Implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model: A Case Study of Instructors' Experiences

Rebecca Lynne Towle Strawn

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IMPLEMENTING THE ARMY UNIVERSITY EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MODEL: A CASE STUDY OF INSTRUCTORS’ EXPERIENCES

by

Rebecca Lynne Towle Strawn

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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Dedication

For Gil – Without your unwavering support and belief in me, this journey would have been so much harder. Thank you for being my biggest cheerleader, loving me, comforting me, and encouraging me through it, even when it got hard. I love you more than you will ever know, and I look forward to our future together.

For my family - thank you for all the support, patience, and love during this journey. I am so grateful to my parents, Karen Towle and Peter Towle, and all my grandparents for always pushing me to be better and highlighting the importance of education from a young age, without which I might have never had the gumption to do this.

For all my friends – thank you for so kindly checked on me, asking about progress, and cheering me on. Your encouraging words and cheerleading helped me finish this, and now I have lots of time to hang out and do all the things!
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Abstract

Strawn, Rebecca Lynne Towle, Ed.D. The University of Memphis. August 2022. Implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model: A Case Study of Instructors’ Experiences. Major Professor: Dr. Wendy Griswold, Ph.D.

The purpose of this descriptive, bounded, qualitative single-case study was to explore the experiences of ten training instructors at the School for Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation, a civilian training institution of the Army, about their transition to using a new standardized model of curriculum design and delivery. This study used semi-structured interviews supported by document analysis to describe the instructors’ experiences learning and fully implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model (Army U ELM), a specialized experiential learning model adapted from Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory. The study documents the instructor’s experiences learning to use the model and using the model in their current design and delivery. The following research questions framed this study:

1. How did training instructors gain the new knowledge and skills needed to implement the Army U ELM in their training design and delivery?
2. How do training instructors describe their experiences of the transition process to using the Army U ELM in curriculum design and delivery?
3. What are the training instructors' current perceptions of using the Army U ELM in their curriculum design and classroom facilitation work?

Keywords: experiential learning, adult education, training, military education
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List of Abbreviations

Army Learning Model (ALM)

Army Materiel Command (AMC)

Army University (Army U)

Army University Experiential Learning Model (Army U ELM)

Department of Defense (DoD)

Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (Family and MWR)

Installation Management Command (IMCOM)

Installation Management Training Center (IMTC)

School for Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (SFMWR)

Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC)

Training Instructors for Service Culture (Training Instructors)

United States Army (Army)
Chapter One

Introduction

The United States Army is the largest all-volunteer military in the entire world, with a force of over 485,000 soldiers in 2020 (Cancian, 2021). In our age of technology and rapid information dissemination, the Army of the past has had to adapt. As such, the training and learning methods within the military have also been forced to change. Gone are the days requiring books full of plans, paper diagrams, and messenger pigeons to complete successful operations and training. These have instead been replaced with digital information repositories available at the tap of a fingertip and global information systems to share and utilize that information amongst soldiers and civilians who run the Army. Due to this transformation of the force and the methods in which both soldiers and civilian team members operate, the training and education components supporting the workforce have adjusted and adapted to these new norms of operations.

Traditional instructional design and delivery methods were deemed ill-equipped to keep up with this new fast-paced, ever-changing environment, so the Army focused on standardizing a new form of instructional design and delivery. This selected model is based on adult learning and experiential learning tenets through implementing the Army Learning Model (ALM). The ALM shifted the Army’s design and delivery from more traditional instruction centering on the instructor as the center of learning to the learner as the driving central force in the learning experience. Standard forms of delivery prior to this included course designs driven by lecture and PowerPoint presentations, with little opportunity for facilitator and student interaction, student-derived learning, or participation in formative and summative performance assessment (Ferguson, 2014). One
significant component of the ALM was implementing a standardized model of
instruction, known as the Army University Experiential Learning Model (Army U ELM).

This bounded case study explored the organizational factors and lived experiences
of instructors who underwent the transition from using the traditional delivery and design
method to using the Army U ELM. The purpose was to identify those factors through
interviews with a sample of instructors about their perceptions of the transition process,
including their recent experiences in using the Army U ELM, and exploration of
supporting documents describing the transition steps taken by the organization to prepare
instructors. One anticipated outcome of this study was a compilation of information on
the transition and instructor experiences that could inform other organizations choosing
to incorporate the Army U ELM into their design and delivery. Qualitative case study
methodology, including semi-structured personal interviews and document review, was
employed to bring to light information about the instructors’ experiences during and after
their transition to using the new model. Interview participants were purposefully selected
from the group of instructors who were employed with the Army learning organization
during the time following the transition to capture their lived experiences throughout the
process into using the new Army U ELM as criteria for inclusion.

This chapter explores the background that frames the study, followed by the
problem statement. Additionally, this chapter discusses the purpose of the research as
well as the research questions. The chapter closes with an exploration of the significance
of the study and definitions of key terms that will be used throughout this study.
Background of the Study

The Army measures readiness in three resource areas including how they are meeting manpower standards, materiel readily available, and training of personnel. Of the three, training is crucial because it influences the ability of manpower to do their job and the processes of obtaining materiel resources (Chapman, 1994). Prior to World War II, the Army relied on a much smaller full-time fighting force, supplemented by civilian volunteers and at times conscripts in times of conflict when a larger fighting force was required. The force size increased throughout the course of the Korean and Vietnam Wars respectively, and following those conflicts lead to the largest all-volunteer force maintained during a time of peace in the history of the United States (Goldich, 2011).

The methods the Army uses to accomplish training their active duty and civilian components have evolved as the Army has grown and modernized. The existing World War I-era Army Training Program was deemed inadequate, as it focused on a small group of highly trained individuals, supplemented by civilians who would have enough time to train for combat prior to being needed in that role (Chapman, 1994). Standards of training modernized over time to meet the needs of the many who now chose the Army as a profession in the longer term.

With the history of training in the active duty fighting force mentioned above, and the addition of 184,000 civilian employees, training readiness continues to be a top priority for the Army of today (Lacdan, 2021). The infrastructure of the Army, including establishment of permanent installations in the continental United States and around the world, has grown to accommodate the professional fighting force and a career civilian workforce. Individual training for civilians has differed in the past from the more
formalized training outlined for soldiers, with the primary difference being a focus on functional occupational-specific training for civilians, rather than the more formal hierarchy of schools and training for military members. Army civilian training underwent a significant change in how it approaches civilian training and development when the Office of Personnel Management published addendums 410 and 412 to the Code of Federal Regulations, outlining civilian training programs and leader development. This new guidance aligned civilian training programs with the Army mission and implemented regular tracking and evaluation of programs to ensure they are competency-based. Army civilians participate in a broad variety of training programs, from executive level courses to adult basic education options, in short- or long-term timeframes. Training sources expanded to include on the job training, Army schools, Civilian Human Resources Agencies, formal schools, online resources, and many more. This guidance even opened options for civilian employee attendance at formal training colleges including Senior Service Colleges such as the Army War College (United States Army War College, 2020).

Supporting the efforts of U.S. soldiers and their family members around the world in the modern American Army is the Installation Management Command (IMCOM). IMCOM is a standalone command with a three-star General leading it that primarily employs civilians. It was established in 2002 to better enable the readiness of soldiers by standardizing installation support. At one time, IMCOM was a direct reporting unit to the Headquarters, Department of the Army, meaning that the organization's leader reported directly to the Undersecretary of the Army. More recently, IMCOM has moved to report to the Army Materiel Command (AMC) effective March 1, 2019 (Army News Service,
This move has changed the reporting structure for the organization in the case study and could eventually lead to changes in policy and guidance for instruction. The current leadership of AMC gave instructions for the organization to continue using its recent learning development and delivery practices at the time of this publication. With a workforce of over 50,000 employees, IMCOM has its own workforce development branch located in the Installation Management Training Center (IMTC), which focuses on developing the specialized skills, learning, and training needed to effectively manage and run installations and houses all Army operations, including equipment, personnel, facilities, and training around the globe. Figure 1 highlights the current organizational structure of IMCOM headquarters, and the IMTC reports to the G3/5/7 division.

Figure 1

*Installation Management Command Organizational Chart*


One segment of the Installation Management Training Center (IMTC) is the School for Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (SFMWR), was the focus of this study. The SFMWR exists to provide specialized professional development opportunities and training to the employees of a division on each installation called Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (Family and MWR) around the Army. The mission of the Family and MWR organization is to provide programs and services that support soldiers and their family members at installations worldwide. In support of those employed by Family and MWR, the mission of the School for Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (SFMWR) training branch is to “enable Garrisons to provide quality of life programs and services by developing and supporting the Family and MWR workforce through functionally specific training, career planning and performance solutions” (School for Family and MWR, n.d.A). Family and MWR provides a broad variety of services for soldiers and their families on installations around the world. Major services include childcare, family social services, libraries, outdoor recreation, special events, pet boarding, golf, bowling, bingo, restaurants, lodging, and various others dependent upon location.

SFMWR is the primary provider of specialized training to the Family and MWR workforce, including technical skills, soft skills, and customer service training. Training provided by the SFMWR is delivered in a variety of learning formats to meet the needs of a large, diverse, worldwide workforce, including traditional classroom instruction, virtual instructor-led delivery, and online just-in-time delivery. Topics of these courses vary to
meet the diverse needs of team members at all stages of their career, as well as the specialty needs of the broad range of services offered by the organization. Entry level courses include online orientation to the organization, basic customer service skills, technical point of sales training, and child abuse and supervision courses for childcare employees. Program manager level courses include technical skills courses such as managing internal controls, budgeting, retail sales accountability, programming and special events, and coaching and management for childcare trainers and managers. Soft skills courses are also offered for mid-level program managers and cover a variety of topics including employee engagement, time management, conflict resolution, and crucial conversations. Executive level courses are offered for the special needs of the division chiefs and directors of the organization as well. Classes can last anywhere from one 1-hour session to multi-hour sessions occurring for several weeks, with a maximum class duration of 80 hours. Many courses are also approved for college credit equivalency by the American Council on Education, and for continuing education units for certifications by International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (School for Family and MWR, n.d.A).

Training Instructors for Service Culture (training instructors) who specialize in customer service training delivery are employed to design and facilitate functional and soft and technical skills training at 12 installations worldwide, traveling to cover over 60 installations total. The training instructors are on the front line, and while they work for the SFMWR, they are not stationed at the headquarters in San Antonio, Texas. Instead, they are located at multiple installations around the Army, embedded within local divisions of Family and MWR to provide just-in-time, in-person learning development
and training opportunities to the team members serving Soldiers and their family members at the installations. This team of training instructors embraced the transition to using the new ALM and the Army U ELM for training design and delivery across their program and was, therefore, the focus of this case study.

In 2015, the Army University began a major initiative with the creation and implementation of the ALM to adopt a more modern adult learning concept driven by Knowles’ (2015) adult learning principles outlined in andragogy. The move to modernize within the training and development field included transitioning from traditional methodologies that included lecture methods and briefings with a visual aid presentation to learning delivery models that focus on experiential simulations and self-directed learning of the adult learners (Knowles, 1970). Following this move, the Army integrated its approach to adult learning in the training and professional development fields across the force, and the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) leads the effort at accrediting all Army learning institutions. The SFMWR is an accredited Army institution of learning, accredited by TRADOC, whose organizational overview is shown in Figure 2 below.
The ALM approach proposes that adults learn differently from humans at other ages and stages in life, particularly children. The Army mandated using a customized experiential learning model adapted from Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning style theory and experiential learning model to standardize the design and delivery of adult learning across the organization's training and education institutions. This standardization forced a significant shift in learning design and delivery throughout all the sub-colleges and schools in the Army University system. Although the change was mandatory, the steps outlined by each organization to transition into developing and delivering learning...
opportunities using the new method mainly were left up to the individual organizations, enabling each organization to design their training and development path for their facilitators to learn about and implement the new model.

Former traditional instructional design and delivery within the Army focused on the instructor as the classroom's driving force. In contrast, the new Army Learning Model focuses on the learner as the center of the learning experience. The former traditional approach primarily utilized lecture-based curriculum and PowerPoint-driven instructional design, making the instructor the center point of learning in the classroom, with little opportunity for learner participation or application of the learning (Ferguson, 2014). As an Army-accredited institution, the training instructor team from the SFMWR transitioned to using the new ALM, particularly the Army U ELM, in their design and delivery, going through an implementation process to learn and incorporate the new method of design and delivery into their practice.

While multiple branches of the Army University adopted the use of the ALM and the customized Army U ELM design and delivery method, there was not a significant dictation of how each sub-school should implement the new curriculum design and delivery guidance, leaving the SFMWR to design their own transition practices using available resources for their training instructors. In this study, the researcher will conduct a case study investigation to describe the experiences of how the training instructors transitioned to using the Army U ELM to design and deliver training and their recent experiences using the model with students.

**Statement of the Problem**

While implementing the customized Army U ELM was widespread throughout
the Army, there has been little exploration to understand organizational factors relevant
to implementing the new experiential learning model at an adult training institution in a
military installation (Pierson, 2017). Additionally, there has been little exploration of the
instructors' experiences to design and deliver training Army-wide using this new method
with civilian employees of the military. This includes a lack of information on how
organizations specifically designed their transition process to using the new method or
prepared instructors to transition to using the Army U ELM, how training instructors
describe their transition, and their perceptions of using the latest model in their training
delivery. Filling this gap in research on the actual experiences of instructors during the
transition and post-transition application of the new model could provide valuable insight
for individuals and organizations who seek to move to a new standardized model of
instructional design and delivery. Documenting instructor experiences could provide
feedback on the efficacy of the standardized delivery of curriculum designed using the
new model, explore the gaps or issues with the process of learning and transitioning to
the new method from an instructor’s lived experiences, and possibly provide
opportunities for improvement in ways of adoption and use of the Army U ELM in other
organizations or program areas.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this case study was to provide descriptions of experiences
implementing the new Army U ELM by training instructors in the SFMWR. The study
describes the experiences the training instructors went through during and after the
transition process to using the new Army U ELM. Specifically, this included their steps
to learning to use the model, impressions of using the new curriculum design process and development, and their perceptions of facilitating adult learning with the new method.

Research Questions

This qualitative case study explored the lived experiences of the training instructors at the SFMWR, a civilian government workforce learning and performance support organization, including their experiences transitioning from using a traditional instructional design method to using the Army U ELM for their design and delivery of adult training and learning. In this case study, I proposed three research questions:

1. How did training instructors gain the new knowledge and skills needed to implement the Army U ELM in their training design and delivery?
2. How do training instructors describe their experiences of the transition process to using the Army U ELM in curriculum design and delivery?
3. What are the training instructors’ current perceptions of using the Army U ELM in their curriculum design and classroom facilitation work?

Significance of Study

The significance of this study came from the researchers’ desire to explore the lived experiences of instructors’ who underwent a significant transition in their approach to adult learning design and instruction. These instructors went through a structured process in a bounded case study environment, allowing for exploration of their reactions to similar lived experiences amongst the collective group.

Increased understanding of the transition process learning the Army U ELM and instructor reactions to using the new method could inform other organizations as they go through the same transition process. Organizations within the Army who have not yet
made the transition to adopting the Army U ELM in their curriculum design could benefit from the information gained by exploring the instructors' experiences who were the primary individuals implementing the changes. Additionally, this study could inform external adult learning organizations considering a major transition in instructional design and delivery methods. New training instructors could also benefit from the lessons learned by exploring the feedback from this study that could lead to improvements in the processes or techniques used with and by the SFMWR. The information and feedback on the process of transition and the reactions to using the new method allow for potential to reduce mistakes in other organizations and benefit from lessons learned.

**Theoretical Framework**

In contrast to some other qualitative research methodologies, identifying a theoretical perspective at the outset of a case study is necessary because it influences the research questions, data analysis, and findings of the study (Yin, 2009). In this dissertation, the theoretical framework served dual purposes. First, the framework was a lens through which the researcher examined the descriptive exploration of the training instructors' experiences learning and implementing the Army U ELM. This approach helped guide the questions asked during the interviews of the training instructors. Secondly, experiential learning theory informed the training design and delivery model implemented by the training instructors. It formed the basis of the use and application of the Army U ELM by the instructors in the design and delivery of learning. Therefore, it served as both the lens for the process of learning the training instructors went through to implement the new model and as the backbone theoretical framework of the Army U ELM itself.
Army University Experiential Learning Model

The specific theoretical framework for this study was the Army University Experiential Learning Model, based on Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model. Kolb posits that his model is a combination of experiential learning with the work of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1946), and Piaget (1971) to create a more comprehensive approach to the nature of experiential learning. Instead of being solely behavioral or cognitive, Kolb posited that learning is a “holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior” (p. 21).

Experiential Learning Characteristics

Kolb (1984) outlined six primary characteristics of experiential learning in his experiential learning model based on the theoretical work of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1946), and Piaget (1971). First, learning is a process and should focus on that process rather than outcomes. The second characteristic is that the context of learning is continuous and is grounded in the learner's experiences before and during the learning process. Third, learning involves dialectic viewpoints that provide tension and conflict to create learning through opposing views. Because of this tension, Kolb posits that the fourth characteristic of experiential learning includes adapting to the world in all settings as a lifelong process. The fifth characteristic builds on the fourth, focusing on interactions between the learner and their environments as an active process of self-direction. Finally, the creation of knowledge is a process of relating social and personal knowledge, the objective and subjective, resulting in a learning experience that creates knowledge. These six characteristics of experiential learning served as the basis for the Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory that will be further explored in Chapter 2.
Assumptions

The researcher approached this study with several assumptions in mind, primarily pertaining to the instructors being interviewed for the case study. First, it was assumed that the participants have similar lived experiences training in the same environment and with similar audiences as the other participants. Secondly, this study assumed that participants would willingly answer questions to the best of their ability and contribute accurate and relevant information to the study. Finally, this case study assumed that the participants entered the interview process of their own free will and shared thorough and honest accounts of their experiences.

Limitations of the Study

While there are benefits to case study research, there are also limitations to choosing case study research (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). When done on a large scale and depending on the level of detail and breadth, case studies can pose a considerable expense and take more time than other methodologies. Merriam and Simpson (2000) also propose that some training in techniques for interviewing and observation may be necessary. Due to their broad nature, case study narratives can be lengthy and complicated for audiences to decipher. Finally, the case study findings are not necessarily as readily generalized to a population as are results from studies that utilize random samples.

Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations exist for this study both internally to the process and in considering external applications of the study findings. The interview participants were training instructors located at different physical military installations, who all worked for the
SFMWR. All participants went through a transition to implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model (Army U ELM), which included a current population of 14 training instructors who qualified as participants in the targeted studies. This case study used interviews as a primary information source and document review to examine the experiences of training instructors at one organization in the Army as they implement the Army U ELM and did not utilize any other methodologies. Using these resources allowed a deeper exploration of this specific case, and therefore the findings may not be generalizable on a larger scale.

**Research Design**

This single case study explored the experiences during the transition of training instructors in an adult learning organization to using a new adult learning design and delivery method. Data was collected from semi-structured interviews to describe the experiences of the training instructors as they adapted to using a new system of instructional design and delivery system and document review informed the process the organization took in the transition process.

Training instructors using the Army U ELM after the transition process were interviewed regarding their lived experiences during and after the transition timeframe using the new Army U ELM. The goal was to recruit a targeted sample of five to eight instructors for interviews from an existing population of 14 who meet the parameters defined for the study. Ten training instructors volunteered and completed interviews. Additionally, the study examined documents relevant to the organizational and instructor transition process to better inform the study and interview findings.
Data was collected virtually through semi-structured interviews. Questions were chosen specifically to inform each of the research questions. Documents reviewed inform some study questions as well. Thematic analysis was used in the coding and data findings output. A more thorough overview of the research design and methodology is described in chapter three.

