JROTC INSTRUCTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF LATERAL WORK RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

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This is a three-article dissertation that presents information pertaining to Junior Reserve Officers Training instructors, specifically looking at the inclusion/exclusion of JROTC instructors in educational literature and exploring JROTC instructors' perception of peer relationships. Article 1 consists of a literature review focusing on peer learning communities and literature surrounding JROTC in education. Article 2 consists of an interview with JROTC instructors and presents their perceptions of their work environment. Article 3 includes a discussion of information presented in Article 2 and presents information and a rationale for greater inclusion of JROTC instructors in peer to peer relationships, specifically peer learning communities.

PREFACE

This basis for this study originally stemmed from my passion for the JROTC community but evolved into a motivation for developing and improving a student's academic achievement through enhancement of faculty and staff interaction. Of all the high school graduates with some attending college or university, some entering the military or workforce, there exists a gap of graduates not engaged immediately following graduation.

During both my high school and collegiate experience, I witness fellow students removed from the classroom by both academic and institutional restraints. Their absences, at times, seem to go unnoticed, but I always wondered; where did they go? What are they doing? There is a constant need for intervention in the educational field to close gaps of learning. While it may be a daunting task with a surmountable mix of obstacles to include funding, staffing, and all things in between; I believe the future potential growth of society hinges on the ability to keep pace with the global race of education.

As the national, international, and global educational community continues to evolve, I find it necessary for educators, administrators, and campus entities to explore opportunities for individual and collective growth using each other as internal resources. After reviewing the findings of my research, I have uncovered the current thinking of key educators that I believe give insight into a doorway of change for peer to peer learning and classroom management. Through my study, I hope to shine a light down a dark hallway of new thinking. I present this study as a prequel to the deliberate removal of communication and administrative barriers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The format chosen for this research study was that of a three-article progressive dissertation. Article one explores elements of peer relationships in the educational work place, specifically peer learning communities and situates current knowledge that is present regarding Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) instructors within the field of education and within their peer communities. The scope of this literature review was the underlying fundamentals of PLC's, how PLC's contribute to teacher success, which in turn contributes to student success and the application of this system to JROTC instructors. The intention and characteristics of peer learning communities is discussed, with an emphasis on seeking to situate JROTC within the field of PLC's and education itself. The scope of the literature review focused on the establishment of JROTC, its purpose within the school system, and JROTC's emphasis on citizenship and leadership, which is mandated through its establishment in federal legislation. Article 1 introduces the theoretical framework of interpretative phenomenology that places an emphasis on "what" and a description of "how" an experience has occurred by the participant.

Emphasis for article 1 was on JROTC, the process of becoming a JROTC instructor, and how JROTC is currently perceived in educational research and literature. A literature review finds that much of educational research that discusses JROTC focuses specifically on perceptions of JROTC from either administrators or community members, without specific reference to JROTC instructors (Morris, 2003; Weaver, 2012). This limited insight into JROTC instructors led to a review of literature pertaining vocational programs at the high school level, which in turn linked similarities and differences of JROTC programs and vocational programs. Literature surrounding the methodological approach to this research was also presented and explained, as well as a rationale for the use of interpretative phenomenology. The final element of article one

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is how this study addressed gaps in the literature regarding JROTC instructor perceptions and the role of these instructors in the educational setting, specifically within a PLC.

Article two consisted of the qualitative data that was gathered for this study. The qualitative data gathered for this study explored the perceptions of JROTC instructors and their peer-to-peer relationships within their school environment. JROTC instructors who participated in the study were sent a link to an electronic survey with long-response survey questions through their site administration. It should be noted that the survey responses were gathered following survey site permission, but prior to internal review board (IRB) approval by Trident University. Results were gathered and analyzed using a list of significant statements, grouping of significant statements, and descriptions of "what" and "how," and a discussion of the experience as seen by the researcher (Creswell, 2013).

Article three discussed elements of the qualitative interpretative phenomenology that occurred based on the results of the site survey that was administered to JROTC instructors. The researcher conducted additional literature review and exploration regarding possible solutions to an apparent disconnecting element between JROTC instructors' perceptions of inclusion and the limited factor that educational language, such as PLC played in the research. Many results that appeared to be confused on the language of the survey were discussed in light of education specific language and skills that JROTC instructors have that are not being capitalized in the educational environment.

