to the proper assistance resources, and enable them to overcome their individual challenges, benefitting both the individual Marine and the Marine Corps.

Background

A recurring theme from Marine Corps senior leadership centers around taking care of Marines by identifying those that are at-risk and aligning them to the appropriate means of assistance. This direction is voiced historically, and is promulgated in the modern-day Marine Corps. In August 1920, Lieutenant General John A. Lejeune, the 13th Commandant of the

Marine Corps (CMC), authored Marine Corps Order Number 29, also known as Relations Between Officers and Men. His order identified an officer's relationship to their men as that of father and son, specifically stating that junior enlisted Marines "are in the formative period of their lives and officers owe it to them, to their parents, and to the Nation, that when discharged from the service they should be far better men physically, mentally, and morally than they were when they enlisted."¹ This thought continues as a common trend today with guidance in the format of multiple Commandant's Planning Guidance documents, as well as formal White Letters. The 38th CMC, General Berger, identified that "Leaders must ensure Marines are well- led and cared for physically, emotionally, and spiritually,"² also highlighting that the upswing in non-end of active service attrition is unacceptable.

Previous Marine Corps Commandants mentioned the same concern with junior enlisted Marine conduct. Planning guidance from the 35th CMC, General Amos, identified the need for increased behavioral health efforts to adequately address suicide and substance abuse prevention measures.³ On a similar theme, White Letter 1-17, authored by the 37th CMC, General Neller, directed leaders to "increase focus on online sexual harassment, violence threats, and other forms of misconduct."⁴ In addition, General Neller's White Letter 1-19 identified that "the center of gravity of our readiness is our Marines and their families – caring for them is fundamental to our ethos."⁵ Unfortunately all of the above mentioned problem areas continue to be present at the junior enlisted Marine level, consistently requiring increased time and effort by already overtasked command leadership that would be better served addressing other priorities. A PEP construct bridges the gap in officer and SNCO leadership awareness of junior enlisted Marine problems.

Part 1: Analysis of Existing Junior Enlisted Evaluation Tools

Within the Marine Corps, the FPC Program and HFC Program concepts are the command-directed standards to identify any potential issues at the junior enlisted Marine level. More specifically, the FPC Program, outlined in the 2016 Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1500.60, formally established the standard organization and conduct of the program, with a mission to optimize “the potential of all active and reserve Marines and sailors by identifying individual risk factors and applying holistic risk management measures in order to improve individual and unit readiness.”⁶ The FPC Program’s method uses consistent, engaged, and proactive leadership at all levels to identify and mitigate the daily stressors that affect the lives and performance of Marines and sailors.

However, the program’s goal of using engaged leadership and risk management guidance “to recognize and intervene early when stressors and potentially risky behaviors first develop in Service members in order to interrupt the chain of events that can lead to an adverse outcome”⁷ remains difficult. The FPC Program’s lack of specific guidance and methods for lower-level leadership to regularly report junior enlisted Marine problem areas to their leadership is problematic. Not only are junior enlisted Marines often times uncomfortable with taking their personal issues to their officer superiors, many are also likely unwilling to discuss specifics with their SNCO leaders. This puts an unfair burden on both officer and SNCO leadership (commanding officer and senior enlisted advisor billets), who are held accountable for their Marines’ personal issues and potentially negative actions.

A key component of the FPC Program is the included Risk Assessment Mapping Process, which is a cyclic process to continuously assess and mitigates risk and/or stressors of Marines and Sailors. More specifically, this process includes high (red), medium (yellow), and low

(green) risk assessment codes to track high-risk Marines from month-to-month. These risk assessment codes, generated by key leadership with information gathered from the COC, often lack the granularity of specific details due to the rigidity of the reporting chain. This in turn negatively impacts the timeliness and amount of assistance provided to at-risk Marines. The lack of knowledge about individual situations results in compounding issues that impact both their individual health and welfare, as well as the unit's mission accomplishment.

Similar to the FPC Program, the HFC Program has the same general make-up and purpose, which includes a top-down COC approach to identifying individual junior enlisted Marine areas of concern. The HFC Program, although not specifically outlined in its own subject MCO, is identified in the service's safety program, known as MCO 5100.29B. More specifically, the HFC Program is promulgated as aviation unit-specific, where it falls underneath the Director of Safety and Standardization (DOSS) Section's responsibility. The HFC Program is detailed within the Operational Risk Management Status Report guideline as a monthly active duty component and quarterly reserve component that reviews "the physical condition, psychological well-being, attitude, and motivation of aircrew and squadron personnel."⁸

Like the FPC Program, the lack of the HFC Program's specific guidance on standardized processes and procedures to evaluate at-risk Marines is omitted, and the same concern with expecting key leadership to be aware of junior enlisted Marine problems is apparent. Along the same lines, Captain Jason Gelfand identifies a concern with the HFC Program in his 2000 *Marine Corps Gazette* article. He states that the program considers "personal or professional circumstances that may cause unusual stress...although detailed examination of these matters in a large group is not recommended."⁹ This alludes to conflict with the group-setting construct of

the existing Marine Corps HFC Program, which does not lead to adequate identification and alignment of at-risk junior enlisted Marines to appropriate assistance resources.

The onus is on officer and SNCO leadership to know and report highly personal information about their junior enlisted Marine population, which is increasingly difficult to obtain via the existing FPC and HFC Programs. Although both the FPC and HFC Programs are valuable resources to a unit, each lacks a detailed methodology to identify and report serious junior enlisted Marine issues to the COC. The expectation that officer and SNCO leadership will be made aware of problems at the junior enlisted Marine level is unrealistic and frequently leaves troubled Marines in need of help.