Study Overview

This chapter provided an overview of the study, starting with an introduction and background of the study. Next, the problem and purpose of the study were introduced, along with the research questions that the study will explore. The significance of the study was explored, followed by an overview of the theoretical perspective that underpins the study. Limitations and delimitations of the study were addressed following the theoretical perspective, and a list of helpful terms that will be used throughout the paper was defined. Finally, an overview of the research design was introduced, which will be more thoroughly explored in chapter three.

Chapter two encompasses a review of the literature relevant to the study. An overview of experiential learning theory including a focus on Kolb’s (1984) learning cycles and models, will begin the section. This will be followed by a literature review of historical instructional design and delivery models used in military learning, in addition to the Army U ELM. The Army U ELM section will include a review of the currently existing literature and the gap that this study will fill in the existing work.

Chapter three outlines the methodology of the single case study design. The proposed research design will be addressed, including the statement of purpose and research questions. The epistemological approach will be outlined before a detailed
description of the participant pool. Proposed data collection methods for the cased study are explored in addition to addressing questions of data reliability. Finally, the process for data analysis is outlined, and the study’s subjectivities explored.

Chapter four presents the findings of the study and chapter five presents the discussion, theoretical implications, opportunities for future research, and conclusions.

**Definitions of Terms**

**Army University Experiential Learning Model.** A five-step learning model for designing and delivery adult learning produced by the Army University based on Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory.

**Case study.** A research method used to examine a bounded system at a specific time to learn about a particular situation (Stake, 1995).

**Curriculum/Training design and delivery.** The process of designing and delivering curriculum for training or educational purposes to adult learners.

**Experiential learning model.** A model of experiential learning design and delivery. The primary model in this research is the Army U ELM, which is based on Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model.

**Experiential learning theory.** Based primarily on the work of Dewey (1983), Lewin (1946), and Piaget (1971), Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory is the definition of this term for the purposes of this dissertation.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter introduced the qualitative case study of training instructors’ experiences at the SFMWR throughout their transition to and use of the Army U ELM, a new method of training design and delivery. The background of the study described the
history of the SFMWR, population served, and the reason for the introduction of the Army U ELM. The problem statement and research purpose described the reasons why the research is necessary and should be undertaken as outlined in this proposal. By exploring the descriptions of the training instructors’ lived experiences learning and implementing the Army U ELM, I have developed a robust description that could provide information to inform other organizations and adult educators going through the same or similar processes.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

The transition to using a new theoretical approach to the design and delivery of training in the military civilian environment provided unique perspectives of the instructors involved in the process. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of instructors as they worked to transition from a traditional form of instructional design and delivery to utilizing the Army University Experiential Learning Model (Army U ELM). For this qualitative single case study, the experiences of training instructors who transitioned the training design and delivery of courses offered by the School for Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Service Culture team from traditional delivery to utilizing the Army U ELM were explored.

This chapter includes a critical review of three topical sections with subtopics related to the study. The first section presents an overview of Kolb’s (1984) theory of experiential learning, the conceptual framework of adult learning that forms the basis for the study. This includes an overview of Kolb’s experiential learning theory, including learning styles, the learning cycle, the model, and criticism of the theory. The second section provides an overview of instructional design and delivery in the military learning environment, including the current theoretical underpinnings of andragogy, facilitation, and instructional design. The final section of the literature review chapter closes with a discussion of the Army U ELM and the current literature on its use and application in various Army environments.
Originating Approaches to Experiential Learning

Contemporary experiential learning theory has its roots in the work of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1946), and Piaget (1971). Their work diverged from the traditional cognitive theories of learning that existed at the time, which primarily focused on the learner’s ability to acquire information, manipulate it, and recall abstract symbols and ideas. In turn, Kolb (1984) states that their work led to the development of the modern form of experiential learning theory, which “offers the foundation for an approach to education and learning as a lifelong process that is soundly based in intellectual traditions of social psychology, philosophy, and cognitive psychology” (p. 3).

Lewinian Model of Action Research and Laboratory Training

Lewin’s (1946) work focuses on action research and a laboratory method used in the field of organizational behavior and development, primarily in training and organizational development. While he made many contributions to the fields of social psychology and organizational behavior, his model of experiential learning was developed through his methodology of action research and his work in the field of group dynamics in organizations. The Lewinian Experiential Learning Model posits a cycle of four stages that begins with a concrete observation as the basis for observation and reflection. Then learners theorize from these observations and test hypotheses that develop from their theories.

Dewey's Learning Model

Dewey’s (1938) model of learning bears many similarities to Lewin's work, with more focus on the development of learning hinging on feedback transforming the initial observation into action. Similar to Lewin’s (1946) model, Dewey’s model of experiential
learning also begins with observation, then relies on knowledge obtained either through prior experience or shared experiences of others, and then proposes learners make a judgment based on their recall. This judgment then leads to purposeful action, one that is not impulsive but rather made based on the process of including observation and judgment in the experiential learning process.

**Piaget’s Learning and Cognitive Development Model**

Piaget’s (1971) work focuses on children's cognitive development as it intersects with their ability to learn. He identifies four distinct development stages from birth to adolescence. While this theory does not stretch into adulthood, it informs adult learning approaches by identifying basic developmental processes that influence adult basic learning processes. Similar to Dewey (1938) and Lewin (1946), Piaget proposes that the learning process is a cycle of interactions between the individual learner and the environment.

**Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory**

Dewey (1938), Lewin (1946), and Piaget (1971) laid the groundwork for Kolb’s (1984) work on experiential learning theory, learning styles, and subsequent experiential learning model. Dewey identified that two keys to effective learning were the continuity of the learning process and the learner's interaction while engaged in the learning process. These three theorists agreed that the exchange of experiential learning required the learner to be engaged fully in the learning process as an active participant, a departure from traditional approaches to the design and delivery of formal adult learning experiences. They laid the groundwork for Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory.
Kolb (1984) outlined six characteristics that all experiential learning processes should embody to be considered experiential in nature based on the earlier work of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1946), and Piaget (1971). Firstly, Kolb posits that the process of learning is more important than the outcomes of the learning. Bruner’s (1966) theory of instruction and Freire’s (1974) theory of knowledge in adult learning support this concept of learning as continuous and should focus more on drawing from the individual and group interactions rather than as a transaction between student and teacher. Second, Kolb (1984) proposes that the learning process is continuous and must be grounded in the lived experiences of the learners. The third characteristic states that experiential learning will include conflicts between contradictory modes of learning and must help learners move through those conflicts. Fourth is the idea that learning involves overall holistic changes in the learner instead of immediate performance changes. The fifth characteristic is that the learning should consist of interactions and transactions between the learner and the broader environment, not limited to the classroom. Finally, the sixth characteristic is that the learning is in the exercise and processes of creating the knowledge itself.

Kolb (1984) summarized this set of characteristics outlined by his predecessors by saying that “learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). He further expands this theoretical approach to experiential learning by outlining learning styles. This learning cycle occurs in the experiential learning environment, and finally, a model for developing and designing experiential learning that can be replicated in learning environments.
**Kolb’s Learning Styles**

Kolb (1984) identified four adaptive learning styles as part of the overarching experiential learning theory based on personal preferences of cross-combination of one of the two dominant prehension learning abilities – apprehension and comprehension - and one of the two transformative learning abilities – extension and intention - identified in the learning cycle. He proposed that people develop a preferred learning style over time based on heredity, lived experiences, and demands of their current environments. This individualistic theory of learning mirrors the theories of Dewey (1938) and is similar to Jung’s (1928) approach to the individual in the psychological characteristics of personality types.

**Divergent Learning Style.** Kolb (1984) noted that people with a divergent learning style have the most strength in learning from feeling through concrete experiences and watching in reflective observation. Their strength lies in using the concrete experience, reflecting from a variety of perspectives, and then organizing those reflections logically. People who prefer this style are great at developing alternative plans, seeing patterns, and brainstorming for new ideas.

**Assimilation Learning Style.** Assimilating style learners gravitate towards reflective observation in watching and then thinking about the observations in abstract conceptualization, according to Kolb (1984). Their greatest strength is in their ability to take observations of an event and create models that explain otherwise unrelated observations. They also value logic and precision, focusing less on people and focusing more on ideas and concepts.
**Convergent Learning Style.** Kolb (1984) stated learners with a convergent style primarily use abstract conceptualization, thinking about the experience, and active experimentation in their learning. These learners are strong problem solvers and make sound decisions. Additionally, they excel at experimenting with solutions and naturally excel at technical tasks and problems.

**Accommodative Learning Style.** According to Kolb (1984), learners with an accommodating style find their strengths in active experimentation by doing and having new concrete experiences to induce feelings. These learners are not afraid of risk nor of trying new things in the learning environment. Accommodative learners can quickly change mid-stream and tend to use trial and error to solve issues that arise.

**Kolb’s Learning Cycle**

In his proposed experiential learning cycle (ELC) theory, Kolb (1984) posited that the adult learning process builds upon previous experiences of adult learners as the basis to stimulate learning transfer. This theory builds on the work of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1946), and Piaget (1971). Still, it takes a more holistic approach by exploring two ways to learn through experience, through the prehension dimension where the learner grasps the experience, and the transformative dimension wherein the learner transforms that experience to learn from it. Kolb states that learning cannot occur without both; learners must both grasp and experience and transform it for themselves. Kolb’s cycle was developed to follow his proposed progress of an adult’s cognitive process for learning through the four adaptive learning modes: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and finally, active experimentation.
Kolb’s (1984) first stage, concrete experience, uses a new or existing experience to begin the learning process. Next, the learner considers the new experience in light of their own experiences in what Kolb calls reflective observation. In the third step, abstract conceptualization, the learner then forms concepts for analysis and general conclusions to learn from the initial experience. During the final step, active experimentation, the learner actively experiments with the idea they have learned on a newly presented experience. Kolb’s (1984) theory posits that by going through all four stages of the ELC, the learner can construct new knowledge through experience, reflection, thought, and action.

**Concrete Experience.** Concrete experience is the first stage of Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model and focuses the most on feelings. It is the stage when the learner becomes actively involved in a new experience or situation. This concrete experience is needed primarily to produce feelings in the learner that cement the experience in the learners’ minds for later analysis. The learner should enter this stage of the learning with an approach as unbiased as possible and focus on the experience so that there is little room for reflection or analysis of the situation. This phase of the experience truly focuses on the feelings that anchor the experience within the learner’s mind.

**Reflective Observation.** Kolb’s (1984) second stage of the experiential learning cycle is reflective observation. This is the stage when the learner can reflect on the concrete experience that started their experiential learning cycle. Kolb encourages learners to approach this stage of their learning from many different perspectives, particularly ones that differ from their norms. This phase focuses on the learner watching what has happened from many different viewpoints.
Abstract Conceptualization. Abstract conceptualization is Kolb’s (1984) third step in the experiential learning cycle. This stage encourages learners to transform their reflective observations on the initial concrete experience into sound and logical theories. Learners may draw on previous external experiences and existing theoretical knowledge to connect between theory and practical application of the learning. The primary goal of this phase is to think about what has been seen and reflected on from as many different perspectives as possible.

Active Experimentation. The final stage of Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle is active experimentation. Kolb states that this is the phase in which the learner “must be able to use these theories to make decisions and solve problems” (p. 30). This last phase is the practical application step of the cycle, allowing learners to put into practice the information they have gained by feeling through the concrete experience, watching in reflective observation, and thinking during their abstract conceptualization.

Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Model

Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model shown in Figure 3 overlays the experiential learning cycle and cross-references it with his identified learning styles. The model allows for all four of Kolb’s (1984) identified learning styles to be addressed by designing specific learning experiences following the four-step learning cycle. Kolb noted that each of the four learning styles above was associated with a learning activity, including feeling, watching, thinking, and doing. The model intends for learners to start at the top with a concrete experience and continue clockwise; however, Kolb noted that the experiential learning process could begin or end at any stage in the cycle. Each of the four poles of the model contains one step of the experiential learning cycle posed by Kolb
and described above, including the concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

**Figure 3**

*Structural Dimensions Underlying the Process of Experiential Learning and the Resulting Basic Knowledge Forms*


The progression through the four quadrants in Kolb’s (1984) model meets the needs of four basic preferred learning styles outlined as well. The model's vertical axis, or concrete-abstract continuum, measures learners' perception, ranging from a learning event experienced at the top of the axis in the concrete experience step to abstract conceptualization involving theorizing without an experience. The processing dimension
occurs on a reflective-active continuum ranked for learners on the horizontal axis, where ranging between action in the active experimentation end and observation in reflective observation. These two continuums divide the experiential learning process into four quadrants that define learners' preferences based on their personal learning preferences.

Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model is set up to meet the learning needs of all four proposed types of learners, and each type of learner falls into a quadrant of the model above. Divergent learners prefer to have a concrete experience that produces feelings and then watch during reflective observation to learn. Assimilative learners like to watch during the reflective observation phase of the experiential learning cycle and then think about what they have seen through active conceptualization. The third learning style is convergent; these learners prefer to think by actively conceptualizing first and then do by actively experimenting with new concepts. Finally, there are the accommodating style learners who prefer to learn by doing through active experimentation and then to explore their feelings about the learning topic through concrete experiences.

To walk through an example of a learner going through this, the experiential learning model outlined by Kolb (1984) starts with a new experience or situation for the learner, the concrete experience. The learner might watch a video of a role play that presents an organizational problem. Next, the learner would have time to use reflective observation, thinking about what they saw in the video and reflecting on it based on their prior knowledge or experiences that might relate to the current situation. Third, the learner has the opportunity to go through the abstract conceptualization process, where they come up with new ideas or modify their existing paradigm based on the experience.
and observation in the first two steps. This process brings up conclusions and possible new learning from experience. Finally, in the active experimentation phase, the learner could test their new idea or theory to see what happens.

**Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Model in Use.** Studies on the implementation of Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model are plentiful. The fields of education and workforce development training offer several studies that have a similar focus to this one. Following are examples describing experiential learning implementation as part of a formal education experience and in post-secondary workforce education environments. These studies were chosen because of their similarities to this study, including their focus on adult education and use of similar research methods to this study. Additionally, the field of higher education offers several examples of case studies focused on the experiences of instructors in implementing experiential learning discussed here.

Munson (2014) explores the capstone experience in a final course in an early education degree program using Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model as a theoretical lens. In this case study, learners describe their learning experience in the capstone course and identify factors that helped and hindered their learning in the class. This study used open-ended questions in a set of three consecutive interviews with each participant, all of whom were recruited with purposeful sampling to gather data for the case study analysis. Two significant findings from the study that influenced the students’ learning during the experiential field experience course were the professor's impact and their interaction with their assigned teacher for the capstone course. Experiences varied amongst the seven participants and were deemed positive or negative based on the
particular experience with the instructors and teachers partnered for the capstone project. Before the capstone course, the work experience of participants appeared to influence the student’s experiential learning progress, as some already had the experience to refer back to in their experiential learning process during the capstone course.

In contrast, others did not have prior experience to compare and synthesize. The unique nature of the job of early childhood educators allowed for the researcher to identify differences in the experiential capstone project that enhanced student’s learning through offering an experience to analyze and use to build on their learning by putting theories into practice. Overall, the interviewees agreed that the experience was critical to the success of the capstone project experience.

Tuberville’s (2014) case study on college faculty members offers a closely similar format to explore the experiences of implementing experiential learning through the lens of the challenges and successes through structured interviews. The study also asked about how the university supports the implementation of experiential learning and how the school can better engage faculty in implementing experiential learning programs. Eight faculty members participated in the case study, while the structure of the actual experiential learning used varied across the campus from program to program. The first significant finding was that no standardized experiential learning program existed across campus, varying from external experiences outside of the classroom to curriculum design of the class structure. The internal curriculum design standardization noted in Tuberville’s results was the most significant difference. Faculty pointed out that faculty development and training were lacking to help instructors more formally implement experiential learning within the course curriculum. While this was a challenge, faculty
expressed a more positive than a negative commitment to experiential learning in the interview results, attributed to their students' great results from the experiential learning process.

Healey and Jenkins (2000) offer an example of the application of Kolb’s experiential learning model in higher education geography instruction. In consideration of using the theory, they state that Kolb’s ideas about learning “connect to-even legitimize-much of what we do as teachers” (p. 190). They propose the use of experiential opportunities in geography higher education that are already heavily relied upon such as fieldwork and computer simulations, and further propose that the theory is critical to effective lecture and seminar as well. The article offers several examples of practical applications of the theory within the higher education geography classroom practice, and they advocate that the theory is easy to understand and is scalable from a one learning instance to an entire degree program.

Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model has served as a theoretical framework for application in adult learning, although not the specific Army U ELM. The studies above explored the use of experiential learning in a variety of scenarios and contexts of adult learning programs and higher education institutions. While outcomes varied, all studies described the experiences of either learners or instructors in the context of using the experiential learning model in practice and their reaction to using the model.

Critiques of Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model. Several scholars have criticized Kolb’s (1984) theory of experiential learning over the years, both from a philosophical perspective and from the standpoint of pedagogy in the form of theoretical limitations (Kayes, 2002). Philosophically, there are concerns with the method’s attempt
to separate experience and reflections as two separate and distinct entities in the learning experience. There are also criticisms about Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model because it comes from an institutional model that is repeatable and not customized. Seaman (2008) does not disagree with the idea that experiential learning can occur in an orderly cycle through sequential steps, nor is it as orderly as Kolb’s model outlines.

Pedagogically, Fenwick (2001) states that there is very little concern about the context of the learning experience in Kolb’s model. Fenwick also criticized the theory behind the use of experiential learning as a pedagogical approach, saying “issues about pedagogy related to experiential learning include debates about what should be learned in experience-based education, about how such education should be designed, and, of course, about what role, if any, the educator should play” (p. 88). There are also concerns that because students are so used to traditional learning and teaching methods, adult learners may not be able to take the reflection portion of the learning experiences seriously and underestimate the value of the experiential learning process (Fenwick, 2001; Torkington, 1996).

Many critiques of Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory focus on the learning cycle and styles. Kayes (2002) defends Kolb’s work and argues that many scholars distill the theory down with too much simplicity, failing to recognize the complexity of applying the theories in developing and delivering experiential learning. Another major critique of the theory is that it fails to account for the relationship between social forms of learning and self-directed personal learning, which can often be separated in the learning environment. Kayes also notes that while Kolb addresses this relationship, he does not robustly defend it, only spending two pages on the explanation in his 1984 book. Kolb
(1981) does, however, defend the theory earlier in response to a critique of the theory and learning style inventory, in stating that “the theory of experiential learning maintains that learning is a process involving the resolution of dialectical conflicts between opposing ways of dealing with the world – action and reflection, concreteness and abstraction” (p. 290).

As described above, not all scholars in the adult education and even the experiential learning arena agree with Kolb’s (1984) theory. However, it is the basis for developing the current Army U ELM. Therefore, it is vital to understand the theoretical background and approach as it developed before the current iteration being implemented in Army Learning (Pierson, 2017).

**Instructional Design and Delivery in Military Learning Institutions**

Institutional learning in the military has a long and storied history beginning with a cookie-cutter approach to educating those in the profession of soldiering, siloed and firmly rooted in baseline procedures of each specific branch. From the establishment of the first military college, the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1802, the Army led the way in training and formal education in the armed services. This formalized education for officers expanded to Non-Commissioned Officer Academies, providing a formalized leadership training environment for individual and group training for non-commissioned officers in the Army, enlisted Soldiers who lead other troops. These formal, traditional academy-style schools were the basis for many years of the formal training within the military (Chapman, 1994).

Due to the unique profession that the military composes, needs arose that could not be met through the existing educational and training institutions, whose focus on
training and education did not always meet the needs for “the critical and creative thinkers the Army will require in the future” (Brown, 2015, p. 19). These changing needs came from the increased move of the Army to adapt to meet more complex operations with added job complexity. Battlefronts were changing, from traditional armored land attacks to multi-force collaborative strategies of warfare. To address this from an organizational level with guidance coming in the form of doctrine, Army training concept plans such as Army Training 1997, Army 2004, and Army Training 21 were developed. Army Training 21 was developed in 1988 and laid out a long-range umbrella training strategy that spanned all the way through to the year 2020. It outlined everything from a revised basic combat training that included individual training at the unit level to reduce costs, as well as new strategies for the Army such as distributed training and partnering with colleges and universities (Chapman, 1994).

