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HOMESTEADING: REDUCING THE MARINE CORPS BUDGET

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HOMESTEADING:
REDUCING THE MARINE CORPS BUDGET

by

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Talent Management 2030 discusses several incentives with the aim of retaining the most talented Marines and ensuring a robust force. One such incentive is to reduce the frequency of primary change of station moves, commonly referred to as "homesteading." The Commandant has emphasized that homesteading should be seen as a means to alleviate stress on Marines and their families, rather than being viewed in a negative light. Furthermore, Marine Corps Order 1300.8, Personnel Assignments, already highlights the importance of reassigning Marines within the same geographic area whenever feasible, utilizing a combination of Low-Cost Permanent Change of Station (PCS) and No Cost Permanent Change of Assignment (PCA) Orders. However, despite this order and the Commandant's encouragement, a stigma surrounding homesteading still persists. The objective of this paper is to explore the potential cost savings that could be achieved through the implementation of a mandated homesteading policy, specifically focusing on a six-year duration. Additionally, it aims to examine the secondary benefits of increased retention resulting from enhanced stability analyzed through survey results. The primary means to achieve the cost savings amount is through analysis of prior fiscal year average data. The means to achieve retention climate is through a survey to determine the attitude towards perception of homesteading.

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HOMESTEADING: REDUCING THE MARINE CORPS BUDGET

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Talent Management 2030 discusses several incentives with the aim of retaining the most talented Marines and ensuring a robust force. One such incentive is to reduce the frequency of primary change of station moves, commonly referred to as homesteading. The commandant has emphasized that homesteading should be seen as a means to alleviate stress on Marines and their families, rather than being viewed in a negative light. Furthermore, Marine Corps Order 1300.8, Personnel Assignments, already highlights the importance of reassigning Marines within the same geographic area whenever feasible, utilizing a combination of Low-Cost Permanent Change of Station (PCS) and No Cost Permanent Change of Assignment (PCA) Orders. However, despite this order and the Commandant's encouragement, a stigma surrounding homesteading still persists. The objective of this paper is to explore the potential cost savings that could be achieved through the implementation of a mandated homesteading policy, specifically focusing on a six-year duration. Additionally, it aims to examine the secondary benefits of increased retention resulting from enhanced stability analyzed through survey results. The primary means to achieve the cost savings amount is through analysis of prior fiscal year average data. The means to achieve retention climate is through a survey to determine the attitude towards perception of homesteading.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

COA	Course of Action
CONUS	Continental United States
DLA	Dislocation Allowance
DOD	Department of Defense
DON	Department of the Navy
EFMP	Exceptional Family Member Program
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
HHG	Household Goods
LCM	Low-Cost Move
MCO	Marine Corps Order
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
OCONUS	Outside the Continental United States
PCA	Permanent Change of Assignment
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
PDS	Primary Duty Station
PME	Professional Military Education
PV	Present Value
SDA	Special Duty Assignment
TOS	Time on Station
USMC	United Stated Marine Corps

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I. INTRODUCTION

Every fiscal year the Department of Defense (DOD) operates in a constrained environment and is in constant search for breathing room within the budget. In an effort to reduce the government's budget, Congress directed an evaluation of the department's permanent change of station (PCS) program and determine potential savings and cost reductions for the program (Government Printing Office, 2014). Despite numerous studies on the subject there have been no concrete policy changes to date. This paper looks to prove in broad brush strokes that cost savings will occur through the use of "homesteading" and a bonus byproduct of that will also improve retention. It is logical that increasing the time on station for tours would decrease overall costs, but it is equally important to understand the secondary and tertiary impacts of such a policy on the troops and their families before implementing such a change. This paper analyzes how Marines feel about a mandatory homesteading policy, how it would impact their home life, the effects on retention, and most importantly potential government savings.

When MCO 1300.8, Personnel Assignments, was released in 2014, it included a paragraph within Chapter 1, "Overarching Assignment Policy," directing that PCS orders only be utilized when it becomes "absolutely necessary" (U.S. Marine Corps, 2021a). The same paragraph states that Low-cost PCS/no-cost PCA moves within the same geographic location be utilized whenever possible within the Continental United States (CONUS). Although this is a written order it was never embraced or practiced. The general belief held was that by not PCSing to a new duty station would have negative impacts on your career (Grayson and Mireles 2016).

In 2021, General Berger, the 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps, introduced Talent Management 2030, which outlines proposed revisions to these antiquated personnel policies. Since the release of Talent Management 2030, the Marine Corps has initiated several major changes that have benefited the Corps. One of the wave topics General Berger discusses was the reduction in the frequency of primary change of station (PCS) moves, specifically in the form of "homesteading." Homesteading is staying in one geographic location for an extended period of time (beyond a three-year tour) rather than

the traditional three-year PCS cycle involving a move to a new alternate location. Talent Management 2030 includes a dedicated section addressing the encouragement of a reduction in PCS frequency, acknowledging its adverse impacts on unit cohesion, training, and families. It unequivocally declares that "the institution will no longer view homesteading as a negative practice" (U.S. Marine Corps, 2021, p. 11). This paves the way to create a new policy to take advantage of the Marine Corp's then top-ranking Marine's guidance.

The Marine Corps could consider developing a clear policy aimed at guiding the career paths of individual Marines, with a focus on incorporating homesteading principles. This approach aims to contribute to future budget reductions for the Marine Corps. This will not only save the U.S. taxpayers but will also have a positive impact on retention as displayed throughout this paper. This paper shows the savings from the implementation of three different COA's as well as survey results that display the want and need for such a change. With this information policy makers can use these results to hopefully reduce the budget, better the quality of life for Marines and their families and increase individual performance.

II. BACKGROUND

The DOD's budget accounts for over half of the discretionary spending. Which makes the DOD's budget a prime target for budget reductions. Discretionary spending, constituting the portion of the president's budget necessitating annual approval from Congress and allocated through appropriations, becomes an ideal target for fiscal scrutiny. Homesteading would be a logical way to produce efforts to a reduced fiscally responsible budget.

To understand the intent behind the homesteading model it is important to understand the current policy in place for PCS/PCA moves. Every branch of service has their own rotation schedule and to date there is not a single policy that outlines a homesteading approach. The Marine Corps could be the tip of the spear in terms of developing a potentially game-changing retention policy.

First, Talent Management 2030 is addressed as it details the importance of such an improved policy. Second, I describe the PCS/PCA program. Last, I discuss the costs incurred with the programs.

A. TALENT MANAGEMENT 2030 AND HOMESTEADING

Talent Management 2030 puts emphasis on providing incentives to Marines based on reducing the frequency of permanent change of station (PCS) moves. The rationale behind this move is to alleviate the substantial strain that frequent PCS moves place on the families of Marines, who already make significant sacrifices to support their service members (U.S. Marine Corps, 2021b, p. 11). This approach reflects the notion that incentives, such as duty station preferences and reduced PCS frequency, are integral to Talent Management 2030s vision of redefining "homesteading" within the Marine Corps. It envisions homesteading not as a practice to avoid, but as a means to enhance training, bolster unit stability, and reduce the burdens on Marine Corps families (U.S. Marine Corps, 2021b, p. 11). We have seen that this is not a new concept, as the order already states this should be standard practice, but we have to mandate such a policy to ensure it becomes enforced.

B. PERMANENT CHANGE OF STATION

A Permanent Change of Station (PCS) occurs when a service member is reassigned from one Permanent Duty Station (PDS) to another for a minimum of 180 days. Each branch of service can tighten restrictions but cannot contradict higher authorities, for example, the DOD. This Marine Corps instruction is built to ensure the services provide movement orders that support combat capability, readiness, and enhance PCS stability. The amount of time or Time on Station (TOS) requirements are designed to prioritize operational readiness, minimize PCS costs, and improve the quality of life for service members and their families. TOS is most often the determining factor for relocation (2021a). This instruction is designed to be vague to allow each military occupational specialty (MOS) of the military to provide time on station requirements that meet the needs of their specific mission requirements.

The order articulates its purpose in the commander's intent, which emphasizes that the Marine Corps aims to restrict the number of PCS moves to the minimum required. Despite written order, the service does not routinely practice this and sticks to the status quo of personnel moves every three years in accordance with rotational orders.

From a fiscal standpoint, the MCO mandates that each PCS transfer should be executed with minimal expenditure, with a preference for low-cost moves (LCM) and no-cost Permanent Change of Assignment (PCA) orders whenever feasible (2021a). A Permanent Change of Assignment (PCA), in contrast, involves the transfer of a Marine between Monitored Command Codes (MCCs) within the same Permanent Duty Station (PDS) (2021a). When a Marine relocates within the same PDS or to another PDS within a 50-mile radius, it falls under the category of either a No-Cost PCA move (within the same PDS) or a Low-Cost Move (LCM) PCS (to a different PDS within 50 miles) (U.S. Marine Corps, 2021a). Notably, a Marine does not receive reimbursement for travel expenses associated with a No-Cost PCA or LCM PCS (2021a). Given that these moves do not entail travel funding, it stands to reason that a reduction in the number of individuals eligible for travel funding would logically result in a reduction in the overall cost of relocating families. A LCM typically involves a PCS move within a local commuting distance order of the current duty station, with the cost usually not exceeding $1,000 (2021a).

Given that this paper is specifically focused on assessing the impacts of a mandatory homesteading policy (with a emphasis on cost reduction), it is essential to comprehend the implementation of TOS which are designed to stabilize Marines and their families, reduce PCS costs, and, as clarified, there is **no defined maximum tour length** for CONUS assignments (U.S. Marine Corps, 2021a). This is paramount to understand because this can therefore be any number of months beyond the typical three-year tours the status quo defaults to. Although there is no maximum TOS, it is stipulated that the minimum TOS requirement for CONUS stands at 36 months (2021a). This remains important because despite the climate of the survey we cannot shorten tours. Talent Management alludes to changing this perspective on any military installation.

C. PCS COSTS AND PCA

The Marine Corps allocates its budget for various types of PCS moves each year. Throughout this paper only operational and rotational PCS moves will be referenced as they are the primary moves that would be applicable to the intended mandatory homesteading policy change proposal. Table 1 shows the two types of PCS moves and their definitions. Accession pipeline, training, unit travel, and separation moves are all not the targeted impacts of a policy change that would be put into place with a mandatory homesteading policy. This is mainly because these types of travel are a requirement for training or mission accomplishment and could not be incorporated into a mandatory homesteading policy.