Marine Corps units differ in their success with the FPC and HFC formats, with numerous variables being the reason why, to include the size of the unit, rank structure, and command climate. Even for units that achieve lasting success with the standard FPC and HFC programs, the PEP has the potential to add another layer of oversight to the junior enlisted Marine evaluation requirements, benefitting both at-risk Marines and the unit as a whole.

Part 2: Existing Military Peer Evaluation Processes

Across the military service branches there are minimal examples of regularly used peer evaluations that address the junior enlisted problems that the Marine Corps FPC and HFC Programs inadequately cover. At Marine Corps entry-level officer training, to include Officer Candidate School (OCS) and The Basic School (TBS), there are established programs for peer-provided evaluation formats that deliver remarkable insight into the leadership capabilities of the student population. Owen West confirmed this in his 1998 *United States Naval Institute* article by quoting a former TBS platoon commander as saying “squad peer evaluations were the single

best way I could monitor and predict the performance of lieutenants.”¹⁰ The author goes on to state that at Marine Corps OCS and TBS, peer input is so vital that it is a deciding factor in screening candidates and assigning military occupational specialties.¹¹ However, few units within the U.S. military currently use a standardized peer evaluation model. In fact, the only service with a large-scale regular peer evaluation-like methodology is the U.S. Army, with both modern examples, as well as recorded instances dating back to the 1960s. Historically, in 1962 Klieger, DeJung, and Dubuisson completed peer rating research, highlighting the importance of ratings obtained from peers as being important to selecting enlisted men for participation in Army-wide programs including OCS, NCO academy training, Ranger School, Special Forces, recruiter assignment, and various forms of specialist training.¹² In fact, the author of this paper can attest to the value of peer evaluations within Ranger School, and witnessed multiple students disenrolled from the course or recycled back to previous training days as a result of substandard performance identified with peer evaluations.

An increasing problem with at-risk junior enlisted soldiers is identified and addressed by the U.S. Army. In 2013 the service created the Risk Reduction Program (RRP), which “focuses on effective use of installation resources and coordinated efforts between commanders and installation agencies to identify high-risk behavior patterns and to implement effective interventions”¹³ More specifically, the RRP tracks, assesses, and acts on a number of high-risk soldier behaviors to include “deaths, accidents, self-harm, suicide attempts, absent without leave, drug offenses, alcohol offenses, traffic violations, crimes against persons, crimes against property, crimes against society, domestic violence, child abuse, financial problems, and positive urinalysis tests.”¹⁴ The RRP is an important tool to U.S. Army leadership in both understanding

and having the opportunity to help with resolving individual soldier issues, but there are additional mechanisms of the program that provide leaders with even more insight.

Key components of the RRP are the Unit Risk Inventory (URI) and Reintegration Unit Risk Inventory (RURI), which are both anonymous surveys that contain questions designed to screen for high-risk behaviors and attitudes that negatively impact unit readiness. However, a negative aspect of both of these surveys is that input is only provided by the individual soldier, with no avenue for peer contribution. All details received as part of the overall process is placed solely on the soldier in question. An opportunity is missed to gain additional insight from those with frequent interaction. Also included as part of the RRP is a web-based Commander's Risk Reduction Dashboard (CRRD) that consolidates information from multiple U.S. Army databases and provides details about high-risk soldiers within each unit to individual commanders, to include the specifics of the incident, and when they occurred.¹⁵ As with the URI and RURI surveys, the lack of a peer input mechanism within the CCRD is a missed opportunity.

Part 3: Benefits of the Peer Evaluation Program

A PEP construct adequately addresses currently omitted details from the FPC and HFC Program formats. More importantly, the PEP focuses on normal concern areas that impact a Marine's daily life. Included are factors that directly relate to behavioral health, which Insight, a leading national psychiatry provider, defines as "the scientific study of the emotions, behaviors, and biology relating to a person's well-being, their ability to function in everyday life and their concept of self."¹⁶ Specific to the Marine Corps, commanders are responsible for the readiness and safety of their Marines. In her 2019 article, "Behavioral Health in the Marine Corps", Dr. Marta Garrett identifies the need to define "a data collection process and mandating what data is

critical for each unit to track to help commanders determine where their unique unit risks are and focus on specific prevention needs at the unit level.”¹⁷ The PEP fills this current void.

The PEP is a monthly analytical tool that enables commanders to better identify at-risk junior enlisted Marines within their ranks, and detects and resolves a wide scope of problems early, before they negatively impact the individual Marine and his or her unit. Use of a Behavior Assessment Matrix (BAM) accomplishes this by identifying the following criteria for evaluation: socializing, alcohol consumption, social media use, spending habits, relationships, and health and lifestyle. These specific areas present routine challenges to junior enlisted Marines. Additional details specific to each BAM designated evaluation criteria are as follows:

Question 1 – Socializing: Does this Marine socialize with other members of their squad during off-duty hours? Question 1 – Socializing Rating Scale: (0) Unknown, (1) Never, (2) Occasionally, (3) Frequently.