The second decade of the 2000s led to the formation of the Army Learning Model and later the Army University as the educational umbrella to overarch all educational opportunities and development within the Army, all lead by TRADOC command. The move towards a cohesive Army University concept was driven by five factors. First was modernization of the educational approach to incorporate adult learning theories and critical thinking, rather than a siloed, topically specific approach. The second driving reason was a lack of cohesion between schools and training institutions, leading to inefficiencies and replication of content generation. Third was the idea that there was no recognizable brand standard for Army education and training to assist with partnerships between military institutions and with external educational agencies. Lack of prestige was the fourth driving factor; Army academic institutions were perceived to have less
academic rigor than their private sector counterparts. Finally, lack of accreditation for credits that transfer to private sector academic programs often resulted in redundant programs, as well as soldiers and civilians being unable to parley their Army education into any equivalencies outside of the Army (Brown, 2015). The standardized Army U ELM design and delivery model for training and education came out of this transformation and need to develop “adaptive Soldiers and DA Civilians capable of operating in ambiguous environments amid chaos (United States Army, 2018b, p. 17).

**Army University Experiential Learning Model**

Throughout its many training and education institutional arms, the Army University employs the Army U ELM, which has its theoretical basis in Kolb’s (1984) learning styles and related experiential learning model (Pierson, 2017). Kolb’s (1984) learning model was chosen as the basis of the new model to provide a standardized instructional strategy to allow instructors to facilitate better experiential learning that meets the needs of an adaptive, complex, and changing learning environment (United States Army, 2018a). Experiential learning refers to the concept that education uses lived experience as a basis for learning and “connects experience and prior knowledge through reflective judgment to construct a new understanding of complex situations” (United States Army, 2018b).

The Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) as part of the Army Learning Concept outlined a specific curriculum development and delivery five-step framework model called the Army University Experiential Learning Model (Army U ELM) to assist students in completing all four steps of Kolb’s experiential learning model. The Army U ELM is outlined in the TRADOC Pamphlet 350-70-7, Army Learning Processes (United
States Army, 2018b). This Army U ELM instructional design method utilizes five specific instructional design and facilitation steps to meet the needs of students at each stage of the entire experiential learning cycle while learning specific competencies: concrete experience, publish and process, generalize new information, develop, and apply (Pierson, 2017).

![Image of The Experiential Learning Job Aid](image)

**Figure 4**

*The Experiential Learning Job Aid*

From The Army University (2016). *Common faculty development instructor course*. Fort Leavenworth.
The concrete experience begins with a new situation that learners either observe or participate in that is designed to elicit an emotional response. This response can be positive or negative and is intended to stimulate connection to the topic that follows. One example of this is in a recent instructional session on recognizing employees; the instructor gave effusive, over-the-top praise to a class participant while using the wrong name.

Immediately following that step, the learners publish and process what just occurred to help identify the significance of the experience based on their own lenses and views of the world. It aligns with Kolb’s (1984) learning cycle, where participants need time to observe and reflect on what they have seen. In this step, the facilitator asks open-ended questions to help the learner explore the concrete experience that just occurred. In our example above, the facilitator might ask participants, “What just happened?” or “How did you react?” to generate conversation about the concrete experience they just viewed.

Next, the learner is introduced to new content in the step called generalize new information. This step is where the topical material of the lesson is covered. The design can include introducing the new information in various learning design methods; some examples include case studies, games, and lectures. In the example above, the facilitator shared an article on non-monetary recognition strategies, and students worked in groups to rank the strategies in order of preference and usefulness for their teams.

The fourth step, develop, is an open discussion of the personal relevance of the new information for the learner. This step is owned solely by the learner with some prompts and facilitation by the instructor. Questions that might be asked in our above
example during this step include “What value does this information have for you?” or “How might you use this information in the future?” This step and the generalizing new information step above are designed to allow the learners to use abstract conceptualization to develop alternative solutions and evaluate the solutions (Kolb, 1984).

Lastly, the learner has the opportunity to use their new learning in the apply step. This step is designed to incorporate the new information the participants have learned into a chance to test their learning and apply it in action and back in their job roles. In the recognition lesson above, the students were given case studies and asked to evaluate the recognition steps taken by managers. They were then asked to identify two steps they would like to take to recognize their team members when they returned to their workplace. This step fulfills the need in Kolb’s (1984) cycle for active experimentation, which encourages learners to select and execute a solution.

These five steps of the Army U ELM design are in place to help meet the needs of learners as they progress through Kolb’s learning cycle steps, and therefore meet their needs at certain stages of the cycle. Below is a table showing how the steps in Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle and the steps in the recently adopted Army U Experiential Learning Model align.

### Table 1

*Alignment of the Army U ELM Steps with Kolb’s (1984) Learning Cycle*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kolb’s Learning Cycle</th>
<th>Corresponding Army U ELM Step</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concrete Experience</td>
<td>Concrete Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Observation</td>
<td>Publish and Process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current Applications of the Army University Experiential Learning Model

While there is a broad existing body of literature spanning many decades regarding experiential learning theory and implementation of experiential learning models (Dewey, 1938; Fenwick, 2001; Kolb, 1984; Knowles et. al., 2015; Lewin, 1946; Seaman, 2008; Torkington, 1996), empirical research regarding the implementation of the specific Army U ELM throughout the Army learning system is relatively limited (Pierson, 2017). Multiple articles document the implementation and use of the Army U ELM, including lay observations about the implementation of the model.

In a mixed methods study exploring learning styles, experiential learning, and learner perceptions of a game, Johnson (2019) uses Kolb’s (1984) learning style assessment and experiential learning model as a theoretical approach. The study occurred at a U.S. military graduate institution and used a learning style inventory, a questionnaire, and individual semi-structured student interviews to gather data. While the quantitative data answered relevant questions regarding learning style, the interviews provided the most pertinent information about this study. Five themes came out of the interview analysis. Johnson found that all participants had the theme that doing and sharing were an integral part of learning in the game experience. Utility and immersion in the game are crucial to learner satisfaction with the game experience. The more experiential the game was perceived to be, the more satisfaction the learners had with the game. And finally, the experiential aspects of the learning game matched their learning styles. Overall,
learners were satisfied with the experiential learning provided by the game because of its usefulness and immersive nature. Some dissatisfaction came with the game experience being unrealistic and lacking fidelity, but overall, learners found value in the experience. This study primarily focused on the learner experiences with the Army U ELM and did not explore the instructors’ experiences.

The following articles from military publications provide anecdotal data on facilitators' experiences using the Army U ELM, which are worth including in the context of the literature review for this qualitative study although they do not contain formal research processes that are replicable. In an article on adopting the Army Learning Model at the Army Financial Management School, Stafford and Thornhill (2012) describe the efforts to ensure new instructors receive instruction on Army U ELM facilitation techniques prior to their introduction to the classroom. They note that using these facilitation techniques can help to provide opportunities for collaboration among students, leading to a learner-centric approach outlined in the Army Learning Model (2011) guidance. Additionally, the Army Financial Management School has incorporated simulations with enhanced rigor to produce a student experience that is grounded in reality aligning with the Army U ELM.

In an article in the Journal of Leadership Studies, Thomas and Gentler (2013) described instructor preparation in their work at the Command and General Staff College (CGSC), whose purpose is to prepare officers to transition from direct leadership to strategic, more extensive organizational leadership through a variety of courses. The CGSC implemented the Army U ELM by ensuring faculty were educated in Kolb’s (1984) learning theory and styles and followed that educational component by monitoring
new instructors to ensure they were focusing on incorporating opportunities for thinking and reflecting and the doing and experiencing portions of the learning cycle. Many instructors arrive at the school directly from the field and must adapt from being the doers to being the facilitators of others' learning.

Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle and models serve as the basis for the Army U ELM, and several articles describing the use of Kolb’s model were reviewed. Kolb’s model of instruction is more widely known than the Army U ELM and has more literature available on its use in both adult education and higher education settings, while there were no articles exploring descriptive instructor experiences implementing the model in either of these contexts. The articles specifically referencing the Army U ELM are written by practitioners within the military school system working primarily with students who are military active-duty personnel (Stafford and Thornhill, 2012; Thomas and Gentler, 2013). There were no articles found representing the experiences of instructors of civilian employees in the context of the Army implementation of the model within any sector of the larger civilian workforce.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a review of the literature relevant to the proposed study. A review of the origins of experiential learning was presented, followed by an in-depth review of the relevant information and studies on Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Model. With its basis in Kolb’s work, the Army U ELM was then explored, including the minimal research on the current Army U ELM application. This section presented the gap that exists in the literature on the implementation of the specifically designed Army U ELM from the perspective of training instructors who must implement it in their learning.
design and delivery. This gap leads to a lack of information about the experiences of the training instructors as they learn and incorporate the model into their practice, which could add to the greater body of knowledge for other instructors who are interested in or required to implement an experiential learning model into their practice. This study describes and strives to fully gain insight the instructors' experiences who implemented the Army U ELM in a civilian training organization.
Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of training instructors at the SFMWR in implementing an Army-designed, standardized experiential learning model in training delivery and design. While there was research in the literature review in chapter two on the implementation of the Army U ELM regarding the student perspective and learning transfer, the literature review revealed a lack of research describing the experiences of instructors implementing or using this design and delivery model.

This chapter discusses the proposed research methodology, a single bounded case study of the experiences of instructors at a civilian learning institution implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model (Army U ELM) into the instructional design and delivery of its training instructors. Within this chapter are the proposed research methodology, explanations of the research design, epistemology, and theoretical frameworks that will guide the study, as well as proposed research methods for data collection and analysis. Additionally, selection of participants, confidentiality, and validity will be discussed.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this project was to explore the experiences of the adult educators who went through the transition process to using the new Army U ELM and identify organizational factors supporting the implementation of the Army U ELM in the SFMWR. This qualitative study explored the experiences of instructors of a civilian government workforce learning and performance support organization transitioning to
using the standardized Army U ELM as a basis for design and delivery of adult training and adult learning. In this case study, I proposed three research questions:

1. How did training instructors gain the new knowledge and skills needed to implement the Army U ELM in their training design and delivery?
2. How do training instructors describe their experiences of the transition process to using the Army U ELM in curriculum design and delivery?
3. What are the training instructors’ current perceptions of using the Army U ELM in their curriculum design and classroom facilitation work?

**Research Design**

The Army University is the official educational arm of the United States Army. Over the past ten years, it has undergone a methodical and seismic shift toward standardizing curriculum design for adult training and education for soldiers and civilian employees, moving from traditional instructor-centric learning to using the learner-centric Army U ELM based on Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory. In the past, Army instructional design focused on the instructor as the center of learning, including lecture-based delivery and PowerPoint instruction, and this new approach focused on the learner as the center of the learning experience (Ferguson, 2014). To standardize the transition process, adult educators within the School for Family and MWR (SFMWR), an educational institution within the Army University serving the civilian employees of the Installation Management Command, began to transition in 2016 to use this approach in their design and delivery of adult learning.

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative inquiry involves exploration to understand a problem that applies to an individual or a group. Creswell (2014) further
described qualitative research as involving “emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected from the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of data” (p. 4). With these defining characteristics in mind, qualitative methodology was chosen as the overarching approach to this study. This qualitative case study explored the process used to train and prepare educators to use the new Army U ELM in design and instructional practices and examined their descriptions of the instructors' experiences after the transition to using the Army U ELM.

**Epistemology**

Epistemology refers to the process of examining the nature of knowledge that researchers believe to be accurate shapes and forms knowledge, which then further informs the theoretical and methodological foundations of research (Glesne, 2011). It also guides the selection of methodology as the primary theory of knowledge in the theoretical perspective. In other words, it is an exploration of how we know what we know that can help to guide the methods chosen in the research process (Crotty, 1998). These theories form a higher-level framework that serves as a blueprint for exploring problems in research. Using epistemology as the baseline philosophical assumption assumes subjective evidence is the basis of the research and that the researcher will seek to reduce the distance between themselves and the subject matter under study (Creswell, 2013).

Although there are various epistemological perspectives available to guide qualitative study, the constructivist perspective was chosen to guide this case study. Creswell (2013) describes social constructivism as the process individuals undertake to
better understand their personal and work lives. During these life and work experiences, they further develop “subjective meanings” that researchers rely on to form theories or meaning patterns (p. 25). Constructivism is individual, with meanings constructed by the participants using their own views of lived experiences (Crotty, 1998). Creswell (2014) further clarifies that “constructivist researchers often address the processes of interactions among individuals. They also focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work to understand the participants' historical and cultural settings” (p. 8). The research findings resulted from interactions between me, the interviewer, and the training instructors who were the participants/interviewees. Subjectivities of myself, as well as those of the participants, influence the results.

This study focused on how instructors within the organization made significant changes in their instructional development and delivery to adult learners due to the implementation of the new Army U ELM and is a specific work context. Although the group of instructors included in the study went through the transition to using the Army U ELM and continued using the model, they are geographically separated. Each uses the model to develop and deliver curriculum on an individual basis as well as working in groups with the other instructors; therefore, the implementation of the Army U ELM is both an activity constructed of both individual experiences as well as group activity.

**Case Study Method**

The qualitative research methodology that best fit this project is that of a case study. This approach was chosen because the research topic is a single bounded case study, in that it occurred in a specific location during a specific period (Stake, 1995). Specifically, the SFMWR went through the transition to using the Army U ELM starting
in January 2016, and the implementation is ongoing. Over the years, case study research has been argued in various contexts to be a research theory, a methodology, an inquiry strategy, and a choice of what to study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Case study as a research methodology allows for a variety of in-depth data gathering methods. For this case, specific attention was given to in-depth interviewing with supporting document analysis to explore themes to co-construct the experiences of the adult educators (Glesne, 2011).

Following the determination of the epistemology for this project, a case study was selected as the research methodology in order to explore the instructors’ experiences more fully. Stake (1995) states that case study design is “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). This institution implemented the use of the Army U ELM in a bounded and integrated system that represents a single entity, a case, and provides a framework for a deeper description of the recent phenomenon and experiences of the participants (Merriam, 1998, 2002; Stake, 1995). Merriam (2002) states, “for it to be a case study, one particular program (a bounded system), selected because it was typical, unique, experimental, or highly successful, etc., would be the unit of analysis” (p. 8). Glesne (2011) goes further by stating that case studies can examine a “process over time” (p. 279), which is what occurred in this case.

This case focused on a bounded system processes of one program, and the instructors employed there, unique because it is in a government civilian work environment serving military patrons and transitioned to a new design and delivery method that occurred there. Cases are seen as a bounded system, an object to be explored
to the extent that the cases boundaries allow (Stake, 1995). The experiences of each instructor were embedded within the single case of the transition of the SFMWR to using the Army U ELM. Stake (1995) also describes this as an intrinsic case study, a case that is "given" because of its particular circumstances and for the sake of learning about this specific bounded set of experiences of the instructors during the transition (p. 3).

**Setting**

This case study involved training instructors from the School for Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (SFMWR), the training branch of the United States Army Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation organization. Trainers for the SFMWR work out of the headquarters Installation Management Training Center in Fort Sam Houston, TX, and at a variety of installations around the world. There is a team of trainers who work remotely across the globe, embedded with local Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation organizations at a home installation while providing training at various other installations regionally. As of July 2020, there were 14 Service Culture Training Instructor positions located at the following installations: U.S. Army Garrison Hawaii; Joint Base Lewis McChord, WA; Fort Carson, CO; Fort Bliss, TX; Fort Riley, KS; Fort Rucker, AL; Fort Campbell, KY; Fort Knox, KY; Fort Stewart, GA; Fort Bragg, NC; Joint Base Myer Henderson-Hall, VA; Bavaria, Germany; and Wiesbaden, Germany. Additionally, there were six training instructors at the headquarters location at Joint Base San Antonio, TX (Installation Management Academy, 2017).

The setting of this case study was the transition and use of the Army University Experiential Learning Model (Army U ELM) that occurred within the Service Culture Training Instructor team. Therefore, the locations of the training instructors vary
significantly while the work is similar across the team. The Training Instructors for Service Culture (training instructors) specialize in skills training including customer service, soft skills, and technical skills for managers and frontline employees of Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation businesses, including but not limited to: childcare centers, golf, bowling, restaurants, outdoor recreation, and family social services. Courses are instructed both residentially and in instructor-led virtual formats (United States Army, 2017b). Current course offerings by training instructors include Operation Excellence customer service, Employee Engagement, Managing Competing Priorities, Non-appropriated Funds Internal Controls, Employee Performance Plans, Resolving Difficult Situations, Coaching for Today, and Strategic Planning. Courses range from three to eight hours in length, and last from one to four sessions (School for Family and MWR, n.d.A).

The population of this study included all training instructors at the School for Family and MWR who were involved in the design or delivery of an existing curriculum using the Army University Experiential Learning Model, currently totaling 14. Purposeful sampling was used to reach the target audience and ensure they were eligible as determined by the following criteria: (a) they transitioned to using the Army U ELM in instructional design and delivery, (b) participated in the mandated training called the Faculty Development Program level 1, and (c) were willing to participate in the interviews.

**Participants**

Participants of this study included current and former training instructors employed in the School for Family and MWR Service Culture Branch. These employees
may ranged from 30 to 65 years of age. Their educational backgrounds include everything from some college education to master’s degrees in a variety of topics. Each of the instructors were also required to have experience working in the Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation programs at an installation prior to being hired, with higher preference being given to those with prior management roles. Prospective participants were geographically distributed across the United States at various military installations and the home schoolhouse at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. No vulnerable populations participated in this study. I did have a pre-existing relationship with participants, who are all current and former co-workers.

Participants were recruited from the pool of instructors employed at the institution who transitioned to using the Army U ELM. The SFMWR currently employs 14 facilitators who meet these qualifications. Participation in this study was voluntary, and I reasonably expected five to eight participants to be available for interviews. There were ten participants who volunteered to be interviewed.

Participants were recruited via secure e-mail in order to maintain confidentiality (see Appendix A). The e-mail message used for recruitment outlined the purpose of the study, and those prospective participants must have utilized the Army U ELM in either instructional design or course delivery to participate in the study. There were no direct potential benefits to the participants of this study.

Data Collection

Stake (1995) states that “a case is specific, a complex, a functioning thing” (p. 2). The goal of the qualitative case study is the complete understanding of phenomena that occur in the case through interpretation. Data can draw from a variety of variables and
instruments, primarily observations, interviews and document reviews, with the interpretation of observations by the researcher as the major basis for any conclusions from the case.

Stake (1995) also states that "one of the principal qualifications of qualitative researchers is experience," meaning that qualitative research involves pulling data from a variety of resources and then interpreting meaning from those experiences (p. 49). Using the following two methods of data collection in this study, semi-structured interviews and document reviews, I became more familiar with the data due to extensive interaction with it in the recording and analysis process.

**Semi-Structured Personal Interviews**

Personal interviews were conducted as the primary method of data collected in the case. Interview participants were selected based on active use of the Army U ELM in training delivery and design. The interviews were semi-structured and included open-ended questions, with the intent that Creswell (2014) describes as “intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants” (p. 190). Semi-structured interview guides generally include a list of specific topics that guide open-ended questions, including prompts and key words to keep in mind during the interview. The guide for this project incorporated open-ended questions that pertained to the project's main purpose and relate to the research questions for the study (Merriam, 1998). Follow-up questions and probing questions were used to gain further clarity, information, and details of significance from the participants, allowing them to fully articulate their responses without any assumption on the interviewer’s part of what participant answers would be (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).
Appendix A provides a protocol for the semi-structured interview process for data collection. Appendix B provides the semi-structured interview guide that was used in interviewing the instructors at the SFMWR. The semi-structured interview questions were developed to inform the research questions that guided the study. Questions were developed to support each of the study's research questions to generate full descriptions of the experiences of the training instructors (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). The following is a table exhibiting the interview questions and the research questions they supported.