Problem Statement

JROTC Instructors straddle two worlds, that of education and that of the military. Current educational literature on JROTC instructors is minimal, with current references to the program itself and not the instructors. When referenced in educational journals, JROTC is a

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negative entity, enlisting and recruiting students, or existing as a non-suitable replacement for physical education courses (Adams, 2014; McGauley, 2015). Yet, research into the field needs to be considered, as lateral relationships play a role in employee retention, even outside of the JROTC instructor. From a general business perspective, lateral relationships play a role in employee engagement, positive communication, and can help minimize elements of stress (Johnson, Cooper, Cartright, Donald, Taylor, & Millet, 2005; Kang & Sung, 2017). Overall, the more engaged employees are within an organization, the business is more successful in achieving key objectives and goals (Jensen, 2012).

As a group, teachers have been able to utilize a unique tool to help with connectivity and engagement, that of the peer learning community, or PLC. Often considered a key element of school dynamics, the PLC creates a peer learning network within a school, sometimes via subject area or grade level (Stoll, Bolam, Mcmahon, Wallce & Thomas, 2006). PLC's have been identified to minimize isolation among teachers, as well as help overall teacher technique, thus influencing student test scores positively (Rosenholtz, 1989; Shaha & Ellsworth, 2013; Sparks, 2013). In instances where PLC's have been seen to have no effect on student learning outcomes, it has been identified that it is the result of poor implementation or limited support from educational leaders on-campus (Riveros, Newton & Burgess, 2012). For all the work done on PLC's in educational research, support staff, in the form of specialty coaches, are sometimes mentioned, but a review of peer-reviewed literature has no mention of JROTC instructors.

As individuals who are members of their educational community, the role of the JROTC instructor has limited exploration within the field of educational research. The field of research is so limited that there is no understanding of the role that JROTC instructors play on their campuses, especially from the perspective of JROTC instructors. This study will add to the field

of educational research, specifically related to lateral work place relationships, as pertains to

JROTC instructors. The goal of this study was to provide a foundation for understanding how

JROTC instructors perceive themselves within their peer community, enabling additional

research to be initiated based on the understandings obtained. There is no research available

regarding how integrated JROTC instructors see themselves within the teaching community, or

even as teachers.

<div align="center">**Methodology**</div>

The research design consists of a survey that allows for closed and open-ended responses

from survey participants, providing both qualitative and quantitative data. The participants were

JROTC instructors from a single school district located in Georgia that included twelve high

school JROTC programs. The research design allowed for identifying the perceptions of JROTC

instructors and their role(s) on campus, as teachers. It also identified JROTC instructors'

perceptions of peer involvement in learning teams, on their campuses. The survey was

administered via e-mail, utilizing Microsoft Office's Form program, which allowed for questions

to be answered via a unique link and then automatically exported to an Excel document. Once

the data was, it was evaluated utilizing a phenomenological lens, or one in which observation

patterns surrounding the experiences of others will be explored to identify similarities and

differences in responses (Creswell, 2013).

The researcher analyzed data utilizing a phenomenological qualitative approach. Eberle

(2014) discusses that phenomenological qualitative data is based on the experiences that people

have had, or as postulated by Psathas it "investigates the social reality-as-it-is-experienced by

members of society" (p. 191). The theoretical framework of the methodology was important to

the population that was chosen by the researcher. The researcher sought to gain insight into the perceived reality of JROTC instructors at high school campuses that have non-military focuses. The reflections that were sought were those of persons who are instructors within a JROTC program, resulting in a population of current JROTC instructors' active at schools with a JROTC program. The sample was a purposeful participant sample, all participants were selected due to researcher access to administrative personnel in the JROTC office of a large county school district in Georgia.

Utilizing a phenomenological lens allowed for a pattern to emerge that was not pre-determined until the data was utilized. The first step was for the researcher to clear presuppositions from the process, such as having had an extensive military training background. Following the removal of presuppositions, the data was organized by questions and information was viewed to determine if any specific pattern emerged. The method of data analysis that was used was a phenomenological analysis and representation. The process was used to look for specific statements, identified by Creswell (2013) as statements that are then grouped into themes, or "meaning units" (p. 193). An attempt was made to discuss the "how" of the experience, or identifying where the event is situated and in what manner it is situated. The final product was a composite description that sought to determine the how and what of the situation that was perceived by the JROTC instructors within a large southern school district that encompasses both urban and rural populations.