A junior enlisted Marine’s socializing routines with his or her peers provides great insight on many potential problem areas. Changes in socializing are tell-tale signs that a Marine has problems that require assistance, to include suicidal ideations. The impact of identifying changes in a Marine’s social status is even more beneficial with today’s junior enlisted Marines. As Millennials* (or Generation Y Marines) they “are socially conscious, aware of their own vast numbers, and their impact on the environment.”¹⁸ Present-day junior enlisted Marines are more adept at identifying social norm changes within their peer group than more senior Marines

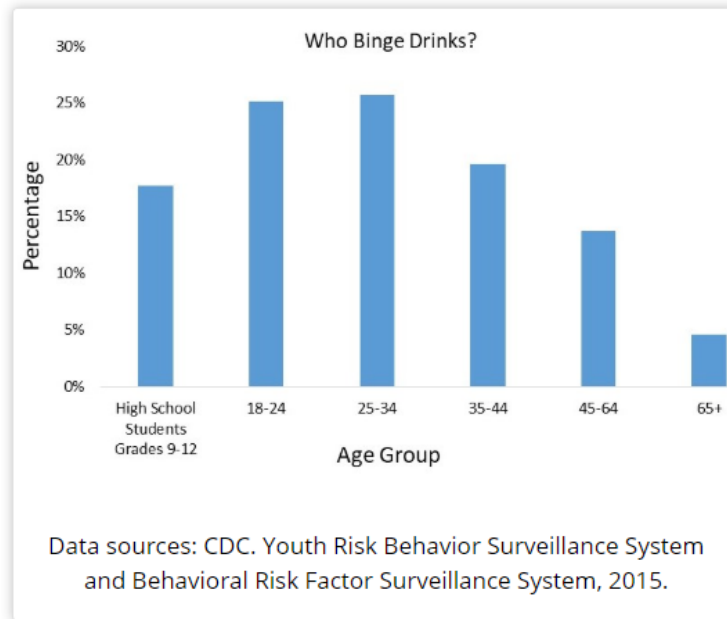
*The term Millennials refers to a generation of people born between 1982 and 2000. While there is much debate about the exact timeframe that makes up this generation, these dates form the general consensus.

in the COC due to variables that include age difference, interests, and observation time. As such, regular updates on a junior enlisted Marine's social status are an important metric.

Question 2: Alcohol Consumption – Does this Marine drink alcohol, and are their drinking habits of concern? Question 2: Alcohol Consumption Rating Scale: (0) Unknown, (1) Binge Drinker/Habitual Abuser, (2) Seldom drinks to an unhealthy level, (3) Responsible/Social Drinker/Non-Drinker.

A junior enlisted Marine's drinking habits lead to personal and professional problems when ill-use occurs. A 2018 exploratory case study of environmental factors related to military alcohol misuse found that excessive alcohol use, or binge drinking, "is associated with a broad range of negative health and social consequences, including productivity loss, legal problems, arrests for driving under the influence, incarceration, injury and hospitalization, motor vehicle crashes, physical aggression, domestic violence, risky sexual behavior, suicide, addiction, and death,"¹⁹ with the study concluding that "in general, younger age, enlisted pay grade...were related with higher rates of alcohol-related problems among Marines."²⁰ Many officers and SNCOs agree that alcohol consumption by junior enlisted Marines directly relates to disciplinary actions, and is routinely the catalyst to bigger future performance complications. Understanding problem areas with a junior enlisted Marine's drinking habits are important, as identifying them early will ensure that assistance resources can be assigned as early as possible. Table 1 provides additional binge drinking insight by age group.

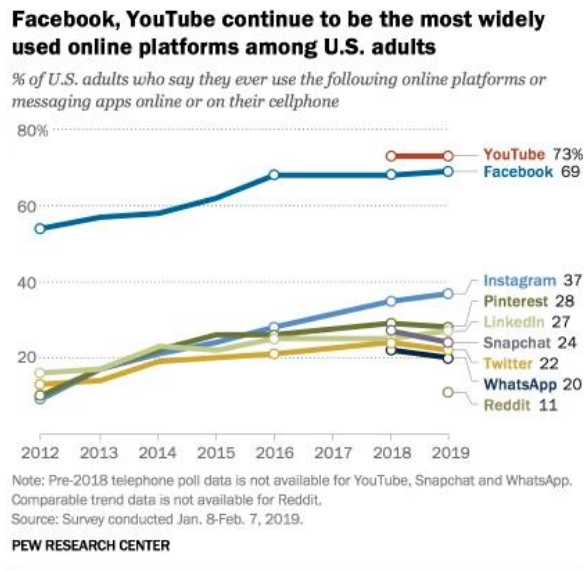
Table 1: Binge Drinking Data



Question 3: Social Media Use – Does this Marine use social media, and if so, do they post content that is of concern? Question 3: Social Media Use Rating Scale – (0) Unknown, (1) Dark Postings/Signs of Needing Help, (2) Some Inappropriate Postings, (3) Appropriate Postings/No Social Media Use.

The impacts of social media use, both within the Marine Corps and civilian society, are profound. Over the past ten-years, since the ban on social media use from Marine Corps networks was lifted,²¹ Marines of all ranks continue to leverage social media platforms as a primary means of communication. Such profound use of social media, an excellent opportunity to communicate thoughts and opinions to the masses, also presents an avenue for identifying areas of concern within a junior enlisted Marine’s personal life. By including social media use as a category within the PEP, an at-risk junior enlisted Marine’s COC is better able to identify and provide help and additional training well before misuse problems impact the individual Marine or unit. Table 2 identifies social media use by platform.

Table 2: Social Media Data (source: Pew Research Center)



Question 4: Spending Habits – Does this Marine show signs of financial responsibility?