**Table 2**

*Research Questions and Coordinating Interview Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Army U ELM Steps</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Coordinating Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background Questions</strong></td>
<td>Questions to identify participants’ background and training experience</td>
<td>Describe a bit of your background with the Family and MWR organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How long have you worked in your current position as a training instructor with the school?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What courses do you currently teach at the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concrete Experience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research Question 1:</strong> How did training instructors gain the new knowledge and</td>
<td><strong>Lead Question 1:</strong> Tell me how you learned about the Army University Experiential Learning Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publish and Process</td>
<td>skills needed to implement the Army U ELM in their training design and delivery?</td>
<td>used in training at the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generate New Information</td>
<td></td>
<td>• How did you hear about the Army U ELM initially?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• How did you gain the knowledge you needed to design learning and teach using the Army U ELM?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• What did you know about experiential learning methods before the transition?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Generate New Information Develop | Research Question 2: How do training instructors describe their experiences of the transition process to using the Army U ELM in curriculum design and delivery? | Lead Question 2: Describe your experience transitioning to using the new Army University ELM in your practice.  
- How did you go about implementing the new model?  
- How did you know you were implementing the new model successfully?  
- What supported your transition to using the new model? |
| Application | Research Question 3: What are the training instructors’ current perceptions of using the Army U ELM in their curriculum design and classroom facilitation work? | Lead Question 3A: How do you currently use the Army U ELM?  
- How have you used the Army U ELM in designing training?  
- What do you like about using the Army U ELM to deliver training?  
- What do you dislike about using the Army U ELM to deliver training?  

Lead Question 3B: How would you describe the difference in the instructional experience between the prior instruction method and instructing using the Army U ELM?  
- How is using the Army U ELM different from the prior instructional design/delivery methods used at the School?  
- How do your interactions with students differ between the new Army U ELM delivery and the prior instructional methods? What were they? Can you describe them? What advice would you give to a new training
**Piloting the Interview Questions.** The interview questions were developed from the research questions and experiential learning model questions. I piloted the interview questions with one participant who work in a different part of the SFMWR, not on the delivery team in the sample. Based on the feedback of the pilot questions, I added a question about demographical data including time with the organization, educational background, and current course design and deliver experience. I also added a question at the end as suggested, which asked what advice these seasoned training instructors would give to an instructor new to using the Army U ELM. This process improved instrument development, expounded on the data collected, and provided validation that the questions would be straightforward for the participants.

**Interview Procedures.** Participants were recruited initially using the emailed participant solicitation letter in Appendix A. An initial email was sent out, with a follow-up email two weeks later to solicit any final participants. I responded to participants individually with a request to read and sign the participant consent form in Appendix D. Once the signed form was returned, I proceeded with scheduling the interview with the participant.

Interviews were set at the convenience of the participants once they confirmed their willingness to participate. The setting for the interviews was through video teleconference on a Zoom teleconference account outside of the work network. The researcher owned the account and set up a separate room with a passcode for each
interview, ensuring the researcher and participants were in the room individually with no observers nor chance for anyone to overhear the interview.

The interviews were recorded with the account only accessible to the researcher via password protection. Interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and transcribed for accuracy post-interview using otter.ai. Recordings of the interview were initially transcribed using otter.ai, reviewed by the researcher to correct transcription errors, and then were sent to the participants following the interviews for review of accuracy and concurrence on content. All participants concurred on the accuracy; the original recorded files were then deleted. The transcripts were stripped of any information that could easily identify the participants, including names and work locations with gender-neutral pseudonyms being used. Master lists of participant names and pseudonyms were destroyed upon completing the labeling of data with pseudonyms. The raw and later redacted data was stored on password-protected computers and storage devices, and access was limited to the lead researcher.

Raw data included interview transcripts and additional documents collected from the purposefully selected documents. Documents were collected and processed based on the need to focus on the smaller number of themes in a qualitative case study (Creswell, 2014).

*Document Review*

While the primary method of gathering data was through interviews, this information was triangulated and checked by reviewing qualitative documents from the case. Documents used in this case study included documentation of training given to facilitators on the Army U ELM, documentation of the organizational transition process
to using the Army U ELM design and delivery format, white papers, and various other
documents and organizational records that described and supported different events and
procedures before, during, and after the transition.

Table 3

*Documents Selected and Data Analyzed*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents selected</th>
<th>Data analyzed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army Training and Education, Faculty and Staff Development, TRADOC Pamphlet 350-70-3 (2018)</td>
<td>Faculty and Staff Development programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Learning, Army Educational Processes, TRADOC Pamphlet 350-70-7 (2017)</td>
<td>Army Educational Processes and the Army University Experiential Learning Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Army University White Paper (2015)</td>
<td>Outlines implementation of the institution and standardizations of the Army University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Development Program Phase 1 Schedule (Van Der Werff &amp; Bogdan, 2018)</td>
<td>Process for training facilitators in use of the Army ELM.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Document review, also known as content analysis, has contributed valuable information to quantitative and qualitative research for many years. The use of this method included the review of text documents that the researcher has not altered or edited in any way. The practical use of the information in these documents can assist qualitative researchers in deriving categories and concepts to further inform other case study elements (Bowen, 2009; Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Further, document analysis effectively provides valuable insight into qualitative case studies, including providing descriptive data and empirical background to inform other analyses in the case study (Bowen, 2009).

The document review process included purposeful sampling to select specific documents about the selected case for this study. These documents were selected keeping the study’s three research questions in mind and to validate and triangulate with the data gained from the interviews with the training instructors. All documents were obtained from the participating organization and are open source, and therefore do not need to be stored under password protection. These documents further informed the data gathered in the semi-structured interviews discussed in chapter four.

**Data Analysis**

Following the participants’ review and concurrence of the interview conversations for accuracy, I used the six-step process of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006). I used the MAXQDA software to systematically organize all of my data and track my codes. This system generated visual maps of codes that were used at current points in my analysis for checking and review of the methods. My approach to the coding process was inductive, coding without using an existing theoretical framework or coding
system from prior research as a baseline. An inductive analysis also allowed me to explore the training instructors' experiences concerning the broader social context, including the institutional role in implementation experiences and the social context of working with fellow training instructors and students to learn, design, and deliver instruction with the Army U ELM. This approach enabled me to approach the data as the main driver of themes as they emerged. I also analyzed codes at the interpretive level, looking beyond the surface semantic codes to get to the ideas and concepts that lie beneath. Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that “analysis from within this latter tradition tends to come from a constructionist paradigm” (p. 84).

The first step outlined in Braun and Clarke’s (2006) process for qualitative thematic analysis was for the researcher to familiarize themselves with the data. I familiarized myself with the data corpus of this project by reviewing all gathered documents and reading the transcriptions of the data multiple times once complete while recording preliminary ideas that arose during those readings. At this point I used the word map function in MAXQDA, which generated the word map from the transcript data that gave me a higher-level view of the words that appeared most frequently in participant interview data. This can be found in Appendix H. Once familiar with the data, they recommended the second step of the process as generating initial codes in a methodical and standardized way across the data set, sorting and matching data relevant to each code, which I did. I then used the code map to see the frequency of codes, also noted in Appendix H. After the initial codes were generated, the third step was to search for themes, which involved collating the codes into possible themes based on the data groups with inherent cross-relevance. While reading and coding data, the process remained
flexible, and themes did begin to aggregate from descriptions of the participants' sharing of their lived experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Lichtman (2013) suggests that between 80 and 100 codes will be generated in most education qualitative studies, falling into 15 to 20 categories, which can then be categorized into five to seven major themes or findings. I ended with 111 codes with seven major themes, which I then combined and refined down to five final themes, as shown in Appendix H.

During the fourth step, I reviewed the themes at both the extract code and the entire data set level to refine themes. Braun & Clarke (2006) also recommended reviewing the entire data set to generate a visual map of themes, allowing the researcher to view patterns, ensure coherency in the themes that have been generated, and code any additional data that has been missed. In step five, I used the thematic map generated by MAXQDA to help further define and refine themes present in the analysis, especially paying attention to the themes and sub-themes to ensure coherent organization and that the themes were not too complex or extensive. This process's sixth and final step was producing the data analysis report, a holistic portrayal of the data's thematic analysis through a narrative story with relevant supporting examples from the data in chapter four. This step also included "a detailed description of the setting or individuals, followed by an analysis of the data for themes or issues" (Creswell, 2014, p. 196).

Throughout the data coding and analysis, I used peer examination and feedback that continued during the process to ensure that the coding is stable across the data sets. This feedback was critical in forming the coding definitions and the process of coding. Detailed transcripts and notes also helped inform the study's reliability to detail the protocols of the case study and the coding database so that the procedures could
hypothetically be repeated by future researchers (Creswell, 2013). These were included in peer review and debriefing by my doctoral advisor as I went through the data collection and analysis process (Glesne, 2011).

Document review followed the interview coding process. Data coding of the documents occurred, and then was referenced with the interview coding to verify participants descriptions of experiences and inform their experiences with further data. These documents helped to inform parts of the study that were not observable by the researcher and may not have been informed by the interview (Stake, 1995).

**Reliability**

Reliability in qualitative study refers to consistency in procedures and approaches across the spectrum of study and can be enhanced in various ways (Creswell, 2014). The first step to enhance reliability in this study was using recordings of the personal interviews. Recordings allowed transcription updates for accuracy to include details such as pauses of the participants' answering and overlapping topics and data. Transcription occurred first with otter.ai, was then edited by the researcher, and then checked by participants for accuracy. Member checking was used as the transcripts were sent to the participants for review via email for accuracy in transcription details and meaning. This helped to ensure the reliability of the data as it came from the participant, as they confirmed that the transcription is what they meant to say and provide a clear perspective on their lived experience (Merriam, 1998).

Triangulation of the data helped to increase the validity of the data collection and analysis. Cross referencing the interview data with the document analysis also helped to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the case. While the convergence of data
informed all the data, it more heavily informed the generalizing new information and the application portion of the theoretical framework. This is because the document information contained background details and steps of how the organization trained the instructors with the new method.

**Subjectivities**

One primary area of concern in qualitative research is the idea that using oneself as an instrument of inquiry will influence or bias the study. Instead, in a qualitative study, it is often necessary to build relationships, listen effectively, understand lived experiences, and expand to view the studied phenomenon from a broader perspective (Piantanida & Garman, 2009). The subjectivity in this study was inherent because I have gone through similar lived experiences of the participants in the study as a colleague on the team who learned to design and deliver the curriculum with the Army U ELM.

I have lived the phenomenon studied in the case study, as I have been employed in the organization since 2010 and therefore saw the case through the lens of having also experienced the organizational transition and use of the Army U ELM. Those with a post-positivist, science-based tradition may assume there could be biases where lived experiences of the researchers do or do not coincide or conform to those of the participants. As a descriptive case study (Yin, 1994), any similarities in descriptions of the instructors’ experiences could benefit the researcher throughout the study. One area this influenced was providing opportunities for greater depth in the interviewing process due to the pre-existing relationships with research participants and the knowledge and experience of the researcher of the transition as a team member. Because I have gone through this experience myself, I had intimate knowledge of the design and delivery
process subscribed by the organization and my descriptions of my lived experiences. There is a possibility that my prior experiences could have influenced my data collection and analysis. To help mitigate the influence of my personal experiences on the project, I took extensive notes as suggested by Merriam (2002) to record reflections and capture my personal interactions with the data throughout the collection and analysis phases. Reviewing my personal interactions with the data helped me to identify and address any biases that might have occurred due to my experiences.

Participants might feel obligated to participate in the study due to our pre-existing relationship and connection as colleagues. I have worked with all the possible participants for a minimum of two years. There was inherently a potential for power imbalance in the participant-researcher relationship (Creswell, 2014). As an insider researcher, there was the possibility that what participants choose to share might be influenced by our existing working relationship. This can occur when participants are too comfortable with the researcher and overshare or may not share enough due to a variety of fears. I addressed these issues through a variety of actions in the research design (Fleming, 2018). First, the invitation to participate was wholly voluntary and the timing and virtual location of the interviews was excluded from the work context as much as possible. The participant recruitment email can be reviewed in appendix A. At the beginning of the interview, a disclaimer was included to remind participants that although we have had previous interactions around the topic, they should respond as if we were covering it for the first time and I do not know the history of the topics. Informed consent was covered in the initial agreement to participate and was included as a reminder at the beginning of the interview that they could choose not to answer questions or withdraw at
any time. See appendix C for the interview verbiage and appendix D for the informed consent form.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of training instructors as they transitioned to training design and delivery with the new Army UELM in their practice. The setting for the study, including the processes of implementing the new method and the instructors’ experiences at the SFMWR, had not been previously examined. Additionally, there was no existing research on instructor experiences implementing the Army U ELM; therefore, this topic and setting are ideal for this type of study.

Two data sources were gathered in this project, consisting primarily of personal interviews with instructors at the SFMWR and secondarily with document review. The data was analyzed using the coding processes noted above to identify the emergent themes that were derived from the data. Chapter four will describe the findings with thorough data analysis, and chapter five will include a summary and discussion of the findings and further implications, recommendations for future research, and conclusions of the project.
Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this qualitative single-case study was to describe the experiences of the training instructors of the School for Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (SFMWR) in implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model (Army UELM). This case study approach employed semi-structured, open-ended interviews coupled with document review to collect the data. This chapter contains the findings of this study and provides an analysis of the data collected during the study. The chapter begins with a description of the participants, followed by a description of the findings. Data sources used for analysis include the transcripts from semi-structured interviews with participants and document analysis.

Experiential learning was the lens that guided this study, specifically Kolb’s (1984) six experiential learning characteristics and experiential learning theory model. The Army University Experiential Learning Model also guided this study and was the theory the instructors implemented as the new curriculum model for learning design and delivery. This theoretical lens served as a framework for examining the implementation of the specific Army model.

Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the data collected from the interviews and supported by document review. The following five themes were found to be common in the responses of participants in discussions about their experiences:

1. Moving from Prisoners to Raving Fans
2. Déjà Vu From a Past Life
3. Just Do It! Practice Makes Perfect
4. It’s Weird and I Don’t Like It

5. Design and Delivery Different… In a Good Way

I used thematic analysis for coding transcripts and document review to develop these five themes. The findings in this chapter are presented by themes, using original phrases and document excerpts to support.

Participant Background

This case study explored the experiences of ten training instructors from the U.S. Army Installation Management Command’s SFMWR. The instructors were interviewed between January 27, 2022, and February 19, 2022. The instructors worked at ten different installation locations across the United States during their time as training instructors and supported the teams at upwards of 30 collective installations remotely. All participants are current or past instructors in the SFMWR’s Service Culture branch. This branch of the SFMWR provides training to team members working for the Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation branch of the U.S. Army Installation Management Command, headquartered out of Joint Base San Antonio, Texas. Because of the distance to their location and availability, all interviews occurred on the Zoom platform with audio and video components. All participants have gone through learning to use and implement the Army U ELM within the SFMWR. Table 4 provides an overview of the demographical data of the participants:

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Demographics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational Background</td>
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</table>
The primary data collection method for this case study was interviews with semi-structured open-ended interview questions. The interview guide for this study can be found in Appendix C. Each participant spoke with the researcher in an interview that lasted between 30 and 55 minutes, with an average interview time of 45 minutes.

**Introduction to Themes**

From the data collected in the interviews with the ten study participants, five themes were identified from the coded interview transcripts. These themes were derived from commonalities that appeared in the coded data as presented during interviews and found through document review.

**Theme 1: Moving from Prisoners to Raving Fans**

During the initial part of interviews, instructors expressed having negative expectations or non-supportive feelings when they were first introduced to the Army UELM. Part of this was due to the existing structures that some instructors felt were already effective while others took issue with the new design process. Instructors also explained in detail how their feelings changed as they saw similarities to the old models and moved to acceptance and support of the new model.

When asked how they heard about the model, many instructors had similar experiences. They were told directly by supervisors that there was a new model and that the team would move to use it after initial training on how to implement it. Skyler said,
“They told us we were going to start following that model,” and they were told they had to do it and that it was a part of their annual job performance standards. Riley stated they were told, “This is how we’re doing it now.” In this part of the discussion, the consensus from all instructors was they were told to implement the new model following initial training on how to use it.

Document analysis further supported these statements. U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-8-2 (2017) presents the Army Learning Concept for 2020-2040, stating that “learning organizations adapt and adopt new techniques and procedures that get the job done more efficiently” (p. 14). In a 2016 White Paper regarding the future structure of learning within the SFMWR, leadership committed to “invest heavily in faculty excellence, focusing on developing the facilitation skills… and building the credentials of our adult education professionals” (p. 21). The SFMWR followed through on this by implementing the Army U ELM, which was first introduced to instructors in the Faculty Development Program 1 (FDP) instructor’s course, a critical component that will be discussed in more detail in the next theme.

One of the interesting points that also came after instructors identified how they heard about the implementation of the Army U ELM were the feelings it elicited prior to anyone attending training regarding the method itself. Skyler said:

We were afraid it was going to be really different and difficult to follow because, you know, the Army sometimes has a convoluted way of doing things. We… I don’t think many of us were very happy about it at first… having to learn something different.
Riley also mentioned the overwhelmed feelings, stating about their experience in the initial training that, “It was overwhelming for many, especially if they didn’t have…no training or even facilitation experience. And that was… tough”. These instructors identified feelings of uncertainty and some trepidation about changing to this new model in their delivery and design.

Another topic identified that helped some instructors engage with the Army U ELM was the identification of similarities between this model and their past methods of facilitation and design. Casey said that presentation of the content was very similar in the Generalizing New Information (GNI) step of the new Army U ELM, stating, “A couple of things I see with the actual content piece, the GNI piece. We all knew that had to be in training, right?” Kerry’s experience mirrored this saying:

The GNI, I mean, in the ELM, it wasn’t really spelled out that this was lecturing on the stuff. It was a part of the “what” phase on it. So, I don’t think it’s really that different than what’s used in the educational; it’s just, we kind of label an extra step in there.

A few instructors mentioned a drastic shift in their feelings regarding implementing the Army U ELM as they began using it in instruction and later in their design process. Casey said about their changed feelings regarding the Army U ELM:

I kind of fought it at first, because I remember thinking, this feel[s] very Army, you know what I mean? It’s so linear, and, you know, that’s what it felt like just because you told me there was a process to it. So, I just immediately dismissed it as that’s just another regulation, another mandatory straight line… but then you
get into it and I was pleasantly surprised, a little bit. Like, oh, wait, no, this is actually the almost exact opposed of that. It just puts you in a framework, right? Several other instructors built on this idea of changing mindset, mentioning that greater comfort came with practice, and this led to their feelings about the model shifting. Logan said, “Really focusing on the concrete experience step and making it relatable and taking myself out of the equation helped me immensely.” Payton echoed this by saying “It makes a giant difference when you understand what you’re doing and what the purpose behind it is.” Jessie mentioned that they were not very supportive of the Army U ELM at first, but then had experiences with students that helped to change their opinion:

Initially, the feedback was exciting, because they were like, wow, this is like the coolest thing ever. You know, we got up, we moved around, we got to do you know, roleplay. And it was… even though I don’t really like it, it was fun. You know, the cartoons were funny, and it reached me on a different level. All these experiences led to a change of opinion for the instructors who were on the receiving end of them.

**Theme 1: Moving from Prisoners to Raving Fans Summary.** These excerpts from instructors describe that many did not feel excited or positive about implementing the Army U ELM. Instructors described their initial trepidation with learning to use the model. Some shared that some similarities of certain steps of the Army U ELM to old design and delivery methods helped them acclimate to the new methods and changed their opinions. Several noted how their attitude about using the Army U ELM changed through different experiences and use.