The survey was administered via a survey link provided to the JROTC administrative assistant, who in turn sent it to JROTC instructors within the school district. The survey link was unique, no individuals could access it unless they had been sent the specific link. No traceable information was obtained by clicking the link and no information was provided by participants to

provide personally identifiable information for taking the survey. The survey link was provided via the program Microsoft Forms, which allowed for researcher ability to export information into an excel document for easier sorting and data processing.

A consent agreement was provided at the start of the survey. The consent agreement identified that participants understood that they needed to be 18 years of age to take the survey and that they were under no obligation to complete the survey. Information for the participants was identified as confidential. To maintain this confidentiality, participant data is maintained through a remove database that is password protected, and will be erased following the completion of the research process.

The final objective of the researcher was to gain insight into the perceived experiences of a population of JROTC instructors. The researcher sought to determine what role JROTC instructors saw themselves within their peer community, as well as the incorporation of these instructors into a common facet of educational professional development known as PLC's. The information provided may be gained based on a small sampling of JROTC instructors, but provides multiple perspectives within one district of the experiences of JROTC instructors, who are individuals who have origins across the U.S. and have been assigned to the region through the JROTC instructor appointment process, a national program. The final element of the research was to explore possible recommendations to administrators based on the research of Ramussen (2014) that discussed successful incorporation of instructional rounds into the practice of administrators and teachers within a school that has vocational programs.

Gaps in the Literature

The gap in the literature that is addressed by this study is the perspective of JROTC instructors within their school community and within PLC's. Presently there is no research that

isolates JROTC instructors and seeks their perspective on their educational experiences. There are studies that discuss the perception that school administrators have on JROTC, as well as JROTC students on themselves, but none specifically seek out the perception of JROTC instructors (Morris, 2003; Blake, 2016). There are also informal pieces of media and organizations that provide an anti-JROTC/military perspective to the discussion of JROTC, but do not provide insight from JROTC instructors (NNOMY, n.d.; McGauley, 2015).

JROTC is a program that has positive influences on students, specifically with at-risk populations, minorities, and females (Pema & Mehay, 2009). Researchers have argued that JROTC should not be assessed based entirely on student's GPA compared to their non-JROTC peers, but take into consideration achievements in maintaining the attendance of at-risk students, as well as creating career ready students. Students who enroll in JROTC have been shown to have lower GPA's compared to their non-JROTC peers prior to enrollment and are traditionally at a higher risk of non-completion of high school, elements JROTC mitigates (Pema & Mehay, 2012; Ameen, 2009). Present at over 1,600 high school campuses, JROTC is an unexplored component that improves student attendance and graduation rates through giving students an element of mentorship and higher levels of intrinsic motivation to matriculate (Morris, 2003; Weaver, 2012). Mentorship, an element uniquely facilitated by the JROTC instructor, an individual on high school campuses, has gone unexplored.

Studies are needed to examine JROTC instructors' self-perception and the perception of their work-related peers, as this exploration can at least create a starting point for a sub-set of educational literature that is not present. Focusing on these perceptions can give insight into self-perceptions and peer perceptions, allowing for continued research in how a gap is successfully bridged, or whether a gap exists. A phenomenological study allows for this insight.

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ARTICLE I: JROTC INSTRUCTORS AND LATERAL WORK RELATIONSHIPS

The purpose of article one is to provide a review of literature associated with Peer Learning Communities (PLCs), Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC), relationships with JROTC and PLCs, as well as identification of placement of JROTC within the field of educational literature. JROTC is explored in the literature as a vocational course, and as such, how PLC's interact with vocational instructors and curriculum. Instrumentation and the research methodology are also discussed.

Framework

The study of phenomenology is focused on the ways in which individuals understand what is going on around them (Bryman, 2012). This study makes use of interpretative phenomenology, which seeks to apply interpretations to the social situations that are occurring. As a conceptual framework, phenomenology recognizes that the social sciences benefit from the idea that lived experiences have meaning to individuals, as these lived experiences are where meaning come from. Individuals may have differing subjective experiences, although shared objective experiences have occurred (Creswell, 2012). Phenomenology is a type of interpretivism, meaning that it is a process that has been developed by social scientists that recognize that the study of people and society is different than the study of natural sciences (Bryman, 2012). The reality of an individual, as perceived by that person, has meaning and a social scientist seeks to discover how the meanings that have been made influence the behavior of the person.