Table 1. PCS Categories Utilized.
Adapted from Grayson and Mireles (2016).

PCS Category	Definition/Explanation
Operational Travel	Officer & Enlisted who travel from one duty station within the CONUS to another duty station within the continental U.S.
Rotational Travel	Officer & Enlisted who travel from one duty station within the CONUS to another duty station outside the continental U.S. (OCONUS) (i.e., overseas)

One of the more difficult tasks of identifying entitlements and allowances specific to each unique travel claim. Every single travel claim is different because of the external circumstances such as rank, dependents, starting/ending locations, number of privately owned vehicles, weight, dislocation allowance, and temporary lodging usage. For example, one Marine can move from Camp Lejeune, NC to Camp Pendleton, CA, and be entitled to a completely different rate than another Marine performing the same travel. This can be for a simple difference of one Marine being married and one being single. It is very safe to say that nearly every single travel claim can be different and unless a travel claim is maximized for all entitlements, only then it will likely be the same amount for two similar cases. Throughout this paper, the average cost of PCS moves will be calculated to capture the cost savings for the government. The exact cost savings would be nearly impossible to capture as there are far too many factors to find a definitive number.

A Permanent Chage of Assignment (PCA) is when a Marine typically moves to a new billet or a change of a position which usually occurs on the same installation or within the local commuting distance of the old installation. This type of move typically has no cost associated with such a move and because the change does not alter the Marine's household and they commute to their new assignment from the previous household. The intention is to utilize this calculation as a leverage option to reduce PCS costs and promote the increased adoption of homesteading as a viable alternative, aiming to retain Marines in a single location for an extended duration.

This paper explores Marine's perception regarding a mandatory homesteading policy, a response to an extension of the TOS requirements from three to six years. To accomplish this, I administered surveys in three separate geographical locations to Marines of all ranks. There was no influence on any Marine's decision while taking the survey. Once the survey began, the survey administrator did not elaborate any questions to Marines as they took the survey to avoid any type of influence. The only explanation given to each surveyed Marine was the definition of homesteading.

The research undoubtedly points to Marines believing that homesteading is overall a positive perception as explained in Chapter V. A desire to homestead only increases as Marines mature with age, marital status, and rank according to the data. This paper offers

three separate COAs to identify possible solutions that will result in cost savings for the Marine Corps. These findings will be of benefit to the Marine Corps should they choose to do further analysis and conduct a Cost Benefit Analysis in the future for follow on studies.

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

First, literature review prioritizing research pertaining to the cost and frequency of moving, how it affects individual Marines and their families, and how existing Marine Corps policies can be utilized to develop a requirement for homesteading. The next step was to research historical PCS data to assess a theoretical possibility to address potential solutions. Lastly, completing a survey to gauge the Marine's views on a homesteading policy and the attitude surrounding the concept. This methodology was used because capturing the climate of "what the Marines want" is critical to determine whether pursuit of a homesteading policy is warranted.

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III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Although there were not any specific studies on the topic of homesteading, there were relevant studies that can be applied to the research. One of the studies found immediately drew attention and became the backbone for this thesis. This was a Naval Postgraduate School thesis that explored increasing the time on station for a tour from three years to five years (Grayson and Mireles., 2016). This is a follow-on study from a three year to a four year time in station increase topic by Mireles in 2014. This thesis would use the same formula used for their study, but would add some key information, which was left out of the previous studies. When reviewing the previous studies, it identified a limitation in the methodology employed, as the survey was exclusively administered to personnel within the 03–05 ranks and E5-E7 ranks, all of whom were situated at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) or within the 12th Marine Corps District. In the research for this paper, a wider geographical audience will be polled with the intent is to adopt a similar framework for assessing cost savings, albeit with a more streamlined regression analysis, concentrating primarily on cost savings and factors pertaining to retention. This will involve conducting concise in-person surveys to gather pertinent data.

Additionally, exploring the impacts such a policy would have on the retention of Marines. The hypothesis being the burden of constant moving plays into the decisions to remain in the service by Marines. In searching for literature to meet this criterion, the need to find studies that analyzed family impacts around PCS moves and the benefits of staying in one location instead of constant moves. The consensus of most studies agree that the higher number of moves required in a service member's career have negative impacts on families. Overall, military families had higher rates of relationship instability, negative impacts on child education, and difficulty building careers (Drummet et al., 2003; Tong et al., 2018; Wan et al., 2018). The last portion desired was to find studies on a Marine's performance as a result of homesteading. Studies were needed that explored how constant personnel moves can negatively impact a Marine's confidence, ability to understand their job, and build valuable networks (Hancock et al., 2013;).

A. RAND STUDY: GAO

This congressional-mandated report serves a tripartite purpose: firstly, it conducts an examination of per-move costs and their evolution over time; secondly, it scrutinizes the extent to which military personnel comply with their Time on Station (TOS) obligations; and thirdly, it delves into the study carried out by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) pertaining to the feasibility of augmenting TOS requirements. Notably, the OSD's study, commissioned from the RAND Corporation, encompasses the fiscal years between 2001 and 2014. To derive comprehensive insights, the study undertakes an analysis of summary cost data associated with the six types of Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves, as delineated in the assessment encompasses both continental United States (CONUS) and outside the continental United States (OCONUS) relocations. Furthermore, the study offers an evaluation of both the median and average TOS periods. Table 2 provides an update to the Grayson and Mireles 2016 PCS costs and definitions with updated costs.

Table 2. PCS Costs and Definitions.
Adapted from Grayson and Mireles (2016).

Type of Allowance	Definition/Explanation
PCS MALT + Travel Per Diem	The service member receives the CONUS flat rate of $151/day for travel expenses associated with a PCS move (e.g., meals, lodging and incidental expenses). Each dependent 12 yo or older receives 75% of the member rate/day. Each dependent under 12 yo receives 50%.
Privately Owned Conveyance Travel	Authorized expense for wear & tear and fuel expense of using your personal vehicle to travel to new duty station. $.17/mile.
Household Goods (HHG)	Cost is dependent on Weight allowances determined by rank.
Non-Temp Storage	Storage of HHG/personnel effects at government expense in a non-temporary storage facility. Must be authorized in orders and is included in weight restrictions of HHG.
Temporary Lodging Expense (TLE)	Lodging expense for up to 10 days in connection with PCS move within CONUS at new or old duty station. Not to exceed (NTE) $290/day/family. Apply the following multiples by the local rate. Service member: 65%; Service member & 1 dependent 100%; each additional dependent over 12 yo add 35%; under 12 yo add 25%. Note: additional instructions apply for members traveling OCONUS.
Dislocation Allowance (DLA)	Authorized to partial reimburse a service member for the expenses incurred in relocating the member's household during a PCS move. Rate paid at with or without dependent rates. Rates vary depending on rank and whether service member has dependents or not.

Regrettably, the study found that the available information does not furnish a reliable or complete basis for ascertaining the potential effects of a policy change aimed at extending TOS requirements, whether such effects are favorable or detrimental (Farnell, 2015). Several factors contribute to this limitation. Firstly, the cost data was marked by inconsistency and incompleteness, rendering it unsuitable for informed decision-making. Secondly, it is evident that the Department of Defense (DOD) Permanent Change of Station (PCS) programs are bereft of sustained process analysis and improvement efforts, thus hindering the identification and evaluation of underlying drivers of PCS costs. Thirdly, the DOD was unable to supply enough evidence to make a determination. The lack of findings from the report made a per-cost move calculation nearly impossible to determine. According to the 2015 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report by Brenda Farnell, the methodology employed entailed dividing the total PCS cost for each PCS type by the number of service members relocated.

It is important to note that this study serves as the foundational basis for the methodology employed to calculate the average cost of a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that the equation employed in this calculation does not encompass the average expenses associated with Personally Procured Moves (PPM) or the costs incurred for the shipment of goods to the government. To ensure a comprehensive assessment of PCS moves, all these factors should be duly incorporated.

Consequently, the findings of this study may yield higher estimations for the overall cost of PCS moves, as it factors in the previously omitted costs, thereby enhancing the comprehensiveness of the analysis.

B. FAMILY IMPACTS

The intent behind the last set of research was to find studies that impacted families as a whole. The research looked for involved PCS issues related to relationship, childhood development, and spouse employment. This would be an opportunity for the survey completed in this research to build on those previous studies to display the beliefs of service members surrounding frequent PCS moves.

The RAND Corporation completed a study which found PCS moves had an adverse impact on spousal employment (Tong et al., 2018). The report details the stress and pressure

of frequent moves leads to difficulty applying for new positions, underpayment, and underpayment. While this can be directly attributed to several factors it is widely known that spousal careers are often secondary to a service members career. Spouses will have to give up their careers (unless they can telework) to follow a service member to their new duty station if orders are received unless they want to live in separate locations. The inability to keep a position for periods of time longer than a typical three-year tour could lead employers to believe they cannot count on long-term employment.

The study also highlighted the substantial disruption caused by PCS moves in securing employment, primarily due to the limited availability of job opportunities in their specific fields or the considerable time required to obtain new credentials following a military relocation. Bottom line: over half of spouses found that PCS moves negatively impacted their career path.

The study provides valuable insights into how PCS moves act as a significant barrier to employment opportunities for military spouses. The research also expresses concerns regarding the perceptions that service members have about their spouse's ability to maintain gainful employment, in addition to addressing how the frequency of PCS moves influences decisions concerning a career in the Marine Corps.

My intended contribution, focusing on the questions surrounding the impact of PCS moves on family stability and life, job employment, and the desire for stability for military spouses, is a vital and relevant research. This area of investigation addresses critical aspects of the challenges faced by military families and can offer valuable insights to support policy and program improvements.

In addition to the challenges faced by spousal employment, the children of Marines can experience adverse effects due to the frequency of PCS moves (Drummet et al., 2003; Herbers et al., 2013). While there may be some positive aspects to frequent relocations, such as fostering resilience and adaptability, the evidence suggests a negative association between frequent moves and education as well as childhood friendships (Drummet et al., 2003; O'Neal et al., 2022). Given that active-duty Marines with children make up 24% of the Marine Corps,

it is imperative to consider these detrimental relationships in order to retain these valuable personnel (Department of Defense, 2021).