Question 4: Spending Habits Rating Scale – (0) Unknown, (1) In Debt/Difficulty Paying Bills On-Time, (2) Spends Freely/Lives Paycheck to Paycheck, (3) Financially Stable/Able to Invest Money.

Fiscally responsible junior enlisted Marines translate their good habits with money to other areas within their life. Unfortunately, a large number of junior enlisted Marines have issues with their finances, to include credit problems, that impact their ability to invest for their futures, pay their bills on-time, and for some, to qualify for and maintain a security clearance. According to a 2010 survey “27 percent of service members reported more than \$10,000 in credit card debt compared to 16 percent of civilians, while 21 percent also reported the use of high-cost non-bank lending sources such as payday or auto loans in the last 5 years.”²² By including a finance-specific category within the PEP construct, a Marine’s COC is more likely to engage early and often with Marines that identify as having finance-related problems.

Question 5: Relationships – Describe this Marine’s relationships with others (dating/romantic), friends, and/or family. Question 5: Relationships Rating Scale – (0) Unknown, (1) Has recently experienced a break-up/has routine relationship problems with others, (2) Experiences occasional negative relationship issues, (3) Currently involved in happy/healthy relationships.

Another stressful subject to junior enlisted Marines is relationship-related. Although studies conducted both within the civilian population and U.S. Armed Forces confirm that Millennials view relationships and romantic love differently compared to their seniors, which includes more acceptance of non-traditional values than previous generations, relationships still weigh heavily on individual Marines.²³ As with Question 1 (the Socializing-related question), it is difficult for a Marine’s COC to understand and provide necessary assistance to a junior enlisted Marine’s relationship issues due to age differences and command relationships that make such discussions problematic.

Question 6: Health and Lifestyle – Have there been any changes in this Marine’s lifestyle (weight gain, eating habits, physical training frequency, etc.)? Question 6: Health and Lifestyle Rating Scale – (0) Unknown, (1) Noticeable Weight Gain/Loss, Eating Poorly, No Physical Training, (2) Unhealthy Lifestyle/Infrequent Physical Training, (3) Healthy Weight and Diet/Regular Physical Training.

The last metric included within the BAM construct is specific to health and lifestyle. Although the category is broad, input received can directly relate to problem areas for junior enlisted Marines. Diet and military appearance are variables within this category, and are important to monitor due to “rising obesity rates among current and potential service members attributing to higher attrition rates and weight control program enrollments.”²⁴ On a similar note,

a survey of more than 16,000 military personnel in 2005 indicated that the combined prevalence of overweight and obesity in military personnel increased to an all-time high that year, with 12.9 percent of military personnel not meeting height and weight standards.²⁵ Perhaps health and diet are categories easier for a junior enlisted Marine's chain-of-command to influence than the other categories described due to problems being visible. However, many argue that understanding the reasons behind health and lifestyle choices is easily defined by peers who often times can view specifics both while in a duty status and after when on liberty.

With the BAM areas of evaluation, to include specific questions and rating scales, now defined, further review of the entirety of the document is beneficial. In total, the BAM is broken down into three separate parts:

BAM Part 1: This includes a Marine identification area, as well as a defined rating category and rating input section that was detailed above. Within this part, each junior enlisted Marine within a squad rates how they perceive the Marines within their designated squad according to the BAM criteria (socializing, alcohol consumption, social media use, spending habits, relationships, and health and lifestyle). For example, in a twelve Marine squad, each Marine completes twelve BAM documents, one for each squad member, including themselves.

BAM Part 2: This includes a "Questions and Rating" section that identifies questions to be answered specific to BAM criteria, as well as a rating scale from 0 to 3. Table 4 depicts the questions per category (example, the socializing category asks "Does this Marine socialize with other members of the unit during off-duty hours?"). Within this part, the Marine completing the BAM inputs a 0, 1, 2, or 3, which will highlight any existing problem areas. Figure 1 identifies a BAM Part 1 and Part 2 in a BAM document format.

Figure 1: BAM “Questions and Rating” Section

<p>Questions and Rating Selections:</p> <p>Socializing: Does this Marine socialize with other members of the squadron during off-duty hours? <i>Rating Scale:</i> 0 Unknown 1 Never 2 Occasionally 3 Frequently</p> <p>Drinking: Does this Marine partake in alcohol consumption? <i>Rating Scale:</i> 0 Unknown 1 Binge Drinker/Habitual Abuser 2 Seldom drinks to an unhealthy level 3 Responsible/Social Drinker/Non-Drinker</p> <p>Social Media: Does this Marine utilize Social Media? If so, what type of content do they project/post? <i>Rating Scale:</i> 0 Unknown 1 Dark Postings/Signs of Needing Help 2 Some Inappropriate Postings 3 Appropriate Postings/No Social Media Use</p> <p>Spending Habits: Does this Marine spend money appropriately and live within their means? <i>Rating Scale:</i> 0 Unknown 1 In Debt/Difficulty Paying Bills On-Time 2 Spends Freely/Lives Paycheck to Paycheck 3 Financially Stable/Able to Investment Money</p> <p>Relationships: Describe the Marine’s relationships with significant others (dating/romantic), friends, and/or family members. Have there been any recent changes that have affected the way they act? <i>Rating Scale:</i> 0 Unknown 1 Has recently experienced a “break up” / has routine relationship problems with others 2 Experiences occasional negative relationship issues 3 Currently involved in happy/healthy relationships</p> <p>Health/Lifestyle: Have there been any changes in this Marine’s lifestyle (weight gain, eating habits, PT frequency, etc.)? <i>Rating Scale:</i> 0 Unknown 1 Noticeable Weight Gain/Loss, Eating Poorly, No PT 2 Unhealthy Lifestyle/Infrequent PT 3 Healthy Weight and Diet/PTs Regularly</p>

BAM Part 3: This includes a “Coordinating Instructions” and “Comments” section.