*Theme 2: Déjà Vu From a Past Life*
Throughout the interviews, instructors described prior knowledge, professional development, or experience that better enabled them to implement the Army U ELM. Prior knowledge of experiential learning practices was noted, both by name and without knowing what it was called at the time. A variety of prior training, certifications, and professional development opportunities were noted as being helpful to the implementation of the Army U ELM. Finally, several noted that the new model had striking similarities to the prior designs used, although they did identify some differences in the pattern or materials.

When asked about any prior knowledge of experiential learning, all instructors noted they had prior experience, however several noted that they did not know it by that label. Logan shared what they knew regarding experiential learning prior to the use of the Army U ELM:

Formally, nothing…Honestly, nothing. So, looking back, I knew about it because I’d been doing it, it just never had been labeled. And so, when I did Faculty Development Program, and actually learned this, the terms and everything I was like, Oh!

Skyler had a similar response saying they had experience with experiential learning and “Well, I may not have known it by that terminology.” Jessie responded to the question by saying, “Yeah. But I think too... We, yes, yes, we were using it, it just wasn’t called that.” They then said about their prior knowledge of experiential learning:

Well, if you really want to think about it, you’re really, you’re utilizing the experiential learning your whole entire life, because you’re raising your children and you’re using experiences to teach them. And it’s not called experiential
learning. It’s called raising your children. Or it’s called setting a good example. Or it’s called something, you know, consequences and choices. So, there’s different names to it. But it’s still experiential learning.

While many of the instructors noted knowing about experiential learning prior to being introduced to the Army U ELM, several had experience using it in other forms before learning the new model. Frankie noted:

Anyway, like, that’s common in so many different disciplines. Like, it’s not just working, like the Army is not the only organization that has figured this out. Like, obviously other organizations have figured it out, too. And so like… if you’re talking about experiential learning, like when I was leading a [training] there’s nothing more experiential than that. You put the person there. But I realized when I was working in this job, that that was... not a crutch, but such a benefit that I hadn’t realized. Because like you are putting the person outside in the area that you’re trying to teach them about. And I can imagine that like the [former] ADDIE model, and the Army U ELM and all that stuff works differently for us than it does for somebody training somebody how to use a tank, or how to use a stinger missile, right?

Avery echoed that, noting that they had prior experience with experiential learning in a different model presented in a prior class taught by the SFMWR:

Yeah, I guess just kind of like I didn’t label it that but I, but adults learn more by experiencing whatever it is that you’re trying to teach them, right? And then and then when we assigned this book [holds up ’10 Steps to Successful Training’ by Elaine Beich] in, was it my first segment? In 2016, and it’s got a whole chapter on
the, you know, on why adults learn better this way. And how to do it. So... but
it’s not, it’s not in the Army’s model.

When they were asked, Quinn recalled an experiential learning activity that was
presented at a team training several years prior to the Army U ELM:

And then, as far as what I knew about the experiential learning model, I remember
one year we got back, we got together, we did our strategic planning week. And
we were working with the other team like the entire schoolhouse. And I remember
Kathleen Gonzalez, she brought us all together, she put a piece of rope on the
floor, she put blindfolds on everybody except for like three people. Do you
remember that year? And then she was like, “Okay, what you’re going to do
is...”. I can’t even remember what we had to do was like, make a circle or do
something... So that experience, after that experience, I remember Kathleen
saying to us, “This is the basics of experiential learning. You, you do something
and then afterwards you ask the question ‘What happened?’ And what you’re
really looking for in what happened is what was like step by step, your
experience. And then that second question, which is ‘How did it make you feel?’,
which for us is our [Army U ELM] publish and process, those two questions.

As seen above, many of the instructors equated their experience within the Army to
experiences they had outside, or other experiential learning they had participated in.

Another area of the past that came up in the descriptions was that former
professional development, including trainings, courses, or certifications, had contributed
to the instructors’ ability to implement the Army U ELM. Primarily instructors noted that
there were similar skills they had learned from these past trainings that were relevant and
applicable to their use of the Army U ELM. Some of these courses were taken as professional development while in their employment with the School for Family and MWR and some of them were more informal courses taken to assist in developing skills.

The primary formal training prior to implementation that was noted by every instructor during their interviews was the Faculty Development Program Level 1 (FDP) instructor course. This course was taken by all instructors prior to their implementation of the Army U ELM as part of a required professional development instruction. When they brought it up, instructors had different descriptions of their experiences with the trainings and ability to use what was taught. Document review provided supporting information on how this FDP course prepared instructors to facilitate using the Army U ELM. The FDP course presents tools and techniques for instructors to create an adult-centric experiential learning environment. With a competency-based approach, Van Der Werff and Bogdan (2018) state this course introduces the instructors to “roles and responsibilities, teaching and learning models, and professional and ethical requirements” (p. 48). It also covered techniques for managing the classroom, covered creating learning objectives and planning lessons, as well as how to effectively communicate as an instructor in the context of this newly implemented experiential learning environment.

When asked how they gained the knowledge to use the Army U ELM, many listed the FDP as a crucial component prior to implementation. Skyler said, “Actually, it was in that, what did they call it? Faculty Development? Because they had the different levels, the one, two, and three. And the [level] one I think, that was how I learned.” Casey said, “The ELM training, and I’m sure you’re going to get to it, was eye opening to me, so that I will say I have found some value in that particular piece as well, that
training as well.” Frankie expounded on their experiences within the FDP course when asked how they first heard about the Army U ELM:

I heard about it when I was signed up for a class through uh, TRADOC to go take the instructor course… So, they, well, they use the model during the full training. So that was a nice framework, but uh, they... it was the instructor course not the developer course. But I would say over three quarters of the class was about developing curriculum, so I found that to be very useful, I was pleased that it was organized that way because they, they go into... I really liked that they showed us why. Like, why you tie this into someone’s experience as an adult learner and how that matters.

Quinn also described their experience of learning about the Army U ELM through the FDP:

There was like a new training that came out called FDP, faculty development program. And I remember I went… I went with [two other instructors]. And it was... the training was, was rigorous. Like we had to... I remember beforehand we had to write an essay and turn in the essay. And when we got there, it was... I’m pretty sure it was one weeklong, but a lot of it, a lot of it was really related to what it means to be a facilitator in general. And then, you know, like, really slowly going through each one of the steps of the Army U ELM, and spending time on things like, you know, how do you... how do you have a discussion? And in discussion... What I can think about and remember is discussion is not you talking, somebody responding, you talking, somebody responding, but I remember them saying like the popcorn effect. Somebody says something, and if
you can shut up as a facilitator long enough, and let somebody else respond, then you’ve got like an actual, genuine, real discussion going. So I remember learning about those kinds of things. I remember the training being rigorous.

The document analysis also provided some more insight into the rigor of the FDP and the part it played in providing the baseline of learning that instructors then went to apply as described above. TRADOC Pamphlet 350-70-3 (2018a) elaborates on the goals of the program by emphasizing that the FDP teaches “adult learning principles articulated in the Army Learning Model” (p. 17). Taking this a step further, TRADOC Pamphlet 350-70-7 (2018b) supports the practical application of the Army U ELM by instructors, stating that it “emphasizes the process of learning and not the product” (p. 15). The Pamphlet also encourages adaptation by instructors in individual implementation of the Army U ELM and experimentation using a variety of learning strategies to meet learning objectives.

Payton and Quinn both mentioned the Langevin model of instructional design, in which the SFMWR instructors were certified in 2015, was beneficial for a baseline education in design prior to learning about the Army U ELM. However, Quinn noted that although they both gave a model for instructional design, they did it in very different ways, noting:

Before we took the FDP. We had, maybe that was the 2014 timeframe... we had a class with Langevin and the class was designing training. And I just remember... you know what, I can go pretty analytical, but I just remember that it was so deep. And it was so.... it was like, I’ve also taken a project management class and it’s the same, it’s the same thing. So, they go really deep into this analysis, and this is
this, and this is this, and this is this. And after taking that class, while I thought that the instructor was brilliant, I thought, I am never going to use this model, because it’s too intense! …so that, that’s a little bit of context in terms of the ELM because we had that class and it felt so inaccessible.

While the FDP played a large part in the prior learning of many instructors, there were several other formal courses mentioned as well. Casey mentioned the “Quality Service course from Disney was phenomenal. It helped me to convey a lot of stuff too and meet people at our Garrison’s at a really good spot where you can make those relevant examples.” Skyler mentioned getting certified to conduct another training and noted that “it basically was a dumbed down version of the FDP.” Several instructors also noted using more informal methods of learning instructional design that contributed to their successful application of the Army U ELM, including watching YouTube videos and attending COURSERA free online courses.

**Theme 2: Déjà Vu From a Past Life Summary.** These excerpts from instructors explained how prior knowledge, professional development, or experience supported them in their current use of the Army U ELM. Instructors described prior knowledge and exposure to experiential learning practices, although sometimes they did not know at the time that it was experiential learning. There were various trainings and professional development opportunities listed by instructors as being helpful in their implementation. Finally, several noted that the new model had striking similarities to the prior designs used, although they did identify some differences in the pattern or materials.

*Theme 3: Just Do It! Practice Makes Perfect*
While some instructors noted that while there was much benefit to formal training and others noted similarities to prior instructional design and delivery methods they used in the section on Deja vu, another theme that came out of the data was the idea that using the model was essential to developing the skillset needed to successfully use it in design and delivery. Several instructors particularly noted that by using the ELM to deliver training, they became more comfortable with it as they were able to assess their delivery through various methods, make adaptations, and improve over time. Instructors noted that learning to design in the model furthered their understanding of applying it with students during training facilitation. Peer support and relationships came up multiple times as important to learning and implementing the Army U ELM in both design and delivery practices. Instructors discussed how peers supported them in the initial implementation, and how the staff at their home installations supported their opportunities to transition as well. Finally, relationships were key to learning to design using the Army U ELM, which is a more recent development within the team’s scope of responsibilities.

By using the ELM, instructors noted that they increased their comfort level with using the model through self-assessment and various adaptations they made. Instructors reported that with using the ELM they made adaptations based on feedback they received in the classroom. Riley noted that when they let go of the feeling of rigidity they got when learning the model, they were better able to apply it effectively, stating:

But now I had had the training and had to let go of the reins a bit. It was like, stop. This is not working. But you know that this model works. You can see it when it’s laid out. You know it works. It makes perfect sense… Why isn’t it working? It was my fault it wasn’t working, because I was the one that was too rigid. And I
wasn’t allowing for those, you know, when you teach it’s kind of like that Slinky Dog, you know, you pull on the head and then the back’s gotta catch up, and now you can go to the next one, and then the back catches up… Yeah, that was the first time I knew that it was actually working that I had found the balance was when that class went off without a hitch.”

Logan also noted that even after the initial formal training, they found that implementing the model solidified the process in their practice:

…from just a couple of times with experience, knowing where to guide them a little bit better, what questions to ask versus what not to ask… It really helped me shore up and so I didn’t… I didn’t feel like a ping pong ball bouncing around.

It is interesting to note that both Riley and Logan indicated that experience helped them work out certain areas of confusion regarding how to implement the model in facilitation. Of note, both instructors related their initial experience to children’s games that involve an element of back and forth or stretch with highs and lows.

Self-evaluation of their own implementation during practice or live sessions to better facilitate using the model was mentioned by several instructors. This use of practice for self-improvement noted a use of practice as not only a way to initially learn, but also a way to perfect skills through use. Payton noted that the “ability to be flexible in delivery” as they were building their skills in classroom facilitation was helpful to improving their ability to get to full performance faster. Logan requested permission to record their sessions to review later for self-evaluation, noting that “I could go back and watch it and see… what was distracting or where I got too stuck on a particular topic or question.” Skyler noted that when asking questions, if students were unable to answer
and they got “that deer in the headlights look” they would reassess and say “let’s go back and clarify now. What did we miss?” This demonstrated the instructor’s ability to self-evaluate during the implementation of the ELM. By practicing the method and using student feedback cues as well as their own observations, instructors were able to look for areas of improvement in their use of the ELM.

While participants did cite other methods of learning to best use the ELM in their design and delivery as noted in the section on prior learning, practicing the method by facilitating with it in a classroom or using it to design was a commonality in addition to the more formal learning methods. Many of these descriptions hinted at the idea that experiential learning, learning through experience and by doing, was essential for instructors to effectively implement the Army U ELM. Logan noted that “After I did FDP, and then the first couple observations from supervisors coming and watching me facilitate, I felt more sure, like I had a firmer grip on what I was doing.” After listing several things that helped them, Payton said, “And then finally, really, the majority of, the vast majority of my learning was through doing”. They also stated that:

It was the hands-on kind of experiential learning model with the experiential learning model. So, it was… as I was designing, as I was delivering, I’m kind of learning it as I go, understanding it better at that point.

Quinn said they implemented the model initially by teaching it to others when they returned from the FDP training, noting that “I was teaching them about [how to train with] the ELM model, and also using the ELM model. And I think that’s really kind of the first time I remember actively implementing what I had learned.”
Payton, Logan, and Quinn’s reflections on the experience of using the ELM illuminated an idea that formal training elements were important and that instructors built on past experiences as discussed in déjà vu from a past life, the section on past learning informing the implementation, however much expertise came from the real-world application through their experiences.

Peer feedback and support from other training instructors on implementation during different stages of learning and implementing the Army U ELM was identified as critical to successful practice. When talking about first implementing training back at their location, Logan said about support from a peer who was visiting to observe them:

I remember after the first site visit with them, that [after training] I was like, “I’m exhausted.” And they’re like, “Yeah no wonder you carried everything, that’s not how it’s supposed to be.” And so I’m like, I really was like… “Huh.”

Sklyer said, “And I guess really just commiserating with my peers that we had to do this like this now and discussing how you would incorporate...I guess we would call that peer review?” They discussed the idea of sharing in the challenges of implementing a new to them method with other team members, as did Frankie when they said:

So, I reached out to everybody at some point or another. And just seeing them implement it in the classroom and understanding why they included all of these things that I didn’t really understand the reasoning behind when I had first joined the school was super helpful.

Payton mirrored this feedback, saying that for new training instructors when starting to design and deliver with the Army U ELM:
I would suggest that they partner with experienced... So have a mentor. And go through the design process with a mentor, to actually have the mentor explain each step of the process, and what the purpose behind that step is.

Another area that was identified by instructors was peer support from their local team members when they returned and began facilitating using the Army U ELM. Jessie noted that, “I think I got the team involved. Partnerships are pretty important. And understanding what the new thing looks like, what the new way was going to be and making sure that I had support.” When asked more about this, Jessie said:

Just being able to go to certain people and say I just came back from training, and I want to share with you this new and exciting stuff that we have and can’t wait to use it. And do you want to see it? And look how cool this is.

Kerry mentioned that “the rollout was pretty easy for me because the directors were supportive.” Logan noted they asked for feedback and:

With some people, it was hard to get that because they don’t want to hurt your feelings. But I, you know, I think again, because that relationship building and because I do put that as a primary thing above everything else. Like, hey, let me know.

Relationships with the team members and leadership at their home garrisons also helped to support the instructors’ use of the Army U ELM when they returned to their locations to begin training.

Something that also came up frequently in the instructors’ descriptions was the support of their peers when designing using the Army U ELM. Peer support, feedback, and interactions impacted the training design processes in a myriad of ways for
instructors. Kerry noted that working in a team to design helped to diversify their approaches to design through working with others and prevented duplication of the same methods:

Because it’s… you tend to if you’re by yourself, I hate to say it... but I tried to get myself out of it, but I’ve caught myself doing it a couple times where you tend to use the same approach every time. Whereas when you’re in a team, they’re like, oh, that we’ve done that before, let’s think of some other way we could do it or let’s… how else could we do this?

Jessie expounded on the impacts of working with peers in the design process and how it impacts outcomes by saying:

Because I think that you need the input from others to generate... I mean, I could do something like by myself, I mean, we’ve all done training in a box by ourselves. That’s not what I’m talking about. I’m talking about the stuff that blows your dress up. I’m talking about that it’s a team effort and it has to be because we all need what all of us differently bring to the table in order to make it that impactful training.

Payton described the process they experienced:

And so working in peer collaboration has basically… we’re all in it together. And some of the teammates have had a more extensive education on this model. And so it has helped, where they can provide insight on what needs to be in each section. And so, as well with, I guess, not flexibility but support from leadership as we go. That it’s not, as we’re learning the process, getting feedback on that, on how to strengthen it, how to do it correctly, has been extremely useful to learn the
process. So rather than kind of going through a class on here’s the, you know, the model, here’s what you do on each thing, it has been... we’ve done it, and then we’ve learned from feedback.

The experiences described by Kerry, Jessie, and Payton all indicate that peer support was essential to learning to design, as well as to the quality of the design after the process.

Document review brought to light some clarity on the Army’s position on peer support in teaching particularly. The Army Learning Concept describes in TRADOC Pamphlet 525-8-2 (2017a) the expectation for peer support for trainers. The section on teaching, coaching, and mentoring states:

Experienced teachers, coaches, and mentors support career-long learning, meeting the needs of current and future leaders, Soldiers, and civilians. The Army must educate teachers, coaches, and mentors on the learner-centric approach to training and education. A learner dominated environment requires focus on the individual being taught rather than the method of teaching or organization conducting the training. Training and education facilitated by a teacher, coach and mentor must appeal to the learner (p. 30).

Additionally, the expectation that “The Army expects leaders to teach and teacher to lead” is also outlined as an expectation for all team members in this section (p. 30) and aligns with the support and collaboration described in the instructors’ experiences above.

**Theme 3 Just Do It! Practice Makes Perfect Summary.** This theme centered on the information provided from the instructors that using the model was critical to improving their skillset needed to successfully use it in design and delivery with their participants. Instructors also noted that by using the Army U ELM, they became more
comfortable with it as they were able to assess their delivery through feedback and student observations, make adaptations to their methods, and improve their outcomes over time. Training instructor internal peer support was also mentioned by several instructors as crucial to both learning and improving their facilitation practice using the Army U ELM. Once they began to use the new model in their local training at installations, support of leadership and staff at the location supported instructors as they began using it. Finally, the support of peer teams during the design of new training were a positive influence on the instructors’ practical experiences as well as the training design outcomes.

**Theme 4: It’s Weird and I Don’t Like It**

There was much positive feedback about learning to use the Army U ELM and experiences with students and other instructors as mentioned in other themes, however many instructors also indicated challenges with the Army U ELM that caused them to dislike part or all the process. The structure of the model came up as a challenge point for some instructors, who noted that it had an impact on either their design or delivery of materials or both in a variety of ways. Instructors struggled with designing or facilitating specific steps of the Army U ELM as well. Finally, instructors found challenges with time and with the model not being a good fit for teaching all topics.

Several instructors noted that they disliked the structure of the Army U ELM, feeling at times that it was inflexible and removed creativity from the design and facilitation process. Logan stated that, “for people that are very linear, and focused on specifics... it can, it removes the creativity.” Jessie had a similar sentiment, mentioning barriers to freedom in designing training and said that “It can just get frustrating
ummm… designing if you are, if you have barriers that you can’t work around. Because we’re the government or something like that.” Skyler echoed this and said:

Sometimes it doesn’t feel as flexible, that maybe I don’t want to include a part for whatever reason, but that… and then I just have to ask myself, Am I being lazy as a, as a designer to not want to include that? And I have to go back and say Okay, where did I miss a step in this? And it, it almost feels inflexible, but that’s not necessarily a bad thing. But it can be frustrating too.

Frankie also discussed the structure and described it as “Rigid, so if you’re doing it right you have a lot less latitude to kind of go out into left field.” Riley described liking the framework as a guide for facilitating, but “It gives you the framework, all that other stuff that I’ve said, sometimes it feels restrictive. Sometimes it feels restrictive.” Each instructor above mentioned the Army U ELM structure felt constraining or restricted them in some way in the design or facilitation.