While there may be some variation in the effects of frequent relocations on the children of service members, the majority of researchers concur that extended relocations tend to have an overall negative impact (Drummet et al., 2003). Numerous studies have highlighted the consequences of frequent relocations on a child's education, including social skills, mental health, and their education (Drummet et al., 2003). According to Aronson (2011), A strong correlation to educational difficulties is evident. An educational struggle is likely attributed to an uprooting of a regulated supporting and stable programming (Aronson et al., 2011).

Although a decline in grades is an easy indicator of a struggling child, a not always identifiable. Drummet argues that children that move frequently may struggle and have anxious or depressive feelings towards friendships. A constant source of stress for children that move is the fear of being able to fit in or the loss of old friendships. There is a huge sense of stress that comes with children that are constantly moving to new locations (Drummet et al., 2003). This is applicable to my research as I am seeking to improve the quality of life for Marines and their families. I seek to see if Marines would see the benefit of increasing time on station and how it could potentially increase the quality of life for their children. The educational benefits as well as mental health would be reduced by a homesteading policy.

C. SUMMARY

The literature reviewed provided a basis for my research and survey topics. The NPS research I found from Grayson and Mireles provided a framework and foundation for this paper. The RAND Corporation studies were included because they were the beginning of the early stages of homesteading becoming a conversation and a direction from Congress, proving this is a needed discussion. Lastly, the family studies used showcased the problems that surround frequent moves that are a consequence of being in the military. All of this background knowledge was used to build this study to further the agenda to make a case for homesteading.

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IV. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The following outlines the steps for the methodology used:

- Collect 10 years of PCS, PPM, & HHG shipment data
- Analyze cost savings through the use of formula
- Conduct an in-person survey in three separate geographical locations to gain perspective on homesteading
- Analyze results of survey

The intent was to follow the scope of Grayson and Mireles in their methods of finding cost savings. Using operational and rotational PCS moves only that was pulled from a RAND study would be used as a baseline for the focus of tours and this research would use their same formula. A key difference that was included in this research, that was left out of the original work, was to include two components of PCS moves which were personally procured moves (PPM) and the shipment of HHGs. The addition of these two elements will ultimately increase the dollar value of cost savings.

First, the formula for which is the average cost per PCS from FY2013 to FY2023, will be calculated using the data in the below Table.

Average Cost per PCS = (SUM annual PCS $ + PPM $ + HHG Shipment $) /
(SUM PCS orders executed)

Second, the number of times a Marine moves in a career is calculated. Under the current policy, a Marine executes 6.7 PCS moves during a 20-year career. This value was found by dividing a 20-year career by the current three-year rotation cycle. For simplicity, Mireles did not consider accession, training, or separations PCS types that involve much shorter TOS requirements (Grayson and Mireles, 2016). There would be too many factors that would influence the time of accession pipeline such as backlogged schools, remediation of a school or training, redesignation, the length of a school per MOS. Therefore, the average cost to PCS a Marine every three years during a 20-year career is

found by multiplying the average cost of PCS by 6.7. Likewise, since a Marine will PCS three times under the new policy, one can estimate the average cost during the same 20-year career by multiplying the average cost of PCS by three. The potential for career savings can be found by changing the PCS rotation cycle from three to n years can be put into formula. Therefore, Potential Savings = (average cost to PCS a Marine every three years during a 20-year career) – (average cost to PCS a Marine every # years during a 20-year career):

Potential Savings = (20/3)(Average Cost to PCS) – (20/n)(Average Cost to PCS)

Finally, potential savings can be expressed in annual terms by dividing them by the 20-year career timespan, or: Annual Savings= Potential Savings / 20 (2016).

For the survey portion of the study, the intent was to find the true perception that Marines have toward the idea of homesteading. To accomplish this, Marines of all cultures, races, ranks, genders, and ages would need to grant their opinion. The best way to ensure there was a diverse set of Marines would be to travel to multiple locations to survey random Marines. This study was performed in three separate geographical locations. The surveyor traveled to MCRD San Diego, CA; Quantico, VA; and MacDill AFB/RS Tampa Bay to collect surveys from Marines. The surveys were done in person by standing in front of commissaries and the local Exchange soliciting a response from as many Marines as possible. In total 317 responses were gathered. 123 responses collected from MCRD San Diego; 112 from Quantico, VA; and 82 from MacDill AFB/RS Tampa Bay.

One issue with the Grayson & Mireles study was that their scope was limited to the California region and that the results were polled from specific populations i.e., student status and recruiting status. This is problematic as this creates a similar mindset among the surveyed and a true feel of the Marine Corps should attempt to poll from all areas of the Marine Corps. This study ensures all voices are captured and a better feel for the perspective is achieved. By introducing the lower ranking service members, I hypothesize that there will be a decrease in the overall percentage of a "want" for homesteading. I believe this to be true because younger Marines want to travel more. As a prior service

recruiter, I am aware that many young individuals join the service with the enticement of travel and adventure.

When the survey was designed, the idea was to keep it short enough that Marines would be willing to stop and answer the questions on the list. There was a shared belief that if it took too long the respondents would not have the time nor the patience to sit through it. Thus, the conclusion was that the questionnaire should be between 15–20 questions. Demographics were extremely important to determine what factors played a role in the perception surrounding homesteading. Beyond that, the next important questions were the overarching themes of preferred length of a tour, the impacts on a Marine's career, family life, and spouse employment.

Once all the surveys were completed the results were analyzed to find common trends discussed in the following chapter.

A. POTENTIAL COURSES OF ACTION

1. Mandatory Homestead for All Service Members

Although the current order does not specify a limit on the number of years a service member can stay at one location, the first recommendation as a course of action (COA) is that all service members stay in location for a minimum of six years. This would be put into place by an order issuing the mandate to take effect immediately and require all personnel to stay in place. While this will receive pushback, if there is one thing that came out of covid for the military, it is that we can stay in one place longer than the status quo of three years. On March 25, 2020, Defense Secretary Mark Esper established a freeze policy for travel for service members and their family due to Corona Virus 2019. This would essentially be a hold on all military travel to prevent them from PCSing and conducting any type of temporary additional duty (TAD) (https://media.defense.gov/2020/Mar/19/2002266939/-1/-1/1/COVID-19-TRAVEL-RESTRICTIONS-FAQ.PDF, 2019). The Marine Corps continued to function without missing a beat, proving that Marines can stay in one place longer than the current order set and the Marine Corps readiness and effectiveness will not suffer. This COA offers the most savings as it is reducing the amount

of moves for the largest population. Therefore, it becomes obvious why it would have the largest savings.

2. Optional Homestead

The next COA chosen to offer was a simple choice by the service member to decide whether they would like to homestead or not. This would be the most appealing to the service members as they would get the opportunity to have more say in their career. According to the survey results, 76% believed tours should be longer than the typical tour, so this percentage was used as an estimate to boldly claim that 76%, theoretically, would opt-in to choosing a homesteading option.

There are some assumptions to be made with this option. Primary concern for this logic is that although 76% believed tours should be longer, this does not necessarily mean that they would choose to if given a choice to stay. A prime example of this would be overseas tours or in a duty station that is deemed an undesirable location. Another concern would be that Marines in a more desirable location would choose this option while the ones in an undesirable location would want to leave sooner rather than later and therefore create a stovepipe situation. Certain locations will have too many Marines trying to stay and not wanting to leave and new Marines trying to go there with no room. This will create an imbalance that will cause a manpower issue. Further exploration will have to find a way to approach this type of situation. Grayson and Mireles (2016) discussed potential financial incentives to address this type of situation.

Regardless of this, the most important focus of this paper is cost savings. Should even 1% choose to homestead, there will be a reduction in the overall budget. With an expectation according to the survey expecting a 76% reduction in the budget there is room to potentially save a substantial amount of money annually.

B. CHAPTER IV SUMMARY

Every PCS move bears a cost to the government. By decreasing the number of annual moves, we inherently reduce the annual budget. By producing a method to collect the annual PCS costs + PPM costs + HHG shipment costs / total # of PCS moves per year

gives us the average cost of a single mover. We then use this number of a 20 year span to establish a baseline of the status quo. We now compare it to a six year span to see the savings. We can then look at the three separate COAs to see how the savings compare. This information can be utilized by the Marine Corps to conduct a CBA to see if the benefits outweigh the costs of such a policy change.

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V. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

In Chapter IV the methodology of assessing the PCS data was described to determine potential cost savings should the Marine Corps adopt a homesteading policy. The method to calculate cost savings would be in done in seven basic steps for each course of action with minor adjustments to find the total savings for each option:

1. Total FY13-FY22 PCS Costs/Total # of FY13-FY23 Movers=Avg Cost per PCS
2. Avg Cost * 6.7 (avg # of PCS moves w/current policy = 20/3)
3. Avg Cost * 3.3 (# of PCS moves w/new policy = 20/6)
4. Career Savings = (Avg Cost Per PCS move * 6.7) – (Avg Cost Per PCS move *3.3)
5. Annual Savings per Marine = Career Savings / 20 years
6. Marine Corps Annual PCS Savings = Annual Savings per Marine * average # of movers for annual PCS Savings
7. Present Value of Annuities over 20 years for the Marine Corps

After determining the two different COAs, the Marine Corps can utilize the results to conduct a CBA or cost effectiveness analysis (CEA) to determine if one of these COA's are worth making changes to achieve the desired savings.

Table 3 shows an attribution to the Navy's *Justification of Budget Estimates* (2013-2024) which holds the operational and rotational total funds spent per fiscal year and the number of movers for each year. This information was used to create the average cost of PCS per year and create the 10-yr. average.

Table 3. Operational and Rotational Travel Total Costs and Number of Movers (in thousands except for final column) Adapted from Department of the Navy (n.d.).

FISCAL YEAR	OFFICER O & R TRVL	ENLISTED O & R TRVL	TOTAL	# OF MOVERS	AVG COST PER MOVE
22	$ 99,313	$ 176,960	$ 276,273	25290	$ 10,924.20
21	$ 92,366	$ 163,564	$ 255,930	25533	$ 10,023.50
20	$ 90,988	$ 178,645	$ 269,633	26334	$ 10,238.97
19	$ 86,339	$ 189,272	$ 275,611	28899	$ 9,537.04
18	$ 94,784	$ 208,632	$ 303,416	28710	$ 10,568.30
17	$ 87,440	$ 196,282	$ 283,722	28738	$ 9,872.71
16	$ 89,330	$ 219,274	$ 308,604	29520	$ 10,454.07
15	$ 79,158	$ 197,383	$ 276,541	27411	$ 10,088.69
14	$ 85,995	$ 175,079	$ 261,074	26116	$ 9,996.71
13	$ 76,363	$ 239,267	$ 315,630	30357	$ 10,397.27
				10 Year Avg.	$ 10,210.15

Finally, a review of the results of the survey to analyze the climate of the Marines' perception towards a homesteading policy. 317 Marines from three separate geographical locations were surveyed to determine a widespread overall viewpoint of homesteading.