Specifically, the “Coordinating Instructions” section contains any special instructions to the Marines completing the BAM, with exact contents ultimately being a commander decision. The “Comments” section adds additional details to any ratings inputted by the Marine completing the BAM; however, any rating of “1” within Part 1 requires a comment (example, if the Marine completing the BAM ranks a member of his squad a 1 for drinking, they are able to follow the numerical rating with written details). Figure 2 identifies Part 3 in a BAM document format.

Figure 2: BAM “Coordinating Instructions” and “Comments” Section

<p>Date: _____ Name: _____ Platoon/Section/Squad: _____</p> <p>Coordinating Instructions:</p> <p>This is a squad-level peer-to-peer evaluation. There will be NO REPERCUSSIONS on responses from this evaluation (i.e. you rate someone’s drinking that isn’t 21).</p> <p>The Continuous Evaluation Program/Behavior Assessment Matrix ARE NOT part of the YW clearance process. This is strictly to identify at risk Marines within Security Company to ensure necessary help is provided prior to reaching the point of loss of their Yankee White Clearance.</p> <p>*If someone was given a rating of 1, please provide comments for additional context.*</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

With the BAM defined, it is important to institute a standard operating procedure for monthly completion and analysis. The following PEP and BAM variables should be considered:

BAM Completion: As a sensitive personal document in a hard-copy format, BAMs are completed with COC oversight, compiled, and sent directly to the senior officer and SNCO billet holders within the unit for review (at the company-level, the Company Commander and First Sergeant would be in receipt of all BAM documents). Due to the potential for sensitive information being included on BAMs, other members of a Marine's COC (fire team, squad, platoon) should not review the details. Once reviewed by the senior officer and SNCO leadership, they will back-brief the rest of the COC, and seek any assistance from their subordinate leaders as is necessary.

BAM Analysis: In hard-copy format, the senior officer and SNCO leadership should review all completed BAMs to determine if there are any annotated concerns. Case-by-case, they will speak directly with the originator of the BAM, individual Marines being flagged for concern (as identified within the Rating or Comments Sections), or the rest of the COC for additional information. This is also the point where other expert resources can be brought into the discussion to ensure that areas of alarm are properly diagnosed, and as importantly, the correct assistance resources are assigned for ultimate resolution (an example being a Marine that is identified as having relationship issues with his spouse being identified on a BAM, and their future assignment to marriage counseling with the unit's chaplain). Additionally, BAMs for Marines with concerning ratings and comments should be filed and used for long-term trend analysis (subsequent completed BAMs may uncover prolonged issues).

Ideally the PEP and associated BAM document will be a Marine Corps-wide tool for identifying and helping at-risk junior enlisted Marines, and instituted as a web and app-based program that is easily accessible by Marines from both work-networked and personal electronic devices. This will both assist with keeping completed BAMs with sensitive information from

being read by other junior enlisted Marines or the lower-level COC, and also allow for a digital archive. Preferably the digital BAM data will be associated to a system or spreadsheet with the necessary algorithms for long-term trend analysis, eliminating the requirement to keep hard-copy BAM documents on-hand at the unit-level, and most importantly, increasing the likelihood of identifying at-risk Marines as early as possible.

Part 4: Peer Evaluation Program Implementation Challenges

Although the PEP is a valuable tool that augments the shortfalls of the current FPC and HFC Programs, its future implementation will come with a number of challenges. First, the PEP is a rather drastic change to current FPC Program and HFC Program processes and procedures. Instead of relying on a top-down approach, where the COC (officers and SNCOs) is responsible for identifying and routing junior enlisted Marine problems to designated command teams within a unit, the PEP relies on peer input as a primary source of information. And while peer evaluation has historically been a valuable tool in both civilian education and workplace performance assessment, it is continuing to spark military interest as a valuable tool for assessment and development.²⁶ Challenges with this include putting less of an onus on officers and SNCOs to identify and resolve difficulties that their Marines are having, which is not an easy task. As well, relying on junior enlisted Marines to not only identify, but detail problems that their peers are displaying on a BAM document is difficult and can come with a fear of repercussion. And the likelihood of junior enlisted Marines tiring of completing a BAM on all members of their squad each month is a real concern. In order for all of these noted challenges to be negated, it is vital that the senior officer and SNCO leadership take personal ownership of the entire PEP process. This requires regularly briefing their command about the importance of

detailed and accurate BAMs, which can be further highlighted with discussions about PEP successes.

Another PEP potential area of anxiety is the reality that BAM details received may implicate a junior enlisted Marine in an illegal act as defined by unit orders and directives, as well as the Uniform Code of Military Justice. This requires each command to complete thorough discussions on how they will receive and process such adverse BAM input. A very likely example is a junior enlisted Marine identifying a peer on his or her BAM that is under the legal age of alcohol consumption as having a drinking problem. Making such a discovery may provoke a zero-tolerance mentality at first reaction; however, many would argue that identifying a problem area such as this early-on will allow for necessary avenues of support to be implemented before a future career-ending alcohol-related incident occurs.