Lateral Work Relationships

The field of K-12 education is heavily influenced by measures of student achievement, which in turn are reported at district, state, and federal levels. Measures of student achievement,

often in the form of standardized testing, is often the main factor of evaluation for educational leadership and administration, which also influences funding allocation. Assessment by test has political elements, with reform groups such as The Brookings Institute encouraging pay based on testing performance (Soifer & Mesecar, 2016). The direct emphasis on student assessment and student outcomes can have the effect of neglecting teacher to teacher work relationships, which ultimately can contribute to student success through retention and longevity of teaching staff (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). If one seeks to approach teaching with traditional business models, lateral relationships (peer to peer) consistently play a role in the overall performance of the individual (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008).

In instances where education policy does not focus on test scores, policy looks directly at career and college readiness. The U.S. economy is projected to have a heavy emphasis on jobs that require postsecondary education at the entry level, making the completion of K-12 education a necessary pre-requisite to most careers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). Again, teacher involvement plays a role in retention of students and the students' success in the K-12 setting. Teacher commitment to the school and buy-in, typically through teaching communities, can help retain students in the academic environment (Rosenholtz, 1989; Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2013). In instances of "on-demand" professional engagement online for teachers, it has been found that students of engaged teachers outperform students of non-engaged teacher's in measures of attendance, attending college, and discipline, elements that reinforce that teacher connections and professional development in relationships can help facilitate student success (Shaha & Ellsworth, 2013). Specifically, in mathematics achievement, the student success rates of isolated teachers are lower than their connected peers and teacher collaboration in general has shown to positively improve student test scores on standardized tests (Sparks, 2013; Goddard,

Goodard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). It does appear that teacher professional development, which includes relationships with peers, has an important role in student success.

Teacher Retention and Student Success

There is an academic benefit to schools that retain teachers. Schools that have a higher rate of teacher turn-over and newer teachers have been shown to have lower scores on standardized tests in Texas (Lopez & Slate, 2014). Teacher turnover has also been an element considered in affecting the overall context of a school, the higher the positive context, the higher the student achievement and results on standardized testing (Kraft, Marinel, & Yee, 2016). There is a large amount of debate surrounding characteristics of successful teachers, but one consistent factor is the experience affiliated with a teacher consistently shows an increase in student achievement (Rockoff, 2004). Teachers with more experience show a greater positive influence on student test scores (Rockoff, 2004; Beardsley, 2012). The ability to persist in a school environment for a set number of years helps to establish success within the student population.

Professional Learning Communities

Lateral workplace relationships play a strong role in forging achievement and retention of employees. Chiaburu and Harris (2008), conducting a meta-analysis of available work-place lateral relationships, found that co-workers play a significant role in support and antagonism of employees. The social situations of employees, such as the desire to leave, are heightened by stress factors, and how well the lateral relationships help navigate this environment. An important consideration based on Johnson et al.'s (2005) findings is that teachers experience one of the highest levels of work-related stress in any occupation, as the position is one that may afford little ownership to teachers in classrooms or involvement in decision making. Even the

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frequency and manner of symmetrical communication within an organization, between peers, helps to determine employee engagement, which in turn influences employee retention and performance (Kang & Sung, 2017; Jensen, 2012).

Recognition of peer relationships and general professional development needs have traditionally been met using peer learning communities, or PLC's. The idea of PLC's dates to the early 1900's, but since the late 1980's it has gained widespread traction and is often cited as a staple aspect of school dynamics (Stoll, Bolam, Mcmahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). Called "mutually supportive relationships within the community of professions in the school," Riveros, Newton, and Burgess (2012) discuss that peer learning communities have undergone multiple types of implementation, to varying levels of success at different schools. In instances where PLC's have been perceived to fail, it is typically a result of the PLC becoming static and not evolving due to the needs of its environment (Riveros, Newton & Burgess, 2012). Whereas PLCs that have been shown to be viable means teachers can collaborate, create a community, and alleviate instructional isolation (Rosenholtz, 1989). Thus, the PLC is an element contributing to peer satisfaction, if maintained and kept responsive to its community.