Some instructors noted an overall feeling of inflexibility in the model, while still others noted challenges with making the steps of the model work, and issues with specific steps of the five-step model that they struggled with in some way. The five steps of the model are the concrete experience (CE), publish and process (P&P), generating new information (GNI), develop, and apply. These are covered in detail in Figure 4 on page 38. In terms of design, Frankie noted an overall struggle in creativity in design:

If somebody does have some really awesome idea, it can be hard to figure out where to put the idea in, because you’re like, I know this is going to work. Like, I know that the students are going to get a kick out of this, but it can be hard to kind of find a place for it sometimes.
Kerry echoed this sentiment in terms of struggling with good facilitation ideas that may not fit exactly into a certain step of the model. They said as they go through the design process, their process looks something like this:

Okay, this is the concrete experience, this is the publish and process, this is, you know, putting them into those little sections, so we can show that we did it. And it’s like, alright, well, this is apply well, but this can be applied too.. and just trying to go back and make it to where, I guess that’s the big downfall, and it’s not so much the process, it’s the labeling.

While some had issues with the overall design process, others noted specific steps that were challenging in facilitation. Logan mentioned that they really struggled with implementing the CE step, because “By personality, I just want to like, dive in and talk about the tough stuff first. Realizing that most people are not like, they don’t want that, like, it’s too heavy, it’s too much.” Document review further expounded on the CE step and why some instructors like Logan might struggle with the CE specifically. This step is described as broader and more general than some other experiential learning models. The suggestion in the Army University’s (2016) Adult Teaching and Learning Users Guide is that the CE could be based on students’ past experiences or even an imagined event and that the goal is an affective learning connection for the learner. Logan’s intention was to jump directly into the content and new information, a process they had used in the past, instead of following the new structure that involved additional steps prior to learning new information.

Peyton noted that the structure can sometimes slow down the experiential learning process and hold up students. They noted the develop step, stating that, “The develops
sometimes is the piece that when they’re ready to apply, and then we add kind of a little thubber [unexpected roadblock], like, hold on, we’re not quite there yet.” Quinn also echoed this issue with the develop step, saying:

If there was any area that I was like, Huh, that’s not my favorite, is the how will you use this information in the future? I think it’s important. And I think it’s necessary at the end of class. But sometimes when we’re working as a team, I noticed that we have that question at the end of our GNI, we have something similar. Have you ever noticed that? It’s like, you’ll, you’ll offer training and you’re doing like the end of the GNI, and there’s usually some kind of breakout or small group activity, and they’re, they’re applying what they know. And then you ask them about it. And you say, Hey, how did that go? What did you learn from it? And then sometimes, we turn around and we’re at the... I can’t even remember, it’s like the fourth step... The develop. And it feels like we just did that...

While some instructors described challenges with steps of the process above, others had issues with time when using the Army U ELM and felt constricted by the model in terms of time. Logan said they disliked not being able to follow the direction of the class due to time constraints:

I always feel like there’s not enough time. And that’s partially because I don’t like the surface level stuff. And I can tend to drive people to those harder areas. And so that’s probably why I like, like, the conflict classes, the communication classes, like that type of stuff, because it forces a lot of self-reflection for the participants and asking themselves those hard questions. We don’t have to have any answers to the hard questions, I just have to guide them. But it’s really easy to get caught
in the weeds. And because of the way the courses are designed, you have a limited time. And if you spend too much time in one area discussing, you gotta cut something else. Yeah, so that’s probably the part I dislike the most.

Kerry echoed that by stating that they felt the classes were not designed with enough time to explore the areas that arose from discussion that occurred in the Army U ELM and that they “Actually built in some time and started telling them the classes were a little bit longer so that we could have that application time because we didn’t have it.” Time came up as a dislike for instructors in the context of being constrained and unable to explore all the topics as in depth as they would have liked to with students.

A few instructors explained that in their experiences facilitating certain topics with the Army U ELM was not a good fit, either in structure or for the complexity of the topic matter being covered. For example, Payton said:

As much as it’s nice to have that structure to go by, some topics... it would be nice to be able to skip those and give the just, when it’s a basic knowledge and skill of, that just requires kind of a lecturette on the information, here’s what it is... kind of thing and move on. Sometimes it can be delivered much more efficiently, and we are making it a larger aspect that is needed in some cases. And so sometimes it might make a specific learning opportunity a little more lengthy than what’s needed.

Riley echoed this saying that the use of the Army U ELM is effective depending on the topic, and is more effectively used with some topics than others:

It’s depending on the topic. You know, if we’re teaching NAF Internal Controls, that’s very heavy on the regulations and stuff, right? If we are teaching, Resolving
Difficult Situations, there are 1,000,001 ways to do that. We just happen to choose this way for this course.

Frankie echoed this sentiment. They described use of the Army U ELM in the bigger Army, noting that it works well for our soft skills topics:

All that stuff works differently for us than it does for somebody training somebody how to use a tank, or how to use a stinger missile, right? Because you’re putting the missile on their shoulder and saying, This is how you use it, which is different than us trying to be like, this is how you do customer service, or this is how you handle your internal controls.

Frankie was describing how the model might not be appropriate for all simple task or technical skills training within the Army.

Theme 4: It’s Weird and I Don’t Like It

Summary. The instructors indicated challenges with the Army U ELM that caused them to dislike part or all of the process in design or facilitation. Instructors described how the structure of the model was challenging, describing how it had an impact on either their design process or facilitation with students. There were also experiences where instructors disliked designing training or facilitating with all of the Army U ELM and also certain steps. Finally, instructors found challenges with time and with the model not being a good fit for teaching all topics.

Theme 5: Design and Delivery Different… In A Good Way

Several of the themes up until now focus on how the training instructors learned to use the Army U ELM and went about implementing it, as well as where they gained support. This theme came about because of the many times the instructors mentioned the
marked differences between the old ways and the new Army U ELM. The main sub-categories of this theme focus on the student learning experiences, how the instructors facilitate differently because of the model, and the ease of designing with it versus prior methods.

Many of the instructors noted that students seemed to be more involved in classes that were facilitated with the Army U ELM, and that student interactions were more robust. Riley said of the difference:

I think the students get more out of it than if you’re just talking at them. Given. And, and it’s... it sounds so corny. It’s the experiential, period, part of it. We have them doing things with their hands, we have them in small groups, we have them talking to one another.

Casey noted that their involvement also seemed to indicate that they cared more about the topics that were presented in the Army U ELM format, saying:

I think more of what I saw that was kind of eye opening to me with that concrete experience in relating it to them is that all of a sudden, they cared about it. It wasn’t just that they had information, it’s that they had information, felt like it was relevant, and they wanted to use it. Instead of just you force fed me info, but I don’t care. Right? Like I don’t care... it’s true. I mean, we’ve all been in training through like, fine.

Finally, Jessie noted that the students were more engaged, which in turn made them more engaged in the facilitation:

Okay, so I’m really passionate, and I get really involved. And I love when like, they’re, like, the audience is engaged. And they... somebody, like just comes up
with an idea and it sparks an idea in my head. And I get like, “Oh, oh, oh!” And then it leads into a whole ‘nother conversation. And then they get involved in this conversation, and then it explodes into something else and people get excited. So this little spark starts and then bam! And then you can just like kind of step back and let it happen and you’re watching fireworks. And that’s like super cool because that’s what we’re doing there.

The instructors above noted from their experiences that delivering curriculum designed after the Army U ELM implementation led to positive differences in student interactions within the classroom.

Several instructors noted in their experiences that the Army U ELM helped them focus on the learner as central to the learning event, instead of the training revolving around them as the instructor. A few instructors also mentioned that facilitation with the Army U ELM felt more learner-driven than facilitation with past methods. Casey described this change in focus from instructor to learner by saying:

It also kept me focused on the learner. Because sometimes when I am the storyteller, I do what works for me, right? And what spoke to me, which might not necessarily [work for them]... so that also that process helped me focus on them instead of how it would apply or make sense to me. Does that make sense?

Quinn points out that the Army U ELM facilitation gets students involved early in the class because of the structure, and said:

I like the fact that it gets people involved early. The fact that it, it gets people to express how they feel. It’s like setting the stage for training, specifically training
that’s not necessarily functional. It’s good to be able to bring those things up, like right in the beginning, and, and like, set the stage that this is how it’s going to be. Jessie noted that the initial feedback was drastically different from feedback during prior learning sessions, saying, “They were like, wow, this is like the coolest thing ever. You know, we got up, we moved around, we got to do you know, roleplay. And it was even though I don’t really like it, it was fun.” Casey also noted that the learning was more learner driven because it allowed the conversations to flow without the instructor needing to be central, stating:

I think using that format, the biggest thing, like you said, is that I realized I was in a... I think they called it the X, right? I kept bringing the X back to me before. It also changed the way that I asked questions to make sure that I’m not... And I still struggle with this in training... I’ll say, so, you know, “When you’re doing your review and analysis, what are you looking for?” And then I’ll follow it up like, “Well, what kind of issues?” and I asked like six questions about the same thing in six different ways.

All the above examples exhibit a major difference in the focus of trainings before and after the new model’s implementation. This shift in facilitator’s focus and role during training was observed by the instructors after the implementation of the Army U ELM.

In addition to describing facilitating with the Army U ELM as more learner-driven in content and focus, some instructors observed that they felt the new methods helped improve their facilitation skills. Skyler noted that “It keeps me focused. It lets me know if I’ve missed a part. Or if I’m lacking in an area.” Payton goes into further detail, noting that the structure was helpful to their facilitation:
The structure. Um, I think it provides a solid structure. One of the things that was difficult prior to having this type of an actual structure was making sure that you were, I guess, checking all the blocks of that are important to learning and retention. And so you might provide all the information, everything else, they might be able to do it, but you might be missing certain steps, because you’re just doing it right there on the spot, in previous experiences. And so this model, the thing that I noticed was the fact that it provides a structure to ensure that a full learning process is being met. Whereas some other times you might miss that.

Quinn echoes this experience that the Army U ELM is helpful in facilitation, and highlights how it is different than using prior models:

I would say in terms of facilitation, you have guideposts to take you along in the ELM model that like, if you had to do something on the fly or something wasn’t going right, you can quickly go to that in your mind and say, “Okay, how do I get us like on track again?” And so, using that is very helpful. And then pre-ELM... pre-ELM... I feel like a lot of our modules did follow something similar, but not necessarily. And we had some long classes, right? We had like, initial OPEX was like eight hours. And... hmmm... I don’t know. I wouldn’t say that it got boring. But there’s something about the cycle of the Army U ELM that keeps us like moving right along a little bit. That wasn’t there.... in terms of facilitation, there were like lulls, there’s lulls and you might have like a module that feels very heavy and slow and... whereas with the ELM model, you...you’ve got those goal posts to be able to think about, okay, what’s coming next? What’s coming next in terms of facilitation?
Skyler’s experience is similar to Quinn’s appreciation of the structure, noting also that the structure is helpful when they are not personally operating at their best, saying:

So, I think that because it is a, you go through this step, you go through this, then you move to this, that if I’m having a bad day, I’m not able to focus as well, then that keeps me on track where I’m supposed to be in what I’m supposed to be doing. If maybe my mind is off somewhere else on something for a split minute and something’s happening in the class. And I’m like, or the class has gotten down a rabbit hole. And that model then helps... we’re supposed to be doing this.... that helps me bring them back to focus back in on what we’re supposed to be talking about.

The experiences of these instructors described what they said were benefits of the structure provided for facilitation when using the Army U ELM.

In addition to the differences they experienced in facilitating with the Army U ELM described above, instructors noted that the process of instructional design of new classes diverged from their former processes. Logan described their experiences designing using the Army U ELM, saying:

For somebody like me, who doesn’t think linearly, and I’m more of a big picture. Like I really, by personality could care less about the step by step, like lock stepping things through. Using this method to design takes away all that worry for that like it is, it’s a roadmap, it’s easy to follow, it’s easy to... it’s almost kind of like I think of it like plug and play. Like when you’re thinking of electronics. You have all the right components; it fits together well.
This experience of a simplified design process was noted in feedback from several other instructors as well. Skyler said:

I think I’m kind of a “Check the box, follow the process” thinker sometimes. And so having those areas to fill in kind of help guide me through writing something, it was like, Okay, I need to do this part, I need to do this part. Now what am I going to put here to fill this gap? Did I miss anything? It kept me from missing anything.

Payton noted that the tone of curriculum designed using the Army U ELM presents a more professional, higher level of rigor, stating:

I think there is more of an aspect of full professional development, a higher level of learning that is taking place in our classes, talking with our managers. They feel like they are getting higher level professional skills and knowledge than what I felt as a manager going through different trainings back in the day. I thought it was good knowledge and skills, but it wasn’t like where I felt like I was getting collegiate level education, which I do feel classes now provide a much, I guess the rigor is much higher now.

Overall, instructors’ experiences with design reflect an affinity for the simplified instructional design technique it provides. Additionally, there was improved rigor of courses noted by instructors in using the Army U ELM. TRADOC Pamphlet 525-8-2 (2017a) indicates that this is the goal of the Army Learning Concept, when instructors develop curriculum, it should provide opportunities for students to use “real-world situations to solve complex real-world problems” (p. 28).
In addition to the differences mentioned above, differences in student interactions and relationships came up in the experiences of instructors in two additional primary ways. First, they discussed the interactions in class, with most instructors describing what they felt as a difference in interactions with students in the classroom after the implementation of the Army U ELM. A few felt they remained similar to interactions prior to change. Second, some instructors shared experiences they attributed to the Army U ELM about changes in their interactions with students that extended beyond the training classroom, to outreach and interactions following the formal learning events.

When asked if they felt their interactions were the same or different, and if different, how were they different, some instructors described the differences they observed in detail. Logan stated that conversations were “very surface level before” and followed with:

[Before] it was more an info push at them and, and then once you’re done, you’re done. Like, you don’t see the result of what they potentially learned, or took away from the class, and so with this one you do, even in class because they’re thinking... because most of the time the participants that we have already been in their programs for, even for a little bit of time. But they can relate that to the real-world examples and interactions that they have. And being able to not only apply that with, with their customers and their peers within their programs, but how they can take that information and use it in their lives. So, and having those types of conversations.

Casey stated that the interactions with students were different and noted “Just richer discussions and more connection, you know what I mean? Like, I think it’s less surface
level and me preaching to them, like a Socratic type of method more of a ‘I’m involved in this, I’m part of my learning.’” Riley commented that they did not lose students anywhere and they were “fully engaged from start to finish” in the class conversations. Jessie mentioned that the student involvement was key to training, that it was increased in the ELM delivery, and “All that build up of what experiential learning is that, that take away” in terms of learning outcomes. Kerry noted that, “I would have to say they’re different because I have more people that are asking me questions, or they’re coming up to me after class,” and gave a further explanation:

I think the biggest thing for me is when people would ask me questions that… of stuff that they heard in the training, so they were remembering it. Prior, you know, you could say ‘You might remember in this where we talked about…’, and you got the blank stares.

Not only did these instructors describe their conversations in class as deeper, but they also noted that the learning outcomes were benefited by this difference. The document review supports this idea, stating TRADOC Pamphlet 525-8-2 that the goal is to create learning environments that revolve around the learner that encourage problem solving and learning between peers (p. 17).

It is important to note that not all instructors described any differences in student interactions. Quinn said, “My interactions with folks go pretty much the same.” Riley mirrored that feedback stating it was similar to before and “No, they don’t differ. They really, they really don’t. Yeah, I’ve always let the students guide the direction.” Skyler noted they weren’t sure, stating:
I don’t know if it’s from the implementation of the learning model, or if it’s because I’m more confident in the classroom. I, when we first started, I really had that feeling of “I don’t know what I’m doing.” And you know that you have that what’s it called? Imposter syndrome.

These were the three who mentioned that the interactions with students in class didn’t vary or varied slightly and they could not pinpoint the cause.

While discussing student interactions, several instructors also mentioned that these different interactions filtered into their working relationships with students following the classes. This included interactions when instructors visited the facilities, as well as at an increase in the amount of unsolicited assistance students requested from instructors’ post-course. These interactions displayed student learning retention through recall, as well as opening up the relationship to delve into other topics. Logan explained this would happen, “When I would go and do site visits with them, and seeing them do the things that we discussed, or having participants that were interested in professional development reached back to me about a particular section.” Jessie said that students would stay after class because they were inspired and noted “But you don’t know that you’re going to get the reaction that you get… sometimes tears. Sometimes I’m [student] going to stay after class and talk to you and tell you how you touched me.” Kerry also mentioned that “I’ve even had managers want to come afterwards and talk to me about, more about coaching or more about internal controls, and having more of those questions than they did in the past.”

These enhanced student relationships as a result of the Army UELM implementation have been helpful to the increase of critical thinking and innovation
for learners, a key goal of the Army Learning Concept outlined in TRADOC Pamphlet 252-8-2 (2017a).

Theme 5 Design and Delivery Different… In a Good Way Summary. This theme included instructors’ descriptions of specific differences between the old design methods and the new Army U ELM. Instructors reported increases in student involvement and improved outcomes from student learning experiences. Several experienced changes or improvement in their facilitation due to the structure of the Army U ELM. The majority of instructors concurred that there was a marked difference between student interactions that occurred in classes prior to and those that occurred after the Army U ELM implementation. Observations on these interactions did vary, with a few instructors noting no difference or differences they could not attribute to the changed facilitation model. Several instructors noted that not only were the classroom interactions different, but they also found students reaching out after class for support more frequently and recalling the topics of the learning sessions more readily. Finally, instructors commented on the ease of designing with the Army U ELM versus prior methods.

Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the findings of the study in detail from interviews collected between January 27, 2022, and February 19, 2022. Interviews were all completed over a secured Zoom account and transcribed first via otter.ai, cross-checked by the interviewer, and then sent to the participants to be checked for accuracy and content concurrence. MAXQDA was then used as the primary interface for coding the data from the interviews, as well as the documents for review. An overview of the participants was given including demographics and information on the interviews.
Valuable data informing all three research questions resulted from the participant interviews and document review. This work was all examined and designed using Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle as a basis in addition to consideration of the theoretical and practical applications of the Army University Experiential Learning Model itself. The five themes that came out of the aggregated codes from the study included:

1. Moving from Prisoners to Raving Fans
2. Déjà Vu From a Past Life
3. Just Do It! Practice Makes Perfect
4. It’s Weird and I Don’t Like It
5. Design and Delivery Different… In a Good Way

The five themes were supported in context with coded quotes from participants given during the interviews.

When discussing their experiences in learning the knowledge and skills needed to implement the Army U ELM, the participants had some similar responses including formal training including the FDP, as well as follow on practice to hone skills when they returned to their installations. In speaking of their experiences in transitioning to using the new model, the feedback varied from smooth sailing with minimal issues to internal and external resistance to implementing it. Different approaches to successful implementation were shared including finding safe spaces to practice, partnering with peers, and experimenting with the curriculum to practice. Finally, current instructor experiences designing and delivering training with the Army U ELM were primarily positive and led to enhanced student relationship. The following chapter will address
discussion of the research questions, theoretical and practical implications, opportunities for future research, and a conclusion of the study.
Chapter Five

Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

This chapter presents a summary of the research findings related to each of the three research questions posed in this study about training instructors’ experiences using the Army University Experiential Learning Model (Army U ELM) at the School for Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (SFMWR):

1. How did training instructors gain the new knowledge and skills needed to implement the Army U ELM in their training design and delivery?
2. How do training instructors describe their experiences of the transition process to using the Army U ELM in design and delivery?
3. What are the training instructors’ current perceptions of using the Army U ELM in their curriculum design and classroom facilitation work?

It also offers theoretical implications, implications for practice, and possibilities for future research on the Army U ELM that came out of the analysis of the findings in chapter four. Finally, the chapter closes with a conclusion for the entire study.