As well, another negative associated with the PEP is the likelihood of a junior enlisted Marine switching squads, platoon, or units, which does occur on a regular basis. Although this occurrence will negatively impact the PEP, to include any ability for long-term trend analysis, the here and now is more important to the present-day command leadership. Any Marine transitioning from his or her parent squad elsewhere will simply pick-up with their new unit when they arrive.

Part 5: Continuous Evaluation Program Case Study

Background: The author successfully used a PEP methodology over a 15-month period while serving as the Marine Helicopter Squadron One (HMX-1) Security Company Commander from March 2018 to June 2019. The PEP system developed and implemented for the duration of this 15-month period was created by HMX-1 Security Company key-leadership, with the

approval of the HMX-1 Commanding Officer (CO). The HMX-1 CO recommended that HMX-1 Security Company identify a means of peer-to-peer continuous evaluation that focused heavily on the junior enlisted Marine population within the company for a few reasons. The first was due to historically poor command climate surveys that identified multiple areas of concern, to include alcohol abuse and social media misuse.

The second was the negative impact to mission accomplishment that occurred when any HMX-1 Security Company Marine leaves the unit due to a wide range of possible issues, to include under-age drinking, credit-related, and social media misuse. HMX-1 (to include HMX-1 Security Company), as a unit that supports a no-fail Presidential Support Duty (PSD) mission, requires its personnel to hold an active Top-Secret Yankee White (TSYW) security clearance. On average, it takes about six-months of processing to grant a TSYW security clearance, which puts a premium on investigating a Marine's background to ensure they are eligible for a high-level security clearance. As well, HMX-1 Marines that are approved for a TSYW security clearance undergo periodic review of their case to ensure no disqualifying details have been added. Overall, the HMX-1 TSYW security clearance process is ongoing, with the intention of "screening out individuals who are not trustworthy and to monitor those already employed in order to identify any who have become untrustworthy since their initial screening and rehabilitate or remove them."²⁷

Unit Details: HMX-1 Security Company is the largest Military Police (58XX) company in the Marine Corps, with a table of organization consisting of 205 Marines, 91 percent of which are Corporals (E-4) or below. As well, the large majority of HMX-1 Security Company Marines are first-term, directly assigned to the unit from their military occupational specialty (MOS) school. Being on their first enlistment obligation, the predominance of these first-term Marines

are Millennials and under the age of 21 years old. These Marines face the same life challenges as their MOS peers in other Marine Corps units, with the added TSYW security clearance requirement, which is a prerequisite for the unit's no-fail PSD mission.

PEP Creation Process: When tasked to create a PEP for use within HMX-1 Security Company, the company's key-leadership coordinated with the HMX-1 Flight Surgeon, HMX-1 Psychologist, and HMX-1 DOSS to identify the critical areas of inclusion within the program. Research on the subject identified numerous peer evaluation successes stories within the civilian business world, centering on employees not being able to hide because of their peers knowing their behaviors better than their supervisors.²⁸ Ultimately, multiple meetings identified the benefits of including the six categories for peer-to-peer input identified on the BAM document and detailed within Part 3: socializing, alcohol consumption, social media use, spending habits, relationships, and health and lifestyle.

PEP Implementation Process: Once the BAM document was approved by the HMX-1 CO, a detailed letter of instruction (LOI) was created and promulgated throughout HMX-1 Security Company. Highlights of the LOI included:

Situation: The PEP will aid leaders in determining the continuous suitability of Marines to perform PSD vital to national security, as well as identify at-risk Marines early in order to provide them the help that they may require. The no-fail mission of HMX-1 and the command's geographically separated nature requires a means by which to ensure the performance of Marines is constantly evaluated. Doing so ensures that only the most qualified Marines remain assigned to PSD. HMX-1 Security Company Marines have been granted a TSYW security clearance and the PEP allows the company leadership to ensure Marines are qualified to continue service in support of the President of the United States.

Mission: No later than 1 March, 2018 HMX-1 Security Company will implement a PEP in order to aid leaders in supporting their Marines to the greatest extent possible, ultimately allowing junior enlisted Marines to continue to serve in a PSD status, and HMX-1 to successfully support its no-fail mission.

Purpose: The PEP is intended to detect and resolve behavioral problems and PSD unsuitability early, and is used as a commander's analytical tool to provide insight into a Security Company junior enlisted Marine's character, habits, and behavior. Although the PEP may be used for analysis of a Marine's ability to serve in continued PSD, the resulting data alone does not constitute grounds for taking action, but may prompt the command to investigate the data collected in detail.

Method: The PEP will be implemented on a monthly basis. Data will be recorded and submitted to the Company Commander. The data will then be evaluated by a command team consisting of the Company Commander, Security Chief, HMX-1 Flight Surgeon, and the HMX-1 Psychologist.

End State: All Marines that display at-risk behavior will be given the appropriate aide and resources to ensure they are able to remain on PSD. All Marines that are determined to be no longer suitable to serve on PSD will be assigned other duties to continue their careers outside of PSD.

Phase 1 Data Collection: This phase highlights the importance of receiving peer-to-peer information due to limited off-duty interaction with senior leaders, and introduces the BAM as the means for doing so. It directs BAM completion at the squad-level by all Sergeants (E-5) and below, and immediate collection by the platoon commander or platoon sergeant for routing to the company commander or security chief.

Phase 2 Command and Medical Evaluation: The company commander with the assistance of the security chief, platoon commander, and platoon sergeant will next evaluate the data gathered by the BAMs in order to identify at-risk Marines. Any Marine identified as at-risk conducts a structured interview with the company commander and security chief, designed to elicit information regarding potential problems for themselves and other Marines, to include major life changes, stressors, social habits, and alcohol use. In conjunction with evaluating a Marine's suitability, this structured interview gives the leadership an opportunity to identify other issues which may need to be addressed within the company at large.