PLC's also play a role in overall collegiality and community engagement within the school community and is a tangible way to improve a school environment. Kaufman and Grimm (2013) argue that teachers are often frustrated with professional development and that it lacks relevance to their environment, but in situations in which peer to peer or teacher initiated feedback are utilized, inclusive of PLC's, there is a stronger sense of ownership. This ownership is extended to the teaching community, especially when teachers engage with one another outside of the classroom and in general feedback and praise (Nelson, Caldarella, Adams &

Shatzer, 2013). This sense of community is also vital in retaining new teachers, especially in

hard to fill and rural positions (Sharplin, O'Neil & Chapman, 2011).

PLC Intentions and Characteristics

PLC's are typically characterized as being instrumental to the overall learning of the

school rather than subject specific support. Key elements identified in a learning community are

collaborative work and an emphasis on education rather than simply teaching mechanics

(DuFour, 2004). Individual narratives from schools, coupled with contact information, almost

always identifies aspects of grade level PLC's that focus on cross curricular skills, as well as

PLC's that seek to engage in student intervention (Solution Tree, 2017). These individual

narratives are supported through data driven research about PLC's enhancing student

engagement when coupled with an emphasis on motivation and teacher strategies for motivation

acquisition (Turner, Christensen, Kackar-Cam, Trucano & Fulmer, 2014). As some PLC's are

developed for a holistic focus on the student, it is important to view them as more than a simple

retention tool for teachers.

In organizational theory, well managed peer learning communities can be a catalyst for

change. Well managed PLC's show a great ability to engage in micro-institutional change

because of diversity of ideas opinions as well as the ability to create shared understandings

(Bridwell-Mitchell, 2015). As within organizational theory, peer learning communities facilitate

personal development, community interaction, learning of facilitation, formal interdependence,

and boundary management as the group comes together and seek to meet specific goals and

expectations of one another (Tosey, 1999). It is not surprising that the organizational elements

of the peer learning community carry over into the teacher workforce and even within the

context of success classroom supports for students, especially minority students (Snyder, Sloane, Dunk & Wiles, 2016).

Peer Learning Communities and Non-Common Core Courses

Current education policy appears to be influx, as Common Core standards have recently been repealed. However, many states are seeking to adopt standards that will have some element of measurement through assessment. There are several best practices from the Common Core period that still warrant consideration for educators. It has been shown that cross-collaboration between vocational and Common Core instructors, especially at the peer level, have given rise to effective collaboration that has bolstered students' exposure to education principals within schools (Ramussen, 2014). Ramussen's (2014) case-study relies on a school that utilizes instructional rounds, like doctors in their residency program, instructional rounds allow administrators and teachers to observe co-workers in varying subject areas (Rogeman & Riehl, 2012). As an element used primarily by administrators, instructional rounds have also had the critical element of increasing the use of common language and creating wide-spread awareness about what specific administrators are doing, as well as campus-specific initiatives (City, Elmore, Fiarman & Teitel, 2009). Peer learning communities play a role for administrators, as well as staff, in understanding the context and way their counterparts are working. This is an important investment of time for administrators and teachers, worth re-prioritizing of an already strained schedule and list of responsibilities.

Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) Background

There is the concern that JROTC instructors, present at approximately 1,697 high school campuses throughout the U.S., are not being incorporated into the peer learning community on their campus. JROTC (n.d.) highlights position requirements of being an army retiree, as well as

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having had a standing of officer, or a non-commissioned officer, having a clean service record, Bachelor's degree for officers, and an Associate for non-commissioned officers (NCOs), as well as currently meeting physical requirements. JROTC (n.d.) identifies that the instructor is a district employee and may have to be certified/have licensure beyond what is required from the army. Additionally, the JROTC instructor is identified as being an employee with "additional duties that may include hall monitoring, chaperoning, providing event security, test proctoring, cafeteria duty, substitute teaching other classes, etc." (JROTC, n.d., para. 3). As both an employee of the district, certified as an educational instructor, and a staff member with comparable duties to other instructors, the JROTC instructor and his/her role appears to have very limited research available.

The mission of the JROTC is to "instill in students in United States secondary educational institutions the value of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment" (JROTC, n.d., para. 3). The program has proven to be very successful in being adopted and implemented by multiple high schools throughout the country, but questions regarding the worth and merit of the program have emerged, especially when only 30% of the participants go into the military, and only 22% attend post-secondary institutions (Pema & Mehay, 2009). It is worth noting that outside of JROTC, only a small percentage of Army recruits come directly from high school, with the present-day majority coming from individuals who have been out of high school for 2-4 years (Rostker, 2014). It is worth noting that the JROTC program is one that is politically charged, as it utilizes tax payer funding, and has been adopted by multiple high schools as a degree tract of training.