A. COA 1 MANDATORY HOMESTEADING FOR ALL

This would be a mandatory homesteading policy put into place immediately upon approval and would inherently raise the largest amount of savings. The larger the group that homesteads the fewer PCS moves incur and thereby the cost to the government would be the lowest. Using the seven steps from above the savings can be calculated as such:

1. Total FY13-FY22 PCS Costs/Total # of FY13-FY22 Movers=Avg Cost per PCS

   Avg Cost per PCS=$10,210.15

2. Avg Cost * 6.7 (avg # of PCS moves w/current policy = 20/3)

   $10,210.15*6.7= $68,407.98

3. Avg Cost * 3.3 (# of PCS moves w/new policy = 20/6)

$10,210.15*3.3=$$33,693.48 Reduction by 49.3%

4. Career Savings = (Avg Cost Per PCS move * 6.7) – (Avg Cost Per PCS move *3.3)

   $68,407.98-$33,693.48=$34,714.50

5. Annual Savings per Marine = Career Savings / 20 years

   $1,735.72

6. Annual Savings per Marine * Avg # PCS moves = Annual PCS Savings for the Marine Corps

   Marine Corps Annual PCS Savings

   $1,735.72 * 27,691 (Avg # movers) = $48,063,822.52

7. Calculate Discounting Rate

   Present Value (PV) of an annuity

   C= Future Cash $48,063,822.52

   r= Discount Rate According to OMB Cir NO A-94 = .4%

   t= Number of years = 20

   $PV= (C/r)*(1-1+r)^t$

   $PV= \$48,063,822.52/.004*1-(1/1.004^{20})$

   PV= $922,060,407.74

By using COA 1, a mandatory homesteading policy for all Marines, the Marine Corps is set to save roughly $48 Million a year in future PCS costs. Over a 20-year span of an induvial Marine's career, the Marine Corps will have saved almost a billion in total PCS costs after factoring discounting in order to capture accurate costs. "Discounting is the process of determining the present value of a payment or a stream of payments that is to be received in the future. Given the time value of money, a dollar is worth more today than it would be worth tomorrow" (Chen, 2023, Para 1). Although this decreases our anticipated

each year savings it is extremely important to understand that each year the cost of a PCS usually increases as allowances for travel often increase due to competition with inflation. There is no way to accurately depict such future savings, but it is worth noting.

This is the largest savings of all COAs presented. The positives of this COA besides the largest and quickest way to make an impact in the budget would be the opportunity for Marines to excel in their career, build networks, allow for children to thrive in a single environment for extending periods of times, and allow for spouses to invest in their own careers.

B. COA 2 OPTIONAL HOMESTEADING

This COA would be accepted by the majority of the Marines because it allows them to be in more control of their career. This would most likely be the favored option to Marines if given the choice. In this COA Marines can opt-in and choose whether to stay and homestead or PCS at the regular rate. To achieve this result the research used 76% as an "opt-in" number. This percentage was a direct result of the survey results, which showed that 76% of Marines surveyed stated tours should be longer than the typical three-yr. tour. While this does not directly indicate each Marine would choose to homestead, it was a starting point to estimate savings.

To calculate the savings the same formula was used:

1. Total FY13-FY22 PCS Costs/Total # of FY13-FY23 Movers=Avg Cost per PCS

   Avg Cost per PCS=$10,210.15

2. Avg Cost * 6.7 (avg # of PCS moves w/current policy = 20/3)

   $10,210.15*6.7= $68,407.98

3. Avg Cost * 3.3 (# of PCS moves w/new policy = 20/6)

   $10,210.15*3.3=$$33,693.48 Reduction by 49.3%

4. Career Savings = (Avg Cost Per PCS move * 6.7) – (Avg Cost Per PCS move *3.3)

   $68,407.98-$33,693.48=$34,714.50

5. Annual Savings per Marine = Career Savings / 20 years

   $1,735.72

6. Annual Savings per Marine * Avg # PCS moves = Annual PCS Savings for the Marine Corps

7. Marine Corps Annual PCS Savings

   $1,735.72 * 27,691 (Avg # movers) = $48,063,822.52

8. Opt-In Savings = Marine Corps Annual PCS Savings * 76%

   $48,063,822.52 * .76 = $36,528,505.12

9. Calculate Discounting Rate

   Present Value (PV)

   C= Future Cash $36,528,505.12

   r= Discount Rate According to OMB Cir NO A-94 = .4%

   t= Number of years = 20

   PV= (C/r)*(1-1+r)t

   PV= $36,528,505.12/.004*1-(1/1.00420)

   PV= $700,765,909.97

While this does not net as much savings as COA 1 this still saves roughly $36.5 million per year. Over a 20 year span of annual savings when factoring in discounting, becomes over $700 million, but once again it is extremely important to understand that PCS allowances are likely to increase in the future causing that overall PV to increase as

well. There would still be less PCS movement on an annual basis but would allow for more flexibility for each Marine to make their own decision.

A. COA SUMMARY

While both COAs offer savings for the Marine Corps, the first COA savings are higher at roughly $48 million a year compared to $36.5 million a year from COA 2. While the first COA may be more attractive to policymakers, there can be some negatives associated with this COA. Some negative aspects to this would be the lack of Marine Corps experience from getting to experience different leadership during a first tour, experiencing new environments, and minimizing an important recruiting incentive offered to potential applicants which is travel. COA 2 can still create savings but has the benefit of giving Marines a voice in their careers. A negative to this option would be that the more attractive duty stations would have a higher likelihood of Marines wanting to stay and the less desirable duty stations would have Marines wanting to leave and not homestead. This would create an imbalance that would inevitably create a problem for manpower. There is no argument that option 1 would save the DOD the most amount of money.

B. SURVEY RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The survey conducted was reviewed by the IRB and found to not be human research. This survey was done by polling 317 Marines expanded across three geographical locations in person. Each Marine surveyed was given a definition of homesteading and once the survey was started there was no further explanation on intent of questions to avoid any influence on the outcome. Figure 1 shows the male to female demographics of the Marines polled.

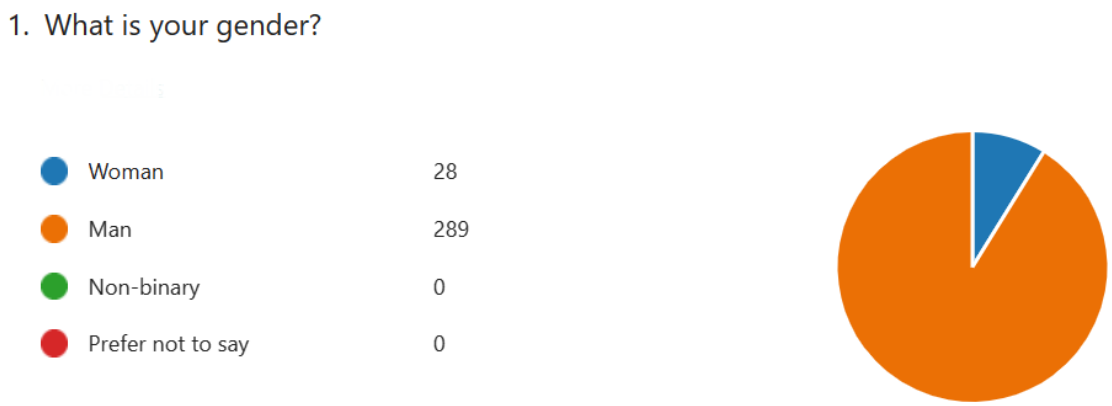

Figure 1. Gender Graph from Survey

Of the Marines polled, 9% were female (28 in total). Of those 28 polled some interesting results when filtering the data were as follows:

- 93% of females would prefer to have fewer PCS moves compared to the 76% of the overall surveyed
- 79% of females believed the current policy is not stable environment to raise family
- 96% of females believe a tour of more than 3 years would have positive impact
- 82% of females allowing tours to increase to more than 3 years at one location would positively increase my likelihood of retention.

These results were interesting because they exceed the overall polled statistics from the survey. Showing that the female Marines are even more likely to support a homesteading policy.

Figures 2–4 show some of the demographics that display the wide variety of Marines polled. Marines of all backgrounds were participants for the survey and allowed for an unbiased opinion from a single group of Marines.