Phase 3 Recovery and Assignment: Marines that are determined to be no longer suitable to serve on PSD are reassigned from HMX-1.

Squad and Section-Assigned Marine Tasks: Complete thorough BAMs for all squad members. Your honest evaluation of your peers is the cornerstone of the PEP. Continually observe your peers and be ready to provide immediate assistance to your fellow Marines when necessary.

Coordinating Instructions: All BAMs are to remain unaltered for the company commander's review. At no time will another individual alter another Marine's BAM.

PEP Implementation Obstacles: There were obstacles encountered during implementation of the PEP within HMX-1 Security Company. The company's junior enlisted Marines trusting the process was a large hurdle initially. The peer evaluation requirement of the PEP is a drastic change to the top-down approach of the FPC and HFC Programs. In order to instill trust and confidence in the Security Company's junior enlisted Marines about the PEP, a slideshow was created to identify and explain the details of the program, and the reasons why the

company was implementing it. All levels of the COC scheduled multiple opportunities to dissect the PEP with their Marines to ensure common understanding and awareness.

A benefit of HMX-1 Security Company's use of the PEP that most other Marine Corps units do not have is the TSYW security clearance requirement, which puts a premium on the conduct of Marines that hold it. HMX-1 Security Company Marines do not want to lose access to this high-level security clearance that opens up many doors for future billets, as well as job opportunities outside of the Marine Corps within the civilian work sector. As well, HMX-1 Security Company Marines observed multiple contemporaries within the company leave the unit due to actions that resulted in loss of their TSYW security clearances. For these reasons HMX-1 Security Company Marines trusted the PEP process as it would bridge the existing gap of gaining insight about problems that junior enlisted Marines have before they compounded to a point of no return, for the benefit of the individual Marine and unit.

Another obstacle encountered was SNCO trust in the process. There was initial push-back from HMX-1 Security Company SNCOs due to the reality that the PEP was bypassing the established COC by routing all completed BAM input directly to the company commander and security chief. All SNCOs take their rank and billet responsibilities seriously, and want nothing but the best for the Marines that they lead; however, some junior enlisted Marines may not trust their SNCOs with sensitive personal information about themselves or their friends, and many of these types of personal problems cannot be resolved at the SNCO level (meaning that specific specialists are necessary, which typically comes with senior leader endorsement and scheduling). As well, the HMX-1 Security Company TSYW security clearance requirement differs greatly from the normal Fleet Marine Force Military Police Secret security clearance standard. For the benefit of the unit and Marines, along with the elevated security clearance came the necessity to

think outside of the box regarding identification and resolution of junior enlisted Marine problems, something that HMX-1 Security Company SNCOs came to understand and endorse.

A third obstacle encountered was HMX-1 Security Company junior enlisted Marines taking the monthly PEP seriously as time went on. It is human nature to get to a point where completing the same BAM format monthly on the same group of junior enlisted Marines become monotonous. To keep this from happening as much as possible, the HMX-1 Security Company COC continued to stress the importance of the PEP, but also shared details of program success with the unit's Marines. Being careful to not identify names and personal details, shared were multiple examples of the PEP, by way of peer-to-peer input, identifying Marines that had problems that were ultimately provided timely assistance resources that reversed their issues and keep them in the unit (where previously their unreported transgressions would have most certainly resulted in their loss of TSYW clearances and removal from the unit as time passed).

PEP Successes: There were a number of PEP successes within HMX-1 Security Company over the 15-month case study that validated the need for the program. One example was a junior enlisted Marine self-reporting on their BAM a problem with alcohol misuse. More specifically, this Marine, who was under the legal drinking age of 21, confided that they were drinking heavily, and that this was beginning to impact their health and welfare. After identifying these details on their BAM, the HMX-1 Security Company COC was able to immediately schedule an alcohol treatment routine that in short time got them the help needed to remain in the mission long-term. This particular example, without the benefit of the PEP, could very easily have compounded into an alcohol-related incident with certain TSYW security clearance loss and removal from HMX-1.

Another PEP win was specific to a relationship issue. A monthly BAM identified a junior enlisted Marine that was reported by another Marine within their squad as having difficulty with a recent breakup. Subsequent discussion with the COC determined that this Marine was showing signs of depression both on and off duty; however, that the reasoning behind it was not known. The BAM input was able to tie the details together, paving the way for continued engagement at the platoon-level with the Marine eventually getting over their relationship-related depression (a common occurrence with junior enlisted Marines).

HMX-1 Security Company PEP use also identified a number of social media-related BAM input from the junior enlisted Marine population. As Millennials, these Marines rely heavily on social media to communicate (much more so than the older generation of Marine that makes up the bulk of their COC). It was interesting to observe the large amount of social media-specific areas of concern annotated on BAMs by squad members, insight that the COC did not have access to by any other means. This was particularly vital to the HMX-1 Security Company leadership due to the historically negative impact that social media misuse has had on the Marine Corps, to include the abhorrent behavior involving upwards of 500 Marines belonging to the Marines United private Facebook group, which shared sensitive photos of female Marines without their consent.²⁹ As well, many other BAM categories were first identified in the social media realm, again, something that is largely unknown and inaccessible with traditional chains-of-command due to individual Marine social media account non-access.