The JROTC program was established by law in 1964, high schools must be accredited to join the program, and all instruction is taught by retired service members or currently enlisted

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personnel (NJROTC, n.d.). The focus of the curriculum is on developing leadership skills,

providing a history of the military branch, as well as some fundamental understandings of naval

tactics and seamanship. There is a combination of year-round service by members, compass

competitions, and in-class instruction to all students. There is also a physical component of

JROTC coupled with field trips and special sessions with current Naval personal. As noted in

the mission statement of the organization, there is an emphasis on promoting citizenship, high

school graduation, and incentives to living a healthy and drug free life. There are considerations

that the JROTC is not specifically a pipeline to the military program, but one that seeks to better

the opportunities and skills for high school students in various communities.

The JROTC instructor position was established by law and remains in 10 U.S. Code Sub-

chapter 2031. The position has as its focus to "instill in students in United States secondary

educational institutions the values of citizenship, service to the United States, and personal

responsibility and a sense of accomplishment" (Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, 2015).

The position is financed partially by the military and partially by the school that has the position,

with hosting school potentially having costs waived because of financial hardships (Junior

Reserve Officers' Training Corps, 2015). These elements are important to consider because it

highlights that the JROTC position, often, does require a financial investment on the part of the

principal, but has an obligation to the federal statutes in which it was enacted. This means that

JROTC instructors maintain elements of their retirement pay scale as they transition to a high

school environment, which results in higher pay for JROTC instructors than other teachers at the

school. It is also important to note that the JROTC position is financed at a different pay scale

than that of other teachers, as the JROTC instructor, based on when/he she was discharged from

the military, will receive pay based on his/her military experience. As a result, pay discrepancies

do exist between teachers and their JROTC co-workers. This pay difference, as well as the federal mandate to maintain an emphasis on citizenship, service, and personal responsibility, may cause a rift between these two work entities.

The requirements for becoming a JROTC can be considered quite high and are enhanced through the competitive nature of positions. JROTC (n.d.) identifies that all applicants must have at least 20 years of experience, having been retired for no more than 3 years, and for non-commissioned officers an Associate's degree and for commissioned officers a Bachelor's degree. These are minimum qualifications, with preference given to those who have higher degree levels; Army JROTC identifies that at least 60% of its instructors have a Bachelor's degree or higher, with a significant number of those having advanced degrees (JROTC, n.d.). It is not uncommon for those who are considering a JROTC position to enhance their current educational background, as it creates a more attractive candidate package. Finally, JROTC identifies as part of the application process, that it is sometimes necessary to gain a subject area or educational certificate based on the state of employment (JROTC, n.d.). There is some level of recognition and interwoven components between the JROTC instructor application and an awareness of additional requirements and certifications that maybe required due to the state in which the program is operating.

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Perceptions of JROTC

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Perceptions of JROTC in educational publications tend to be negative. Loungberry, Holt, Monnat, Funk, and Mckenzie (2014) ask "JROTC as a substitute for PE: Really?" is one example of an article targeting physical education teachers that highlights that JROTC does not have the same level of rigor as traditional P.E. classes (Lounsbery, Holt, Monnat, Funk & McKenzie, 2014). Compared side by side JROTC was shown not provide the same level of

physical rigor as P.E. classes at an observed school district. However, Lounsbery et al. (2014) ignored that most states have approved a pre-school JROTC fitness class for participants and looked at only one portion of the JROTC curriculum (Logan, 2000). In 2014, JROTC found itself most notably under attack from stakeholders in California as JROTC was being considered for physical education credit. Most public discourse articles on the topic immediately identified that JROTC instructors were non-certified and lacked a bachelor's degree (Adams, 2014). A perception that is not entirely supported by the preferred qualifications of the JROTC instructor position and overlooks at least 20 years of military service requiring a physical component.

Other pieces include McGauley's (2015) "The military invasion of my high school: The role of JROTC" which articulates an educator's concern regarding a perceived message of violence that JROTC brings to an educational environment. These opinion pieces by educators are also supplemented through citizen campaigns that are against JROTC, such as the organization The National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth (NNOMY), which is a grassroots lobbying organization and base most of their arguments on the anti-JROTC articles mentioned, such as Lounsbery et al (2014) findings. Although JROTC seen through the eyes of these educators may be a valid perspective, it is one that is lacking empirical data or scholarly information supporting its arguments.