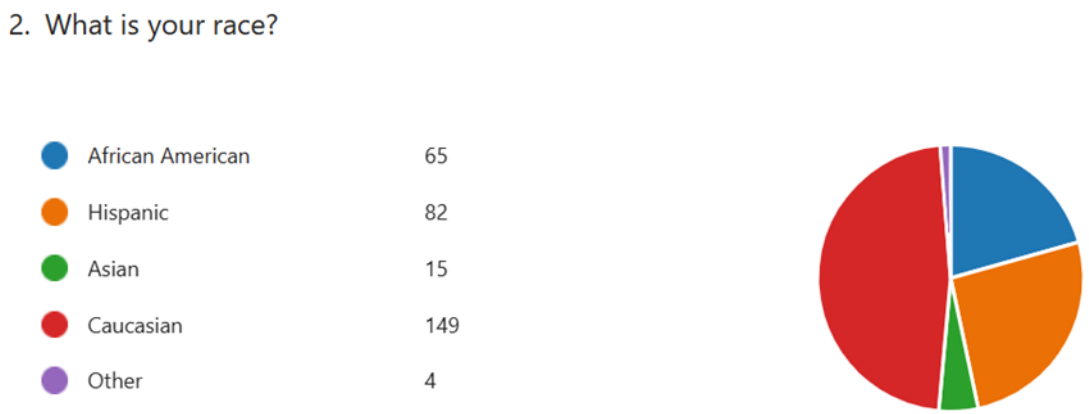

Figure 2. Race Graph from Survey

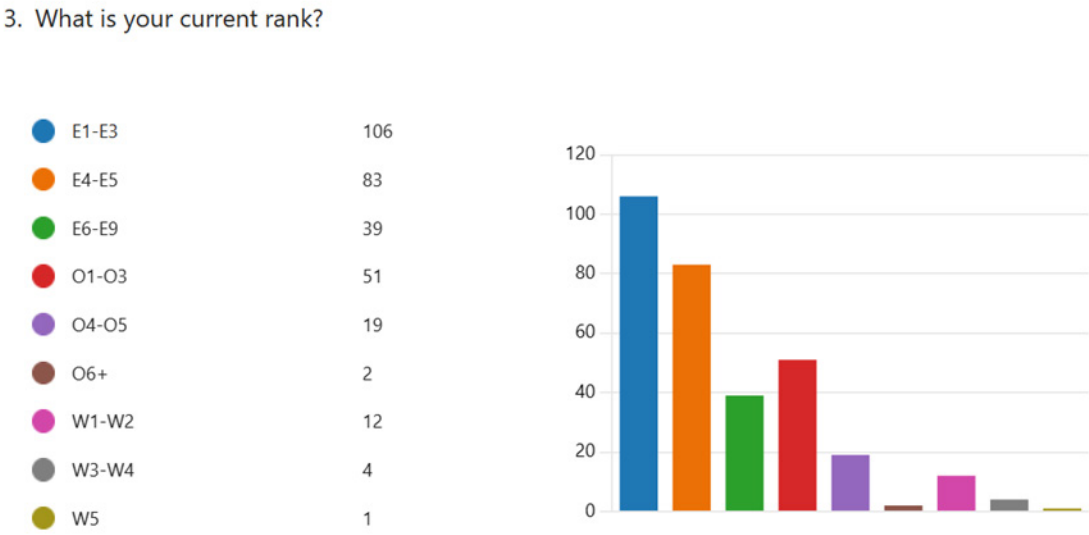

Figure 3. Rank Graph from Survey

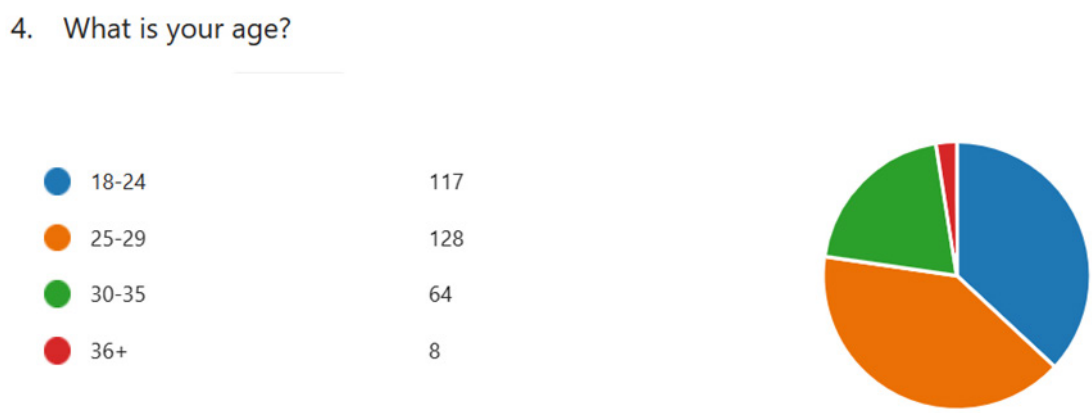

Figure 4. Age Graph from Survey

Figure 5 shows a breakdown of participants by geographical location. *At the "East Coast" location the surveyor was asked to not administer the survey in front of the commissary as it was considered soliciting. Thus, resulted in the lower amount of polled in that location.

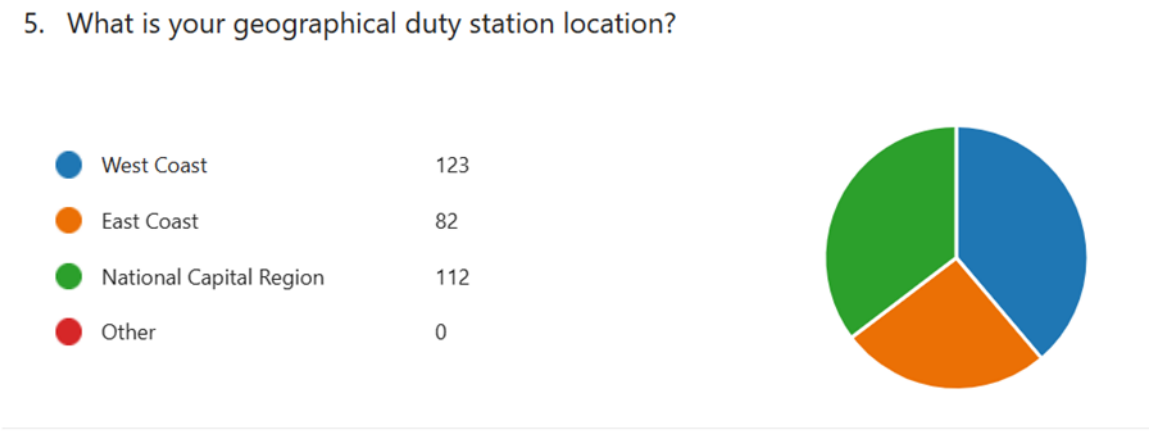

Figure 5. Geographical Duty Station Graph from Survey

Figure 6 is important because it displays that less than 25% of individuals wanted the status quo or less for preferred time to stay in one geographical location. The highest number of Marines voted for a preferred time of six to seven years per tour. This would be

the minimum amount of time to homestead if such a policy were put in place for the suggested COAs.

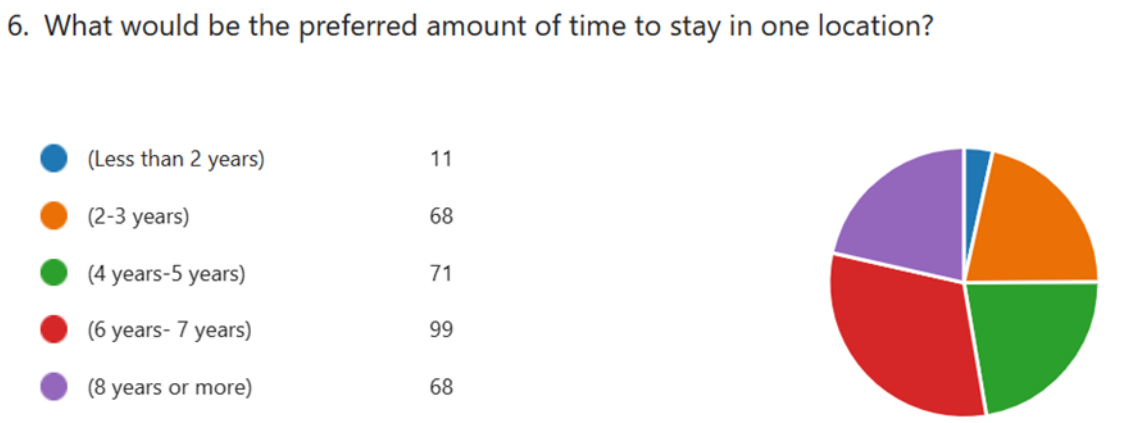

Figure 6. Preferred Time on Station Graph from Survey

Figure 7 displays the breakdown of Marines polled that had children compared to those that did not. 57% of surveyed respondents had children. This becomes important when filtering those that were surveyed that have children as a positive view on homesteading goes up.

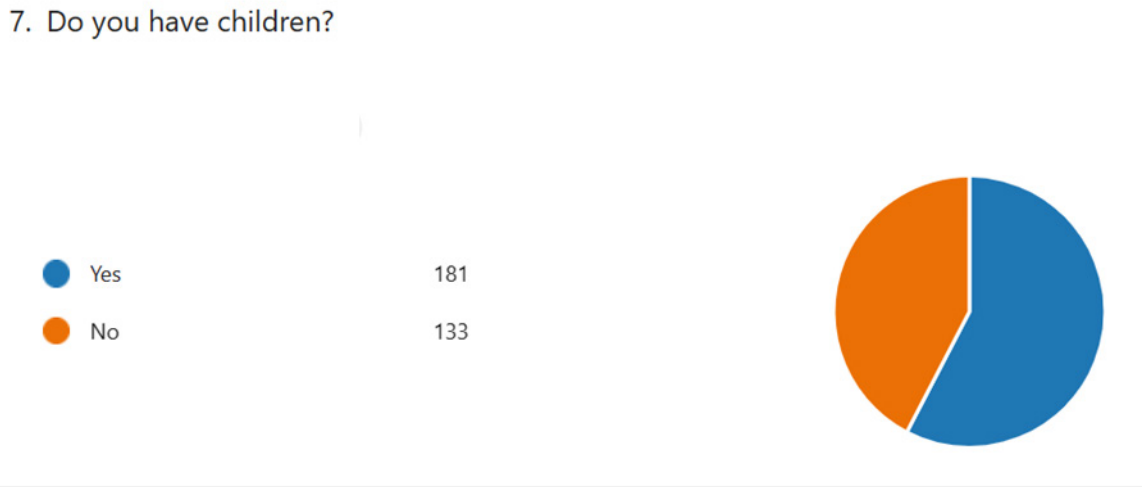

Figure 7. Percentage of Service Members with Children Graph from Survey

Figure 8 shows that 56% of Marines do not believe there is a negative stigma surrounding the idea of homesteading. This is a positive note because the Commandant wanted to change the view of staying in one location for an extended period of time to a more accepted concept. 22% of Marines still carry the view that homesteading is negative.