Discussion

This section discusses how the information gathered through the interviews and referenced with the document review informs the research questions. Three research questions guided the study's semi-structured interview questions and served as a guide for analyzing findings in chapter four. This discussion includes implications of the analysis in chapter four in response to each of the research questions presented about the training instructors' implementation and use of the Army U ELM in their training design and delivery at the SFMWR.
Research Question 1: How did training instructors gain the new knowledge and skills needed to implement the Army U ELM in their training design and delivery?

Study participants described various ways that they felt they gained the knowledge and skills needed to implement the Army U ELM during the interviews. Formal training opportunities were mentioned first by multiple instructors as the initial delivery of new knowledge about the model. While those specific Army U ELM training events helped, training instructors also shared that building on past experiences enhanced their new knowledge, which appeared in the theme Déjà Vu From a Past Life. Second, instructors noted that although training and prior experiences were an essential baseline to successful implementation, practicing and evaluating the application of their new skills was vital to applying the skills as shown in the Just Do It! Practice Makes Perfect theme. Finally, instructors stressed the importance of peer collaborations to their success in facilitating learning and designing learning in their successful application of content design and delivery after learning how to use the Army U ELM. This feedback on peer support also appeared in the Just Do It theme.

Training instructors noted a variety of training that gave them the knowledge base to implement the new Army U ELM. The primary formal training course that most participants mentioned was the Faculty Development Program 1 (FDP) instructor course. This course's main goal was to train instructors on the expectations of using the Army U ELM along with the guideposts for adult experiential learning that were implemented while using the Army U ELM (The Army University, 2016; Pierson, 2017; Van Der Werff & Bogdan, 2018). Instructors described this course as rigorous and expressed that the skills learned within this course were essential to their learning to implement the five
steps of the Army U ELM in their design and delivery. Other formal training that was mentioned as supporting their implementation included the Langevin design and facilitation workshop from 2015 and a variety of informal Coursera courses and YouTube videos for more informal support.

Following the formal knowledge training they had, instructors noted that the primary way they were able to gain the skills necessary was to continue using the Army U ELM in their design and delivery of training through practice. This finding aligned with Kolb’s (1984) learning cycle movement from abstract conceptualizing to active experimentation. Several instructors described this progress when returning to their installations and building on existing relationships to initially create safe spaces to hone their new skills. This initial practice included recruiting training participants with whom they had existing solid and trusting relationships that gave them more confidence in implementing learning in the new model. Another approach that supported honing their new knowledge was to take the provided instructional materials and teach the classes, despite feelings of trepidation or uncertainty about the content and their skills. These findings aligned with Kolb’s (1984) six proposed characteristics of experiential learning.

An additional layer to that practice that added to their new learning of the skills needed was collaborating with peers after returning to their home installations. Training instructors expressed that they relied on peers for validation of their practice of the Army U ELM, as well as a review of their course design and delivery. This collaboration with other training instructors who were going through the same process helped them gain different perspectives of using the Army U ELM in design and gave them feedback on improving their delivery using the model in the classroom. Training instructors who
began using the Army U ELM later in the process also noted that support from peers with more experience already using the Army U ELM in their practice was helpful to their own method of implementing it. The benefits of the group interaction to individual learning reflect the experiential learning characteristics listed above (Kolb, 1984) as well as Burner’s (1966) and Freire’s (1974) ideas that learning is drawn from the group interactions in addition to the individual learning experience.

**Research Question 2: How do training instructors describe their experiences of the transition process to using the Army U ELM in design and delivery?**

Transition experiences described by study participants did vary in practical components of the application and emotional journeys. Their experiences included descriptions of different practical experiences of learning to use the Army U ELM via formal and informal methods as described above and various emotional and feelings reactions as they started using the Army U ELM. Emotional and feelings responses primarily came up in the theme Moving from Prisoners to Raving Fans, which captured their transition from initial feelings of uncertainty and resistance to acceptance and, in some cases embracing the new model. In the theme Just Do It! Practice Makes Perfect, the instructors described their practical experiences of the transition, including how they went about implementing the new model and practices that made it work for them. Finally, the instructors described the differences in their facilitation experiences before and after implementing the Army U ELM in the theme Design and Delivery Different… In a Good Way.

The initial response to the Army U ELM was a mixed bag of reactions from training instructors. Some instructors had concerns about how to transition from a
practical standpoint. In contrast, others were resistant to changing to and using the new model due to attachment to the prior methods used and concerns or doubts about the efficacy of the new model. This initial attitude was much like that of a prisoner because they were directed and forced to implement the Army U ELM without much say in the matter. Throughout the transition period of implementing the model into their design and delivery, many of the instructors who showed initial resistance became fans of the new ways. This attitude shift came because of practical experience and outcomes instructors observed from the redesigned curriculum and student learning interactions. These experiences shared by the instructors align with Knowles’ (1970) principle that adults are self-directed in their learning as well as the Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning characteristic of conflicts in contradictory modes of learning. Training instructors also noted feeling they had some autonomy in how they transitioned helped them progress through the transition, such as choosing participants for their first classes or practicing and getting feedback on the new delivery.

Another theme that informed this question was Just Do It! Practice Makes Perfect. As mentioned above, many instructors initially described feelings of concern or wariness. Several instructors said that practicing helped them through the transition to using the new model more effectively, literally just doing it. Outcomes generated from successful practice and improvement in using the Army U ELM also assisted the training instructors in a successful transition to using the new model. As instructors practiced the new model with students, as noted above, they noticed that the differences in the design and delivery led to more impactful and positive learning outcomes with students. Kolb’s (1984) fifth characteristic of experiential learning is in line with this result, as it describes that
learning outcomes do not only exist within the classroom environment, rather they are outcomes of interactions and transactions between the learner and their outside environment. Once they experienced this positive difference, their concerns were mitigated. Instructors noted that they embraced the model more fully and implemented the redesigned training with a far less internal struggle.

**Research Question 3: What are the training instructors' current perceptions of using the Army U ELM in their curriculum design and classroom facilitation work?**

Current training instructor perceptions of using the Army U ELM were generally described in a positive context within the interview results, although they did not necessarily begin that way. The instructors described positive perceptions of using the model currently in their design with other training instructors and their delivery of training with students. Even those who did not start as fans of the model or struggled to learn to implement it had positive outcomes, changing their opinions as described in the Moving from Prisoners to Raving Fans theme. This success in delivery was also reflected in Johnson’s (2019) findings that doing, and later sharing were important to a successful learning experience. Training instructors compared the current methods to past ones, noting beneficial differences in the theme Design and Delivery Different… In a Good Way and reported perceiving similarities to prior design and delivery in Déjà Vu From a Past Life. These relations back to prior methods of instructions were also echoed in the anecdotal information from other schools (Stafford and Thornhill, 2012; Thomas and Gentler, 2013).

Some training instructors indicated that they thought their current positive perceptions directly resulted from the difference in design with the Army U ELM. They
also noted that their experiences facilitating learning in the classroom with students led to better outcomes and relationships with their participants in post-course interactions, which is a separate role the training instructors play in continued learning and coaching for professional development. The focus of training instructors' current perceptions described in the interviews centered on student feedback and their own experiences facilitating courses and designing training with the Army U ELM. Because of the difference the model brought to their experiences, training instructors describe their experiences as positive, and several are raving fans. These positive outcomes and continued learning post application support Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning characteristics as well as Bruner’s (1966) theory of instruction and Freire’s (1974) theory of knowledge, particularly that learning is continuous and draws from group interactions. This resulting change in attitude throughout the process was undocumented due to no formal research on instructors’ experiences implementing the Army U ELM.

**Theoretical Implications**


Kolb's (1984) six characteristics of experiential learning appeared throughout the experiences described by the training instructors; however, the first theoretical implication is that some of the descriptions of instructor experiences did not fully support Kolb's characteristics. The first characteristic, that learning should focus more on process than outcomes, was evident in some instructor's descriptions but not all. However, their focus centered primarily on the process of getting to the outcome of full implementation of the Army U ELM rather than the process of learning itself. Reports of the use of prior knowledge gained that informed this learning process supported Kolb's (1984) second
characteristic of continuous learning that incorporates former and current experiences of the learners. Tension throughout the learning process was evident in the instructors' descriptions of changing feelings and negative first impressions about the Army U ELM. This aligns with the third characteristic of learning that includes conflict with opposing viewpoints to create knowledge.

There was some evidence of Kolb's fourth learning characteristic of adapting to the world in all settings in the instructor's experiences implementing the Army U ELM at other locations and in the virtual face-to-face learning environment. Training instructors’ experiences fully supported the fifth characteristic; they provided many examples of occasions where they used self-directed learning within their environments to transition to using the new learning model successfully. Finally, the instructor's experiences working with others helped support the sixth characteristic of experiential learning, allowing them to combine their own subjective and objective personal knowledge to create new knowledge in social interactions with other instructors and students in different environments while learning to use the Army U ELM. Training instructors still identified their process of learning the Army U ELM as experiential, even though their experiences did not fully support Kolb's (1984) six defining characteristics.

When reflecting on experiential learning as it related to the findings, the second area of theoretical implication was how closely the experiences the training instructors had in learning to use the Army U ELM mirrored the process of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle even though it was not designed to follow that process. The design of instruction within the introductory course that provided the baseline knowledge for instructors to use the Army U ELM, the Faculty Development Program 1 (FDP)
intentionally used the Army U ELM in to teach the Army U ELM. Unintentionally, the instructor's experiences post-course also aligned with the experiential learning cycle described by Kolb (1984). This duplication was not by design but instead seemed to develop out of necessity to implement the method quickly due to the guidance given.

This was demonstrated fully when the SFMWR training instructors left the FDP with varying impressions of the class itself and the Army U ELM. These different emotional reactions to the course acted as a concrete experience for them as learners, eliciting emotions that connected throughout the rest of their learning experiences. Kolb's (1984) second step of reflective observation happened during and post-FDP course. Instructors described relating with other instructors at the course and connecting to work through their experiences in class. Instructors described studying and preparing to use the Army U ELM, which aligned with Kolb's abstract conceptualization step of learning new knowledge. Finally, when using the model, instructors harnessed existing relationships to practice, solicit feedback, and assess their own performance, which are all parts of Kolb's fourth experiential learning step, active experimentation. Based on their descriptions of their post-course actions, the instructors followed Kolb’s experiential learning cycle inadvertently.

Embedded in the work of Kolb (1984) is the constructivist view, which was also the epistemological basis of this study. While there is much writing on a constructivist view of adult learning, portraying adult learners as the constructors of their own knowledge, Fenwick (2000) notes that there are several critiques and possible other lenses outside of this approach. Primarily the constructivist view is noted to be too simplistic and reduces the role of environment in the learning experience. Additionally,
there are assumptions that adult learners are in full control of the reflective portion of the experiential learning process, which has been challenged by other epistemological perspectives on adult learning. These include psychoanalytic perspectives that consider ego and unconscious thought, situative cognition perspectives that center on learning coming from the participation, and the enactivist view that posits learning comes from the combination of cognition and environment. These perspectives challenge Kolb’s (1984) approach to experiential learning by examining the process through different lenses.

**Instructor Implementation of the Army U ELM**

Another area for theoretical implications centered on one of the five specific steps of the Army U ELM itself as the instructors described their experiences implementing the model. Develop, the fourth step in the Army U ELM, is worth mentioning in terms of reflection for theoretical implications in this model's implementation, as it came up frequently in the It’s Weird and I Don’t Like It theme. The Army University Common Faculty Development Instructor Course Guide (2016) notes that this step often causes the most confusion for instructors and students, which was reflected in the instructor's descriptions of their experiences implementing the model. The intention of this step is to identify the value or relevance of the learning and is noted to feel that it is late in the facilitation process, which was also noted in the instructors’ interviews. Designing the develop step was not noted as challenging for instructors, but their descriptions of using it in facilitation did support that this step is the most confusing step for instructors in facilitating learning as well as for learners. Additionally, instructors noted that the develop step felt like a duplication of previous content, or that it was something they had already covered. The separation of the develop step is unique to the Army U ELM
experiential learning model, intended to align with the beginning of Kolb's (1984) learning model step four, active experimentation. It bears reassessing whether the develop really needs to be a separate step in the process or whether it should be integrated throughout the other steps following the CE or part of active experimentation as Kolb’s model aligns it. This is reflected in the critique that experiential learning is not necessarily orderly and sequential as outlined by Kolb (Seaman, 2008).

**Implications for Practice**

This case study explored the experiences training instructors had applying the Army U ELM in designing and delivering training at a civilian learning institution within the U.S. Army. Findings from the case study cannot always be broadly applied due to differences in participant demographics, location, organizational structure, and lived experiences. However, in this case, there were four major areas of implications for practice in adult learning design and delivery that may hold crossover potential for use outside of this case environment and the Army U ELM specifically.

The first implication for practice came up in the findings under the theme Moving from Prisoners to Raving Fan. Training instructors' descriptions of initial negative impressions and resistance to using the Army U ELM are areas of focus for practice improvements when planning a transition to a new curriculum design model. Several instructors had initial negative impressions of the Army U ELM and expressed these in describing their negative experiences in the primary learning method, the Faculty Development Program 1 (FDP). This course did not leave a positive impression on all instructors, and it might be worth re-examining the participant experience in this course as well as how the course can be presented in a positive light. The course is designed in
the Army U ELM format and could be worked to have a more engaging and positive
concrete experience to set a positive stage for the instructors’ learning experiences, much
like they are expected to do for students when they return to their locations. The theme
It's Weird, and I Don't Like It illuminated instructors’ feelings of being confined by the
model itself while learning and implementing it within practice. In the descriptions of the
FDP class, the model is taught in a way that make it appear very fixed and inflexible.
Instructors described learning that the design and delivery with the model can be quite
flexible within the framework of the five steps once they began applying it after class.
There is opportunity for application to be taught so that instructors learn this in the
beginning, rather than having to learn it once they return to their locations and must learn
this by trial and error.

Secondly, during training and preparation to use the Army U ELM, instructor
comparisons of old methods of design and delivery to new methods assisted in faster time
to complete performance implementing the model as described by some of the instructors
in Déjà Vu From a Past Life. This intentional comparison could be harnessed for future
transitions as a point of self-reflection during the initial learning process to help the
training instructors connect new knowledge to former knowledge. The idea of building
on prior experiences supports Kolb’s (1984) second identified characteristic of
experiential learning, which posits that learning processes are continues and build on the
existing lived experiences of the learners. While the comparison led to negative feelings
towards the new model for some, for others, as they began practicing, they found
comparisons between new and old, notwithstanding the differences. One step of the
model that was the most foreign in the instructor’s descriptions was the concrete
experience (CE) in the theme It’s Weird and I Don’t Like IT, some instructors struggled with this step and others saw it as superfluous. Fenwick (2003) and Torkington (1996) noted that adult learners are so used to traditional forms of learning that reflective portions of the experiential learning process may not be taken seriously or underestimated. Instructor too, may be privy to this predilection of thought. Assisting instructors with relating this step to similar past methods including case studies and storytelling might help instructors learn to more effectively deliver this part of the Army U ELM. Harnessing these similarities intentionally, as mentioned, might be an excellent way to introduce the new model more positively by relating it to what instructors already had experience in design and delivery, which also incorporates Kolb’s (1984) second characteristic of experiential learning, building on previous experiences.

The third area of focus for practical implications of this study resulted from the findings. Throughout the interview data, the instructors noted the parts of the Army U ELM that dealt with emotions, particularly the concrete experience (CE) felt the most foreign from their former ways of designing and were the most challenging new part of their facilitation. Several noted that facilitating learning with the intent to provoke emotions differed greatly from their former methods of getting straight into the materials. This showed an interesting difference due to the inclusion of some social and emotional learning techniques as part of the Army U ELM. Social and emotional learning occurs when learners recognize and manage their emotions, care about others, create positive relationships with others, and display ethical and responsible behavior versus negative ones (Elias et al., 1997). While social and emotional learning are often targeted as an area of learning design for childhood, it may not always be a primary focal point in adult
educational settings, and particularly not highlighted in past civilian education design and delivery processes in the U.S. Army. Due to the differences in this approach, it might be worthwhile to invest in some social and emotional learning opportunities for instructors to help them better manage their own emotions as well as work with their learners to walk through the emotional connections they are expected to make in the experiential learning process.

And finally, peer support and feedback provided training instructors with a network of people who were going through similar transitions and could provide information, best practices, and shared experiences. This was described in the theme Design and Delivery Different… In a Good Way. By connecting with each other, training instructors expressed that they were better able to learn and implement the Army U ELM. The instructors described this as occurring organically through collaborations on training design teams and through training with other trainers as co-facilitators. All of this social learning through observations and modeling happened organically, however this implication for practice could be easily duplicated intentionally in a variety of ways, including pair-share partnerships, the assignment of mentors, or the development of formal communities of practice for connection and sharing (Bandura, 1977; Stein, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). These targeted implications for practice also reflect Kayes’ (2002) critique that Kolb’s (1984) model does not specifically account for social forms of learning.

Implications for Further Research

Throughout the course of this case study, several different opportunities came to light that might bear further investigation regarding this topic. While this case cannot be
generalized thoroughly outside of the context of this environment and population, some opportunities could potentially lead to further research based on lessons learned. Larger scale implementation at other locations throughout the U.S. Army where transition has taken place would be a starting point to explore the experiences of instructors at other military learning institutions. This expansion could help further to fill the gap in the literature about instructor experiences and provide additional data that informs the findings from this case.

Another opportunity for further research is to explore training instructors' experiences of learning and implementing different learning models, particularly experiential learning models outside of the Army U ELM. Examining instructors' experiences as they transition using other models could help inform best practices for learning to use a new learning model of design and delivery of learning. The more studies on the experiences of training instructors who learned a new model, went through the transition process, and successfully implemented it, the more the knowledge base will grow. This more extensive knowledge base would assist organizations with information to inform their model instruction plan, processes of rolling out new instructional models, and enable organizations to design support networks for the instructors better.

In addition to future research relating directly to the Army U ELM, experiential learning model implementation, organizational factors, and training instructor learning model transitions in general, there are opportunities for further research in terms of the research design and approach to the topic. Using narrative analysis would be an excellent method for a different approach to exploring the transitions and the use of a new learning model, allowing the researcher to construct the story of how the transitions occurred. It
would work particularly well for researchers embedded at the beginning before the transition takes place.

An additional interesting possible way to explore the impacts of the learning model for students before and after the transition would be to use a quantitative study approach. Most U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) accredited schools use post-course student surveys to evaluate the learning design and objectives from the student's point of view and the instructor's performance with both quantitative scorings and qualitative feedback. Several options could be of interest to explore in that student course survey new data set. Researchers could examine the scores and student feedback for course content in a single course topic before the transition compared to after the course was redesigned using a new learning model. A similar approach may be helpful to examine feedback on training instructors before, during, and after the complete transition to using a new learning model, or with Army instructors who have been through multiple transitions of applications of learning models to their practice.

**Conclusion**

This case study explored the three research questions about the experiences of training instructors at the SFMWR as they transitioned to using the Army U ELM in their design and delivery of training to a civilian workforce. Training instructors were introduced to the new model and then sent back to their home installations to implement it in their work with students. This study explored the experiences of training instructors through the context of adult learning, experiential learning, and the specific Army U ELM implementation.
The ways instructors learned the new knowledge and skills to use the model went beyond the scope of initial formal training, including former knowledge, practice using the model in classroom contexts, and self-analysis or external feedback to improve use. Training instructors described their experiences transitioning in a broad spectrum of emotional reactions, and they shared practical applications that impacted them throughout the transition process. Finally, the instructors' recent experiences using the model are primarily positive, leading to building better learning outcomes and fostering stronger student relationships between faculty and students.