The 15-month results of HMX-1 Security Company's use of a PEP were overwhelmingly positive. Without a doubt, junior enlisted Marines with personal problems within the realm of the BAM document were identified and aligned to assistance resources that ultimately allowed them to recover and continue to serve. In a phone conversation with the author on January 10,

2020, Colonel Garrett Hoffman, the former HMX-1 CO, stated that the Security Company's PEP set a new standard for taking care of Marines by using a non-common approach to resolving personal issues that previously would have remained unknown until they reached the career-ending level.³⁰

Conclusion

Although the Marine Corps continues to use the FPC and HFC Programs as a valuable resource for recognizing junior enlisted Marine problems, these programs both lack early identification of issues that can potentially compound and result in serious injury, death, or removal from service. The PEP is a proven method of FPC and HFC Program augmentation that is better able to identify junior enlisted Marine issues due to the peer evaluation conPEPt. By reviewing existing junior enlisted Marine evaluation tools, sister service junior enlisted peer evaluation processes, PEP implementation challenges, and a PEP case study, the benefits of future implementation of a PEP Marine Corps-wide are recognizable. A PEP format for use across the Marine Corps will identify junior enlisted Marine (with potential application to officer and SNCO populations) problems early, align them to the necessary assistance resources in a timelier manner, and provide a positive impact at both the junior enlisted Marine and unit level. Without a doubt, a PEP construct for use throughout the Marine Corps will assist leaders at all levels with the most important responsibility in the Corps, leading Marines.³¹

Appendix 1: List of Acronyms

BAM – Behavioral Assessment Matrix

CCRD – Commander’s Risk Reduction Dashboard

CO – Commanding Officer

COC – Chain of Command

CMC – Commandant of the Marine Corps

DOSS – Department of Safety and Standardization

FPC – Force Preservation Council

HFC – Human Factors Program

HMX-1 – Marine Helicopter Squadron One

LOI – Letter of Instruction

MCO – Marine Corps Order

MOS – Military Occupational Specialty

PEP – Peer Evaluation Program

PSD – Presidential Support Duty

RRP – Risk Reduction Program

RURI – Reintegration Unit Risk Inventory

SNCO – Staff Non-Commissioned Officer

URI – Unit Risk Inventory

TSYW – Top-Secret Yankee White

¹ Lieutenant General John A. Lejeune, Marine Corps Order Number 29 (Relations Between Officers and Men), Headquarters Marine Corps, 14 August 1920, 1, [https://www.fitness.marines.mil/Portals/211/documents/Spiritual %20 Fitness /MCO%201500.61%20Marine%20Leader%20Development.pdf](https://www.fitness.marines.mil/Portals/211/documents/Spiritual%20Fitness/MCO%201500.61%20Marine%20Leader%20Development.pdf).

² General David H. Berger, 38th Commandant's Planning Guidance, Headquarters Marine Corps, July 2019, 22, https://www.marines.mil/Portals/1/Publications/Commandant's%20Planning%20Guidance_2019.pdf?ver=2019-07-17-090732-937.

³ General James F. Amos, 35th Commandant's Planning Guidance, Headquarters Marine Corps, October 2010, 10, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=15245>.

⁴ General Robert B. Neller, White Letter 1-17, Headquarters Marine Corps, March 10, 2017, 1-2, [https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/Portals/148/Docs/CMC%20White%20Ltr%201-17%20-%20Conduct %20on %20Social%20 Media.pdf](https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/Portals/148/Docs/CMC%20White%20Ltr%201-17%20-%20Conduct%20on%20Social%20Media.pdf).

⁵ General Robert B. Neller, White Letter 1-19, Headquarters Marine Corps, February 22, 2019, 1, <https://www.marines.mil/portals/1/Publications/White%20Letter%201-19.pdf?ver=2019-03-22-115211-957>.

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⁷ Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Force Preservation Council Program*, MCO 1500.60, July 25, 2016, 2, <https://www.marines.mil/portals/1/Publications/MCO%201500.60.pdf?ver=2016-08-23-114836-707>.

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⁹ Captain Jason M. Gelfand, "Another Look at the Human Factors Council," *Marine Corps Gazette*, February 2000, 1.

¹⁰ Owen West, "You Can't Fool the Troops," *United States Naval Institute: Proceedings*, September 1998, Vol. 124 (9), 52.

¹¹ Owen West, "You Can't Fool the Troops," *United States Naval Institute: Proceedings*, September 1998, Vol. 124 (9), 53.

¹² Walter A. Klieger, John E. DeJung, and Adrian U. Dubuisson, *Peer Ratings as Predictors of Disciplinary Problems* Washington: U.S. Army Personnel Research Office, 1962, 11.

¹³ U.S. Army Fort Knox, "Risk Reduction Program," last modified 26 August 2019, <https://home.army.mil/knox/index.php/about/Garrison/directorate-human-resources/army-substance-abuse-program/risk-reduction-program>.

¹⁴ U.S. Army, "Risk Reduction Program," accessed January 15, 2020, https://home.army.mil/hawaii/application/files/3415/5451/0132/Risk_Reduction_Program.pdf.

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¹⁶ Insight, "Defining Behavioral Health," <http://insighttelepsychiatry.com/defining-behavioral-health/>.

¹⁷ Marta Garrett, "Behavioral Health in the Marine Corps," *Marine Corps Gazette*, March, 2019, 78.

¹⁸ Jessica Brack and Kip Kelly, *Maximizing Millennials in the Workplace*, 2012, 4, <http://www.gandyr.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/maximizing-millennials-in-the-workplace.pdf>.

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