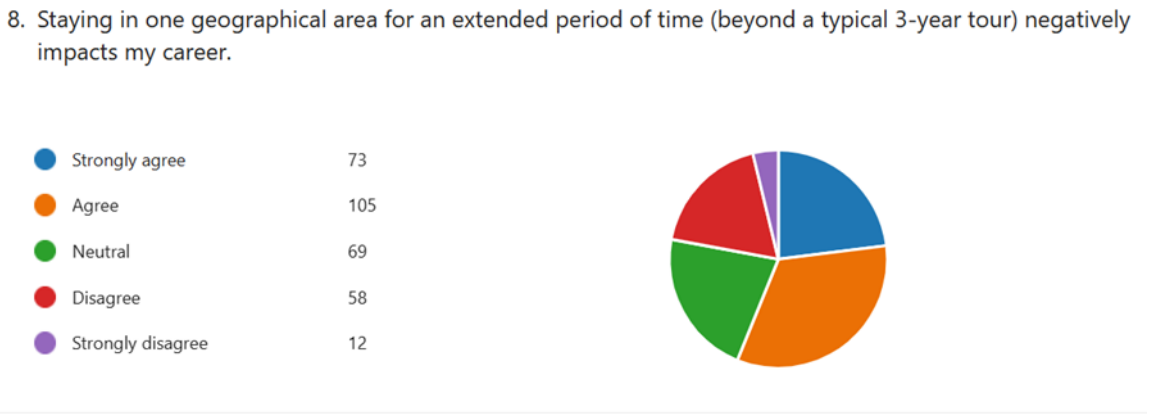

Figure 8. Graph Depicting Belief in Homesteading Having Negative Career Impact

Figure 9 displays the entire basis of the thesis in that Marines want to homestead according to most of the Marines surveyed. 69% of Marines would prefer to have fewer PCS moves.

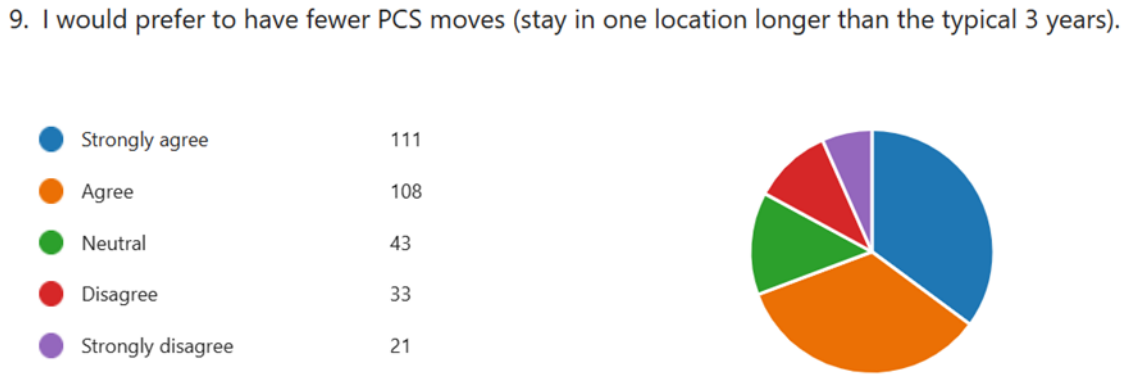

Figure 9. Graph Depicting Percentage of Service Members that Want Fewer PCS Moves

Figure 10 displays an interesting result because the hypothesis was that it would be a disagreed statement, but it was fairly equal across the board for the current policy of a three-year tour allows for a stable environment for a family. This could be due to the status quo of the service already raising families in such an environment.

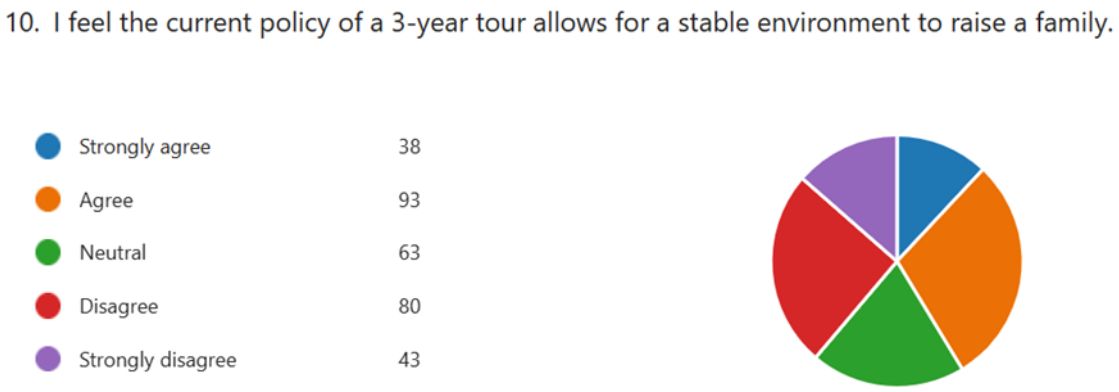

Figure 10. Graph Depicting Percentage of Service Members that Believe Current Tour Allows for a Family Stability

Figure 11 shows perhaps the most damning evidence of a positive result of homesteading was that nearly 83% of the polled believed that increasing a tour beyond three years would result in a positive impact on family stability.

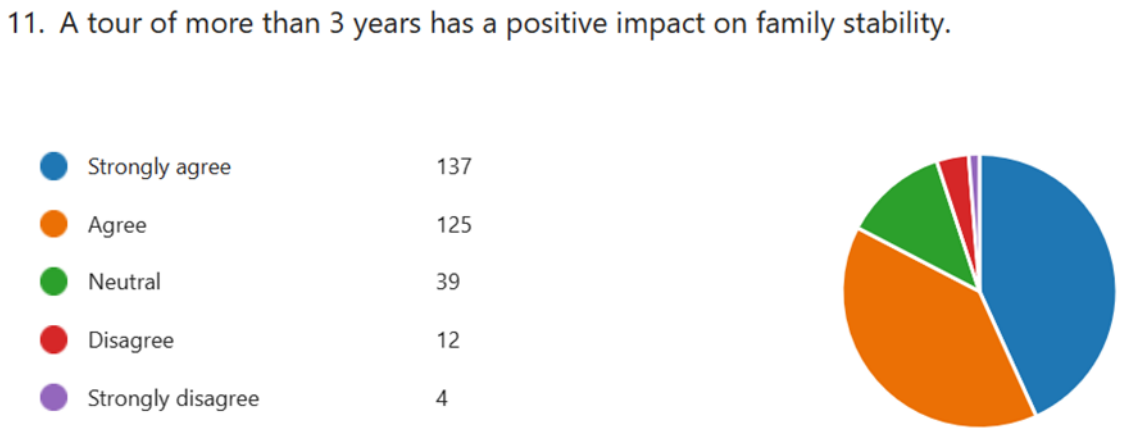

Figure 11. Graph Depicting Percentage of Service Members that Believe an Increase in Tour Would Positively Impact Families

An interesting note to Figure 11, is that of those that strongly disagreed to the statement of "an increase in tour to more than the status quo of three years would have a positive impact on families," all of them answered "no" to having children in question 7 as displayed in Figure 12.

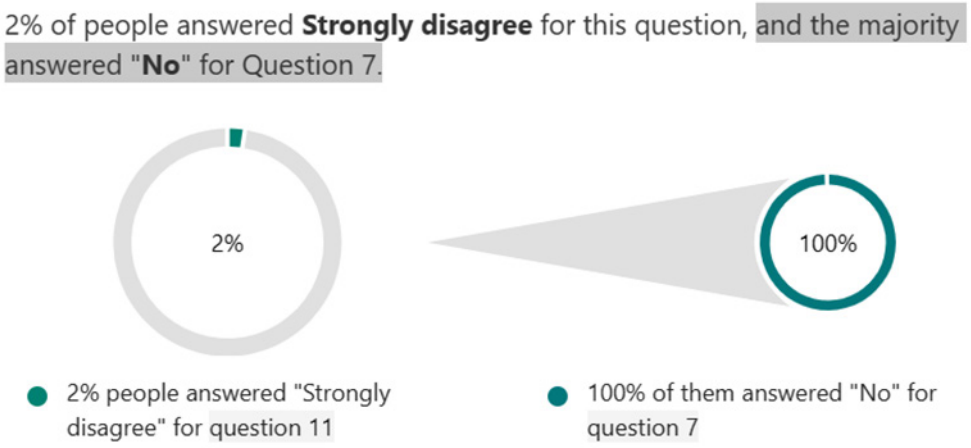

Figure 12. A. Graph Depicting Percentage of Service Members that Believe an Increase in Tour Would Positively Impact Families Follow on Statistics

Figure 13 shows those that felt very strongly about question 11 also strongly favored in agreement to preferring fewer PCS moves.

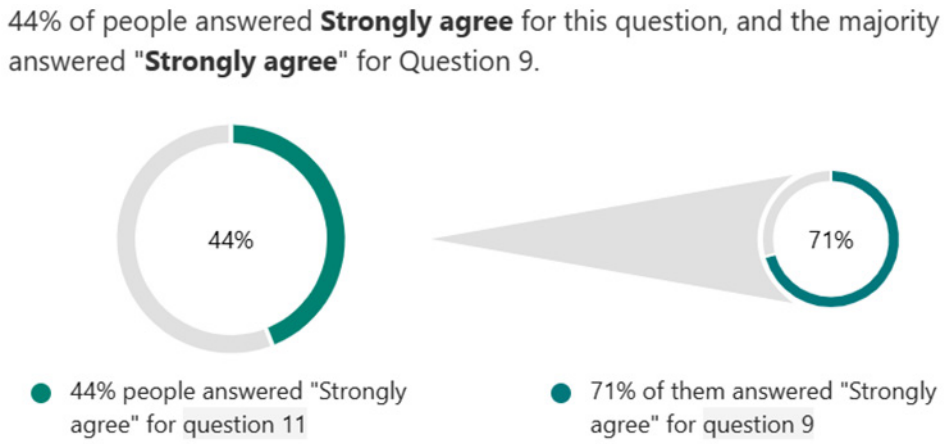

Figure 13. B. Graph Depicting Percentage of Service Members that Believe an Increase in Tour Would Positively Impact Families Follow on Statistics

Figure 14 shows most Marines believing increasing tours beyond three years would make a Marine more proficient at their job. This supports the overall thesis which regards increased work performance would result from a homesteading policy.