Theoretical implications of this study apply to both Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory and the Army U ELM. The descriptions of the instructors' experiences reflected the four-step experiential learning cycle described by Kolb and occurred naturally, without being scheduled or designated to follow that path after their initial training. Two of Kolb's (1984) six experiential learning characteristics were only partially supported, although the instructors still described the process of learning to implement the Army U ELM as experiential. The fourth step of the Army U ELM can benefit from reassessment and possible further examination in the initial knowledge process and the application with students when facilitating using the model.

Applications for practice provide information to improve the implementation of this new model. The participant experiences in the initial formal learning course can be enhanced to be more positive for the participants. In the new model implementation, training instructors' may grasp the Army U ELM more quickly and efficiently when given guidance on connecting the model to their own past experiences in design and delivery. Establishing formal communities of practice or partnerships for support
between peers can help provide resources and feedback for the application of the Army U ELM, particularly for teams who are distanced from each other or work independently.

Several opportunities exist for continuing the exploration of the Army U ELM throughout the U.S. Army. Qualitative options are available beyond the examined case research population and methods to the experiences of training instructors at other installations and training locations. Quantitative data regarding the use of the Army U ELM can help assess redesigned curriculum and student perceptions of training instructors' application of the model. With these additions to the existing knowledge base, training instructors and institutions can call upon this information to inform their processes and procedures as they implement new learning models.
References


The Army University (2016). *Common faculty development instructor course*. Fort Leavenworth.


Cambridge.


United States Army (2017a). *TRADOC Pamphlet 525-8-2: The U.S. Army Learning*


Subject: Implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model: A Case Study

Hello,

I am seeking Training Instructors who went through the transition to using the Army University Experiential Learning Model and continue to use it in their work to participate in interviews about their experiences. The interviews will last approximately 30 to 60 minutes and will occur in the evenings via Zoom.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the transition Training Instructors went through to incorporate the Army University Experiential Learning Model into their instructional design and delivery with students at the School for Family and MWR. This is a great time for you to share descriptions of experiences you had during the transition and in using the model with current course participants.

Any staff member of the School for Family and MWR who designed or facilitated training prior to and after the transition to the Army University Experiential Learning Model is eligible to participate.

Please call Rebecca Strawn at 912-414-7356 for more information.

Very respectfully,

Rebecca Strawn
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Memphis
Pre-Interview Protocol:

- Send standardized email to all perspective qualified participants.
- Develop separate calendar for tracking interviews.
- Put appointments in personal calendar with reminders minus identifying data.
- Create single code sheet with name of interviewee and pseudonym, store in secure file.
- Develop Excel log file for tracking data collection to include: date and time of interview, method, pseudonym, transcription numbers, beginning and ending dates of transcription, transcript approval dates, consent submission.
- Data Management Plan to be followed:
  - Key code sheet with names and pseudonyms in locked digital file.
  - Transcriptions and related notes in separate locked file.
  - Data identification and manipulation kept in password protected files on a password protected computer only accessible by researcher.
  - All electronic records kept in password protected files.

Data Collection Interview Protocol:

- Schedule interviews of willing participants.
  - Confirm availability and schedule Zoom meeting.
  - Send electronic consent form for signature and return prior to interview.
  - Send reminder email day prior to the interview.
- For interview:
  - Test Zoom room day of interview.
  - Recording ready to go.
  - Notebook and writing utensil available.
  - Semi-structured interview guide printed out.
- At interview:
  - Turn phone off and ask participant to turn phone off.
  - Consent form with script to review with participant.
  - Answer any questions they have prior to starting.
  - Be aware of any subjectivities and biases – avoid professing own experiences, thoughts on topics, behaviors/feelings, met/unmet expectations of interview.

Post-Interview Protocol:

- Send thank you to instructor for their participation in the interview.
- Record personal field notes and thoughts on the interview.
- Transfer recording to computer and backup.
- Note any items for follow up.
- Begin transcription on otter.ai and record in log.
- Check transcript, make edits, and then send to participants for concurrence.
- Begin open coding once transcription is complete and approved.
- Coding across categories after a few open coded interviews.
- Coding, categories, and theme identification will occur throughout the process.
- Utilize peer checking of coding after initial theme identification.
- Additional review by peers later in process.
Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Introduction: “Good morning/afternoon _________. Thank you for taking time to speak to me today about your experiences. As you may remember from the initial email and consent form, I would like to record our conversation today for review and transcription later. All measures described in the consent form will be taken to ensure the anonymity of your answers. Is that still OK with you? (Allow participant to answer.). Great. As a reminder, you can choose not to answer a question or request that we stop at any time. I will be taking some notes as well as we go along so that I do not forget anything we discuss. Today I’d like to hear about your experiences with transition to using the experiential learning model in your work with the Army, we’ll get started with a few questions.”

Research Question 1: How did training instructors gain the new knowledge and skills needed to implement the Army U ELM in their training design and delivery?

Lead Question 1: Tell me about how you learned about the Army University Experiential Learning Model design now used in training at the School.

- How did you hear about the Army U ELM initially?
- How did you gain the knowledge you needed to design learning and teach using the Army U ELM?
- What did you know about experiential learning methods prior to the transition?
- What did you expect going into using the process of using the new model?

Research Question 2: How do training instructors describe their experiences of the transition process to using the Army U ELM in curriculum design and delivery?

Lead Question 2: Describe your experience transitioning to using the new Army University ELM in your practice.

- How did you go about implementing the new model?
- How did you know you were implementing the new model successfully?
- What supported your transition to using the new model?

Research Question 3: What are the training instructors’ current perceptions of using the Army U ELM in their curriculum design and classroom facilitation work?

Lead Question 3A: How do you currently use the Army U ELM?

- How have you used the Army U ELM in designing training?
- What do you like about using the Army U ELM to deliver training?
- What do you dislike about using the Army U ELM to deliver training?
Lead Question 3B: How would you describe the difference in the instructional experience for you between the prior method of instruction and instructing using the Army U ELM?

- How is using the Army U ELM different from the prior methods of instructional design/delivery used at the School?
- How are your interactions with students different between the new Army U ELM delivery and the prior method of instructions? What were they? Can you describe them?
- What advice would you give to a new training instructor learning to use the model?

Closing: “Thank you so much for taking time out of your day to speak with me. Do you have any questions for me? (Pause for questions, answer any that arise.) Do you have anything you’d like to add that we did not discuss? (Pause for answer from participant). Alright. When we leave today I will take some time to go through what we discuss and make some notes. After that I will send you an outline of what we discussed for your review, to ensure I’ve correctly documented what you said, and have written down what you meant. Thank you again, I really do appreciate you sharing your experiences.”
Appendix D

Consent Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model: A Case Study of Instructor Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher(s)</td>
<td>Rebecca Strawn, University of Memphis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers Contact Information</td>
<td>912-414-7356, <a href="mailto:rlstrawn@memphis.edu">rlstrawn@memphis.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The box below highlights key information for you to consider when deciding if you want to participate. More detailed information is provided below the box. Please ask the researcher(s) any questions about the study before you make your decision. If you volunteer, you will be one of about ten people to do so.

### Key Information for You to Consider

**Voluntary Consent:** You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to participate or not. There will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled if you choose not to participate or discontinue participation.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the lived instructor experiences in implementing a new instructional design and facilitation model at an adult civilian training delivery institution in the military. This qualitative case study will explore the lived experiences of training instructors in a government workforce learning organization had in learning and implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model in their course instructional design and delivery to civilian employees.

**Duration:** It is expected that your participation will last 60 to 90 minutes total.

**Procedures and Activities:** You will be asked to participate in a conversation with the researcher regarding the organizational transition to incorporating the Army Experiential Learning Model into your instructional design and delivery. You will also be asked about your personal facilitation experiences before, during, and after the transition.

**Risk:** To the best of our knowledge, participation in this research will pose no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

**Benefits:** Some of the benefits that may be expected include greater clarity of your own lived
experiences through reflection and analysis. Possible benefits to others from your willingness to participate may help the Army and society as a whole better understand the implications of this research topic.

**Alternatives:** Participation is voluntary, and the only alternative is to not participate.

**Who is conducting this research?**
Lead Investigator Rebecca Strawn of the University of Memphis, Department of Leadership is in charge of the study. Her faculty advisor is Wendy Griswold, PhD. There may be other research team members assisting during the study. No research team members have any financial interest related to the research topic.

**Why is this research being done?**
The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of training instructors at the School for Family and MWR in using the Army University Experiential Learning Model in their instructional design and learning facilitation for government civilian workforce employees. You are being invited to participate because you were employed by the School for Family and MWR during or after the time the organization transitioned to using the Army University Experiential Learning Model.

**How long will I be in this research?**
It should take about 60 to 90 minutes total of your time. An initial interview will occur, and a transcript of that information will be sent to you for review and concurrence of accuracy following the interview.

**What happens if I agree to participate in this Research?**
If you agree you will be asked to participate in a conversation with the lead researcher regarding your lived experiences throughout the transition to using the Army University Experiential Learning Model in instructional design and training delivery. The researcher will ask general questions about the transition, what methods were utilized to learn the model, and specific questions about your experiences designing and facilitating learning using the model. Should you choose to participate, you may skip any questions that make you uncomfortable and may stop at any time.

This interview conversation will be done in a virtual setting and recorded for accuracy in a secure, password protected account accessible only by the lead researcher. Following the interview, the researcher will document the conversation in a transcript, which you will then be able to review for accuracy. Identifying information such as names and locations will be given pseudonyms for anonymity. The recording will then be deleted.

**What happens to the information collected for this research?**
Information collected for this research will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study interviews. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we may write about individual experiences as well as about combined information with similarities that we have gathered from other participants. Your name will not be used in any publications about this study and will not be personally identified in the written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information or what that information contains. Any personal identifiers from the interviews will be removed. This information could be used for future research analysis or distributed to another investigator without obtaining additional consent.

**How will my privacy and data confidentiality be protected?**

We promise to protect your privacy and security of your personal information as best we can. Although you need to know about some limits to this promise. Measures we will take include:

- Interviews will be conducted using internet software. The interviews will be recorded in a password protected account, and the password will only be known by the lead researcher.
- Interview recordings will be kept until they are transcribed by the lead researcher, and then reviewed for accuracy by the participant. They will be deleted once accuracy is confirmed.
- Your participation in this research will not be disclosed to other participants by the researchers.
- You will be assigned a pseudonym, which will only be known to the lead researcher. Any identifiable information in the interview transcript will be changed or redacted to protect your identity.
- Audio recordings and data will be stored on a password protected account and analysis program. Access to these programs will be limited to the lead researcher and will be stored on password protected computers and storage devices.

Individuals and organization that monitor this research may be permitted access to inspect the research records. This monitoring may include access to your private information and interview transcripts. Those individual and organization include:

- The Institutional Review Board
- The University of Memphis
- Wendy Griswold, PhD and the Dissertation Committee Members

**What other choices do I have besides participating in this research?**

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

**What if I want to stop participating in this research?**
It is up to you to decide whether you want to volunteer for this study. It is also ok to decide to end your participation at any time. There is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you decided to withdraw your participation. Your decision about participating will not affect your relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Memphis.

**Will it cost me money to take part in this research?**
There are no costs associated with participation in this research study.

**Will I receive any compensation or reward for participating in this research?**
You will not be compensated for taking part in this research.

**Who can answer my question about this research?**
Before you decide to volunteer for this study, please ask any questions that might come to mind. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator. Rebecca Strawn at rlstawn@memphis.edu or 912-414-7356, or advisor Wendy Griswold, PhD at wgrswold@memphis.edu or 901-678-5439. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Institutional Review Board staff at the University of Memphis at 901-678-2705 or email irb@memphis.edu. We will give you a signed copy of this consent to take with you.

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

I have had the opportunity to consider the information in this document. I have asked any questions needed for me to decide about my participation. I understand that I can ask additional questions through the study.

By signing below, I volunteer to participate in this research. I understand that I am not waiving any legal rights. I have been given a copy of this consent document. I understand that if my ability to consent for myself changes, my legal representative or I may be asked to consent again prior to my continued participation.

As described above, you will be audio/video recorded while performing the activities described above. Recordings will be used for accuracy in transcribing for data analysis. Initial the space below if you consent to the use of recording as described

_____ I agree to the use of audio/video recording
Name of Adult Participant | Signature of Adult Participant | Date

**Researcher Signature (To be completed at the time of Informed Consent)**

I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understand the information described in this consent and freely consent to participate.

Name of Research Team Member | Signature of Research Team Member | Date
## Appendix E

### List of Documents Examined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents selected</th>
<th>Data analyzed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army Training and Education, Faculty and Staff Development, TRADOC Pamphlet 350-70-3 (2018)</td>
<td>Faculty and Staff Development programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Learning, Army Educational Processes, TRADOC Pamphlet 350-70-7 (2017)</td>
<td>Army Educational Processes and the Army University Experiential Learning Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Army University White Paper (2015)</td>
<td>Outlines implementation of the institution and standardizations of the Army University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Development Program Phase 1 Schedule (Van Der Werff &amp; Bogdan, 2018)</td>
<td>Process for training facilitators in use of the Army ELM.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

U.S. Army Approvals

Strawn, Rebecca L NAF USARMY USAG (USA)

From: Hedberg, Kurt Ernest CIV USARMY HQDA RMD (USA)
Sent: Thursday, January 13, 2022 1:33 PM
To: Strawn, Rebecca L NAF USARMY USAG (USA)
Cc: Fravel, Douglas Vernon CIV USARMY HQDA RMD (USA); Lashley, Lavone CIV USARMY HQDA RMD (USA)
Subject: SCN into implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model: A Case Study of Instructors’ Experiences (UNCLASSIFIED)
Signed By: kurte.hedberg.civ@mail.mil

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Ma’am,

The information collection titled “Implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model: A Case Study of Instructors’ Experiences” has been reviewed IAW AR 25-58 Chapter 6-5a is EXEMPT from further review. The Survey Control Number information (SCN) block is provided below.

INFORMATION BLOCK

SURVEY APPROVAL AUTHORITY:

U.S. ARMY RECORDS MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE

SURVEY CONTROL NUMBER: AAHS-RDR.PR-22.57(EX.)

AGENCY IDENTIFIER: TEEC-AF

Expiration Date: 01/13/2023

V/r
Institutional Review Board
University of Memphis
315 Administration Building
Memphis, TN 38152-3370

To Whom It May Concern:

Ms. Rebecca Stawn, Researcher at University of Memphis has requested permission to conduct the research project named below at the U.S. Army Installation Management Command (IMCOM), G-3/5/7 Directorate, School for Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation during the period of December 2021 to May 2022. The IMCOM Director of Operations (G-3/5/7 Director) has read, understands, and agrees to:

a. How the research will be accomplished.

b. How the personal interviews and follow up will be administered.

c. The research will provide the G-3/5/7 Training team valuable insight on the Instructors’ experiences implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model into their instructional design and facilitation, which will assist staff and faculty on future projects.

d. Provide permission for research and personal interviews to be conducted during duty or after hours.

e. Final Research paper will be shared with staff, faculty, and Command of IMCOM.

Additionally, IMCOM G-3/5/7 accepts responsibility to provide oversight of above mentioned research and surveys. Monitoring any release of interview data and ensuring all findings are marked with the appropriate distribution/release statements.

This letter notifies you that I grant permission to researcher, Rebecca Stawn of the University of Memphis, Department of Leadership, to conduct research at the location listed below.

a. Research Project Title: Implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model: A Case Study of Instructors’ Experiences
b. Principal Investigator: Rebecca Strawn

c. Study Site Location: School for Family and MWR, 2280 Signal Road, Building 4022, Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas 78234

Permission granted by Colonel John K. Baker, IMCOM Director of Operations (G-3/5/7).

POC for this action is Rebecca Strawn, (912) 797-1454, or rebecca.l.strawn.haf@army.mil

Sincerely,

[Signature]

John K. Baker, P.E.
Colonel, U.S. Army
Director of Operations (G-3/5/7)
MEMORANDUM FOR: Army Human Protections Office (AHRPO), 7700 Arlington Blvd 25W4283, Falls Church, VA 22042

SUBJECT: Research Access Permission

Name of Researcher: Rebecca Sarnak
Title of Protocol: Implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model: A Case Study of Instructors’ Experiences
Protocol Number: PRO-FY222-190
Date of Protocol: 15 Dec 2021 to 01 May 2022

1. References:

   b. Department of Defense (DOD) Instruction 3216.02, Protection of Human Subjects and Adherence to Ethical Standards in DOD-Supported Research
   c. Army Regulation 70-25, Protection of Human Subjects in Research

2. Approval. I hereby approve the request for support described below.

3. Scope. I give permission for Installation Management Command, School for Family, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation to provide support to the above referenced research via access to the following installation assets and/or personnel: Training Instructors.

4. Conditions of approval for research involving human subjects: If this activity is research involving human subjects, this approval is provided on the condition of, and with the understanding that, the researcher’s institution will:

   a. Provide to my command any human research protection program-related support necessary to implement and oversee the above referenced activity.
   b. Obtain and comply with the terms of its Federal Assurance for the Protection of Human Research Subjects for this DOD supported research involving human subjects (if applicable).
ANIM-OPT-R
Subject: Research Access Permission

c. Inform me via my point of contact below regarding any relevant unanticipated problem involving risk to subjects or others, or serious or continuing noncompliance.
d. Obtain publication clearance review from my command before publishing or otherwise releasing findings from this research to members of the public (e.g., via abstract).

5. Affirmation. By endorsing this request, I affirm I have determined the above-referenced activity is mission critical and will be worth the time and cost of Army support. I acknowledge that my office assumes responsibility for ensuring the portion of the activity supported by my area of responsibility meets all applicable regulatory requirements.

6. POC. The action officer is Rebecca Straw, School for Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation, G3/5/7, I MCOM, rebecca.straw.mil@mailarmy.mil, 912-787-1454.

Attachment: University of Memphis Institutional Review Board Approval
Appendix G

Institutional Review Board Documentation

Date: 12-6-2021

IRB #: PRO-FY2022-190
Title: Implementing the Army University Experiential Learning Model: A Case Study of Instructors’ Experiences
Creation Date: 11-4-2021
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Rebecca Strawn
Review Board: University of Memphis
Sponsor:

Study History

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<th>Submission Type</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Review Type</th>
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<th>Decision</th>
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Key Study Contacts

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<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wendy Gristol</td>
<td>Co-Principal Investigator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wgristol@memphis.edu">wgristol@memphis.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Strawn</td>
<td>Principal Investigator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rlstrawn@memphis.edu">rlstrawn@memphis.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Strawn</td>
<td>Primary Contact</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rlstrawn@memphis.edu">rlstrawn@memphis.edu</a></td>
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Findings - Themes

- Moving from Prisoners to Raving Fans
- Déjà Vu from a Past Life

Findings - Themes

- Just Do It! Practice Makes Perfect
- It's Weird and I Don't Like It
# Findings - Themes

- **Design and Delivery**
- **Different… In a Good Way**

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<tr>
<th>Design &amp; Delivery Different... In a Good Way</th>
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<td>ELM gets people engaged, visible</td>
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<td>ELM student interactions are different, deeper conversations</td>
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<td>Students reached out after successful ELM training</td>
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<td>ELM sets more professional tone in classrooms</td>
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<td>Programs reach out for assistance resources</td>
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<td>Perseverance for ELM IL</td>
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<td>ELM more content driven</td>
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<td>ELM structure helps facilitation focus on students</td>
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<td>ELM changes year own advantage</td>
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<td>ELM Pedagogy process critical</td>
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<td>ELM design facilitation thread flow from beginning to end</td>
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<td>ELM application critical to learning, feedback</td>
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<td>ELM helped streamline process for non-linear trainers</td>
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<td>ELM facilitation CI most helpful connecting content</td>
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<td>ELM facilitation pulls in rogue participants</td>
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<td>ELM facilitation seamless, participant driven, stay on task</td>
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<td>Different ELM gives concrete takeaways facilitate participants</td>
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