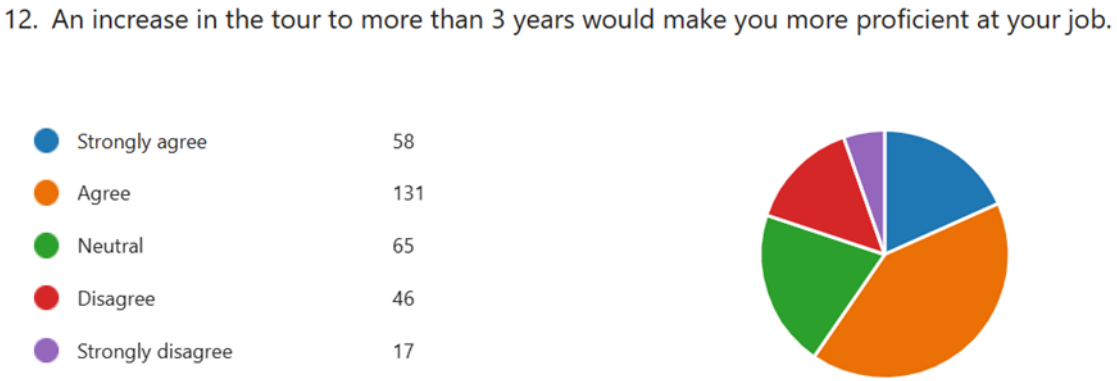

Figure 14. Graph Depicting Percentage of Service Members that Believe Job Proficiency Would Increase if Tours Were Extended

Figure 15 shows Marines believe that mission accomplishment would not be jeopardized by increasing the length of tours. This becomes paramount when offering counter thesis arguments that mission accomplishment is questioned when homesteading.

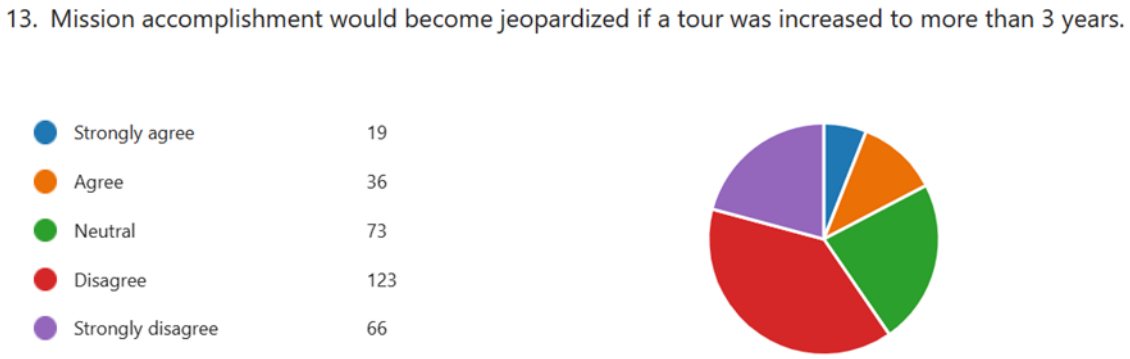

Figure 15. Graph Depicting Percentage of Service Members that Believe Mission Accomplishment Would Become Jeopardized if Tours Were Increased

Figure 16 shows the positive impacts homesteading would have on retention. An important note, although there was no follow up question to analyze why it would have a negative impact on retention for clarification, there were several surveyed Marines that openly stated that, "Nothing would increase their decision to get out of service." This leads the analyst to believe that some Marines mistakenly answer disagree due to not wanting to stay in the service at all.

Figure 16. Graph Depicting Percentage of Service Members that Believe an Increase in Tour Would Positively Increase Likelihood of Retention

Figure 17 shows the amount of Marines polled that were married compared to those that were not.

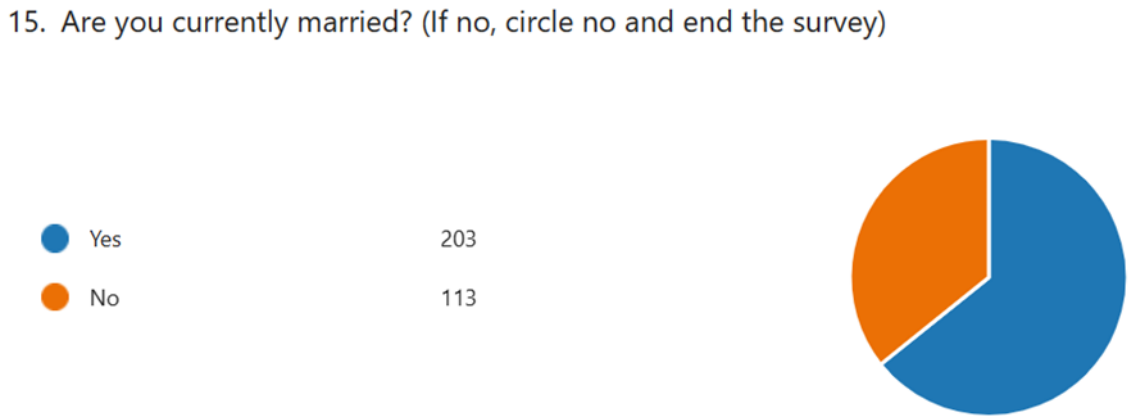

Figure 17. Graph Depicting Percentage of Service Members Currently Married

Figure 18 shows an interesting note that of those who marked yes as married, also were more likely to agree with wanting fewer PCS moves throughout their career.

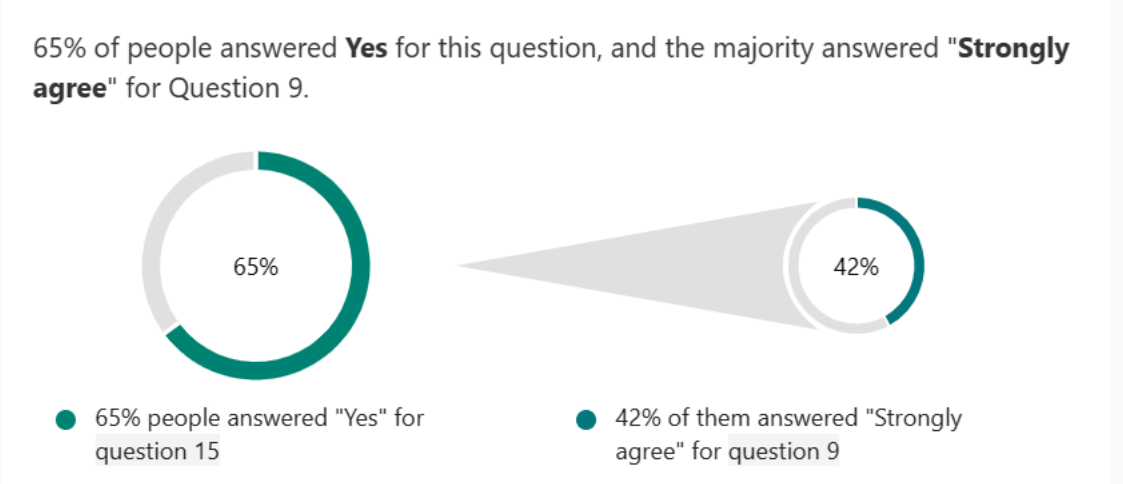

Figure 18. A. Graph Depicting Percentage of Service Members Currently Married Follow on Statistics

Figure 19 displays a statement that should be discarded. This question led to confusion as Question 17 elaborates on those that marked yes but allows for an option of homemaker. This led to some individuals not answering question 16 or going back after question 17 and changing their answer.

Figure 19. Graph Depicting Percentage of Service Members that Have Spouses Currently Employed

Figure 20 displays the types of occupations of the spouses surveyed.

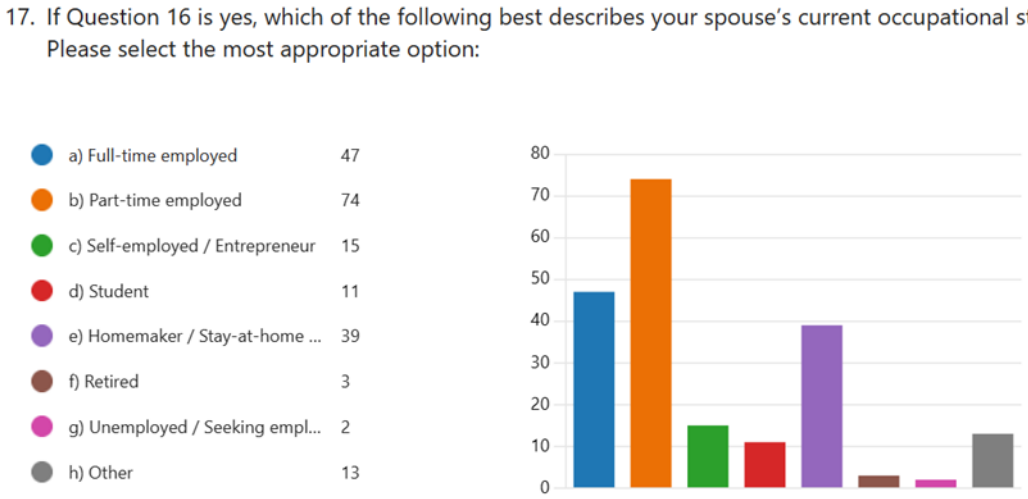

Figure 20. Graph Depicting the Types of Occupations of the Spouses Surveyed

Figure 21 shows the number of Marines surveyed believe that their spouse's career would be positively impacted through a homesteading policy.

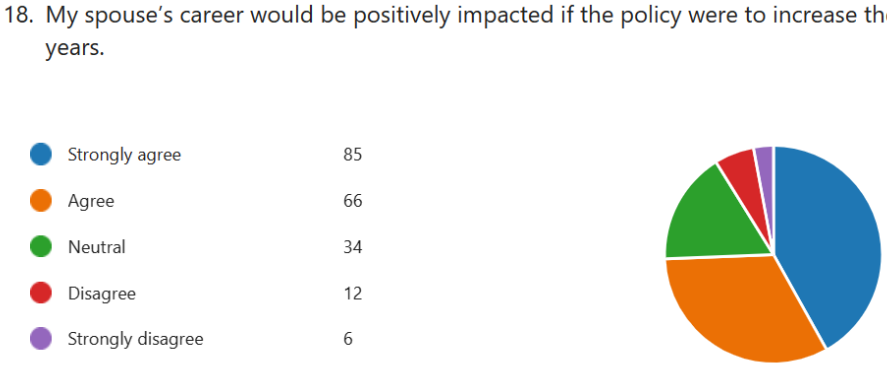

Figure 21. Graph Depicting Percentage of Service Members that Believe an Increase in Tour Would Positively Impact Their Spouses Career

C. SURVEY SUMMARY

In conclusion, the findings of the survey unequivocally endorse the central thesis that Marines overwhelmingly support the implementation of a homesteading policy. The resounding consensus among respondents not only underscores the feasibility of such a

policy but also highlights its multifaceted benefits. One of the primary advantages is the potential for substantial budgetary savings for both the Marine Corps and the broader government. Beyond the fiscal implications, it is crucial to underscore the positive impact such a policy would have on the well-being of Marines and their spouses. The survey results reveal a clear correlation between support for homesteading and increased welfare among the military community. The conclusive data from the survey not only affirms the viability of such a policy but also provides a compelling argument for its implementation as a means to achieve fiscal responsibility and enhance the overall well-being of Marines and their families. As we look to the future, it is imperative that military policymakers consider the resounding endorsement expressed by the survey respondents and seriously evaluate the potential benefits of incorporating a mandatory homesteading policy.

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VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a COA recommendation based on cost savings and survey results, offering a critical analysis of the methodology, and providing recommendations for follow on studies. This research still needs to be refined and analyzed from different scopes, but it needs to be explored since there is an immediate need for budget reductions. This could be a needed solution the government is looking for.

A. COA RECOMMENDATIONS

The author contends that COA 1 stands out as the optimal choice for the Marine Corps, primarily due to its significant cost savings and the ease with which it can be incorporated into policy. The impact of COVID-19 has underscored the effectiveness of a non-travel order in swiftly halting travel without impeding mission accomplishment, affirming that COA 1 has the potential to yield a substantial $48 million a year in annual savings.

However, it is imperative to acknowledge the drawbacks associated with COA 1. By limiting the opportunity for Marines to experience diverse leadership styles before reenlisting, there is a risk of some individuals being subjected to suboptimal leadership, potentially tarnishing their perception of the Marine Corps and influencing their decision to exit the service rather than reenlist. Additionally, the intangible benefits of travel and adventure, which serve as a significant motivator for volunteering for service, may be compromised under COA 1.

While COA 2 presents a commendable estimated savings, approximately 24% lower than COA 1, it is not without its flaws. The reliance on duty station desirability poses a substantial challenge, as it could result in an overwhelming preference for attractive locations, creating a logistical nightmare in terms of manpower distribution. Addressing this challenge would necessitate a comprehensive study to accurately gauge the percentage of Marines willing to homestead at various locations, a task complicated by the unpredictable fluctuations in preferences and the difficulty in forecasting these trends when preparing and earmarking budgets.

A potential middle ground could involve introducing an additional COA that mandates homesteading once a certain rank is attained. Survey results indicate a shift in the desire to homestead among enlisted ranks, particularly around the E4-E5 and O4-O5 levels. Incorporating this into policy would allow Marines to experience multiple Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves during their initial tour, preserving the sense of adventure and professional development. Subsequently, a mandatory homesteading policy could be activated as individuals progress in rank and start to establish families, ensuring both experience and stability. This compromise not only aligns with the shifting preferences identified in the survey but also maintains an overall net savings for the budget. While this option holds promise for future studies, gathering additional information, such as the number of PCS moves by rank each year, is essential to accurately predict and achieve the anticipated savings.

B. SURVEY QUESTIONS

When creating a survey, the intent was to create a poll that can be quickly taken and captures the required data that not only captures the opinions of Marines' perception towards homesteading, but also records homesteading impacts on spouses, children, and work performance. The survey could have been more in depth and offered more room to clarify and go more in depth on subjects.

C. FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

As reiterated earlier, there exists the possibility of delving into a hybrid Course of Action (COA) to consider alternative options beyond the scope of the current discussion. In this vein, it is noteworthy that the investigation into homesteading lengths and associated incentives remains unexplored at present. This facet, left unexamined, introduces a potential area of complexity, particularly when contemplating less-than-desirable locations.

In addressing the nuanced challenges associated with such locales, it is crucial to draw attention to the insights provided by Grayson and Mireles (2016). Their discourse emphasizes the viability of a monetary incentive as a means to staff these specific locations adequately. However, it is essential to recognize the inherent difficulty in determining the

precise monetary value that constitutes an equitable incentive. Striking the right balance becomes a formidable task, given the intricacies involved in assessing the appropriate financial encouragement to attract personnel to less desirable assignments.

A potential avenue for resolution may involve not only contemplating the monetary incentives but also reassessing the duration of the homesteading period. By reducing the length of the homestead, a dynamic element is introduced that could potentially mitigate some of the challenges associated with incentive determination. This, in turn, opens the door to a more nuanced and flexible approach, acknowledging that a shorter homesteading period may be more palatable for individuals considering assignments in less-than-desirable locations.

In essence, the exploration of a hybrid COA necessitates a comprehensive examination of the intricate interplay between homesteading durations, monetary incentives, and location preferences. It prompts a consideration of alternative strategies to address the complexities associated with staffing less desirable locations, with a keen eye toward finding a balanced and adaptable solution. As the discourse unfolds, it becomes apparent that delving into the specifics of homesteading lengths and incentives is a rich terrain that merits in-depth exploration to refine and optimize the proposed hybrid COA.

There are some duty assignments that simply would not be able to take on an extended tour such as Special Duty Assignments (SDA). These duties are considered extremely stressful and typically hard to fill billets. Increasing the time required for such a billet would only drive a further wedge into manning these difficult positions. A policy shift would have to account for this and exempt these Marines.

Additionally, Marines with family members that qualify for the Exceptional Family Member Program would also be potentially exempt from the policy or perhaps benefit from such a policy if in a place where medical care is at the ready. Many of the families that qualify have to be located in distinct locations in order to receive medical care. Such a policy can ensure that they stay at one location longer and thus theoretically should receive care from the same medical professionals rather than starting over every 3 years to find a new one. This could be an added benefit for those families.

While this research primarily focused on the cost savings and retention benefits there are some notable benefits worth stating such as operational flexibility. A homesteading policy could offer longer tours that provide the Marine Corps with greater flexibility. It may reduce the frequency of turnover, allowing units to maintain experienced personnel for longer periods, which could contribute to more effective and efficient operations. This could lead to more opportunities for career advancement within the Marine Corps. Marines could potentially gain more experience and expertise in their respective fields, leading to more promotions and career progression. This could be beneficial for specialized units that require a high level of expertise and continuity. These units might benefit from a more stable personnel structure.

On the other hand, the Marine Corps will have to find a way to adapt to the longer tour structure. This includes evaluating potential challenges and implementing strategies to address them, such as adjusting training programs, deployment schedules, and family support services. If implemented, a transition period would likely be necessary to allow for a smooth shift from the existing policy to the new one. This could involve considerations for personnel currently serving under the old policy. Any change to military policy requires careful consideration of various factors to ensure it aligns with the overall goals and needs of the organization while also taking into account the well-being of the service members and their families.

For future surveys, an online survey would be better suited as you can poll larger amounts of Marines and poll all over the world. This would give a wider view of a larger perception giving more accurate results.

Family questions surveyed need to go more in depth. There was only one question that dealt with homesteading and the impact it would have on a spouse's career and only one question that pertained to family stability. This is not enough to offer enough insight to potential family benefits surrounding homesteading.

D. FINAL THOUGHTS

This paper presents the outcomes of an extensive survey conducted among Marines to gauge their perspectives on a homesteading policy. The survey's objective was to elicit

feedback from Marines regarding their sentiments about the existing policy and to assess their reactions if the requirements were extended from three to six years. The survey encompassed responses from 317 Marines across three distinct geographical locations. The results reveal potential avenues for cost savings and the prospect of enhancing the quality of life for Marines and their families, all while maintaining operational readiness. Notably, an adjustment in the rotation cycle from three to six years could yield an annual savings of $48 million a year for the Marine Corps. When factoring the present value of a 20-year period the Marine Corps would be expected to save Over $922 million dollars.

Interpreting these results, it becomes apparent that there is substantial support among Marines for an extension to the current tours, suggesting that a policy change in this regard could be advantageous for the institution. The perceived intangible benefits are highly valued by the surveyed Marines. Moreover, there is a discernible opportunity for significant cost savings. Considering these findings, Marine leadership should contemplate the possibility of increasing the current tour from three years to six as a strategic move that aligns with the preferences and well-being of service members and their families, without compromising individual or unit readiness.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps paved the way for a new outlook on the approach to homesteading. The United States Marine Corps needs to capitalize on this mentality shift in order to save money, increase retention among Marines, and increase family stability. This can be an opportunity to revolutionize the military PCS structure at the benefit of saving taxpayer dollars. Over $44 million dollars a year is at stake to be divested with the bonus of increased retention. The Marine Corps needs to seize the initiative and become the tip of the spear and become the first branch of service to adopt a homesteading policy.

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APPENDIX: SURVEY

Homesteading Survey

1. What is your gender? Single choice.
Woman

Man

Non-binary

Prefer not to say

2. What is your race? Single choice.
African American

Hispanic

Asian

Caucasian

Other

3. What is your current rank? Single choice.
E1-E3

E4-E5

E6-E9

O1-O3

O4-O5

O6+

W1-W2

W3-W4

W5

4. What is your age? Single choice.

18-24

25-29

30-35

36+

5. What is your geographical duty station location? Single choice.
West Coast

East Coast

National Capital Region

Other

6. What would be the preferred amount of time to stay in one location? Single choice.
(Less than 2 years)

(2-3 years)

(4 years-5 years)

(6 years- 7 years)

(8 years or more)

7. Do you have children? Single choice.
Yes

No

8. Staying in one geographical area for an extended period of time (beyond a typical 3-year tour) negatively impacts my career. Single choice.
Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

9. I would prefer to have fewer PCS moves (stay in one location longer than the typical 3 years). Single choice.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

10. I feel the current policy of a 3-year tour allows for a stable environment to raise a family. Single choice.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

11. A tour of more than 3 years has a positive impact on family stability. Single choice.
Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

12. An increase in the tour to more than 3 years would make you more proficient at your job. Single choice.
Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

13. Mission accomplishment would become jeopardized if a tour was increased to more than 3 years. Single choice.
Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

14. Allowing tours to increase to more than 3 years at one location would positively increase my likelihood of retention. Single choice.
Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

15. Are you currently married? (If no, circle no and end the survey)Single choice.
Yes

No

16. Is your spouse currently employed? Single choice.
Yes

No

17. If Question 16 is yes, which of the following best describes your spouse's current occupational status? Please select the most appropriate option: Single choice.
a) Full-time employed

b) Part-time employed

c) Self-employed / Entrepreneur

d) Student

e) Homemaker / Stay-at-home parent

f) Retired

g) Unemployed / Seeking employment

h) Other

18. My spouse's career would be positively impacted if the policy were to increase the tour to more 3 years. Single choice.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

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