Contrasting the opinions of community members and teachers, administrators have been shown to have a generally favorable perception of JROTC. Principals who had and did not have JROTC programs indicated that there was a favorable impression of the program, especially as it pertains to leadership implementation within their student bodies (Morris, 2003; Blake, 2016). Focusing on the element of student achievement as a measure of success, JROTC was identified as a way for a school to meet this expectation through the use of student mentorship (Blake,

2016). Respondents also identified self-confidence as a key result of having JROTC on their campuses when asked about the influence of JROTC in a research survey (Blake, 2016). As the primary authority on a high school campus, the school principal could arguably be the main individual needing to have a positive perception of the program; however, this does not satisfy elements of work-place retention, lateral peer relationships, and other elements that have been shown to contribute to student success.

<center>**JROTC and Student Achievement**</center>

As it pertains to critical analysis of JROTC's influence on student achievement, educational attainment, and enlistment, it has been found that the results are mixed, meaning that JROTC does not have a strong relationship in increasing GPA and enlistment of high school students for all participants (Pema & Mehay, 2009). However, JROTC has been shown to have a positive influence on African-American male students, with an increased rate of high school completion (Pema & Mehay, 2009). It is important to note that Pema and Mehay (2009) highlight the limitation that JROTC students overall are more at risk than their non-JROTC peers, meaning that poorer academic outcomes maybe linked to the students' at-risk status. JROTC students have also been shown to have longer long-term job stability than non-JROTC peers in vocational training, as well as have less early job turnover. It has been argued that JROTC should not be used to improve students grade point averages, but should be considered as a skills program to help students maintain their enrollment in high school and finish (Ameen, 2009). A finding that has also been supported on the junior high level of JROTC, with no difference in GPA's, but higher rates of student attendance for participants (McGhee, 2011).

A positive perception of JROTC and student achievement appears multiple places in review of JROTC literature. High school principals, based on their perception, often feel that

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JROTC tends to benefit mid-range academic students the most, giving a greater sense of intrinsic and extrinsic involvement and motivation with the school (Morris, 2003). Furthermore, students in JROTC have expressed a positive perception of JROTC on their life, especially as it pertains to school completion (Weaver, 2012). Among JROTC students, mentorship was perceived as the largest influencer in their lives, positively impacting performance in all subjects, including core subjects. In the larger debate of measures of success for education and schools, JROTC is perceived by some as a positive element in student success.

Reasons why JROTC may have a positive influence on student attendance can be found in research conducted relating to vocational and elective courses. In teaching skills, vocational courses can increase human capital, or the employment and economic benefit of the students learning (Black, 2010; National Education Association, 2012). Furthermore, vocational programs like JROTC can enhance social capital by introducing students to new norms and values than what they had previously been exposed to in traditional school work (Black, 2010). The benefits of vocational training are often hampered by getting students, especially lower socioeconomic students, into vocational programs due to low self-efficacy (Ali, McWhirther & Chronister, 2005). School environments that are collaborative can help target at-risk populations and provide counseling on career aspirations, which is then reinforced through mentorship found in such programs as JROTC (Ali, McWhirther & Chronister, 2005).

JROTC: Caught in the Middle

JROTC in high school curriculum is classified as a vocational course or elective with some states allowing it to substitute for physical education. The National Education Association (2012) identifies that vocational training engages in the application of specific skills for a trade, it excludes professions, and is focused on providing hands on experience. As per the

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Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), strong vocational programs utilize the skills of professionals from the field who have experience within that work environment (2011). In having instructors who have at least 20 years of professional experience, as well as providing basics in presentation, physical fitness, and discipline, JROTC seems to neatly fit into this classification. JROTC does have a higher number of participants who go into the military than non-JROTC participants, but overall, the number of JROTC graduates who go into the military are not at the same level of other vocational programs (Pema & Mehay, 2009). The classification of JROTC as a potential elective or vocational program can play a role in heightening the idea that it is a recruitment element. Whereas this may not be entirely true, as JROTC has a mission that is unique and focuses on being an extension of government policy for civility and leadership, while allowing high school participation for individuals who may otherwise be excluded from enlistment such as citizenship status and physical abilities.

As a vocational course, JROTC is arguably overlooked for possible contributions to government educational mandates, especially as it pertains to college readiness. Current research indicates that individuals who are from a blue-collar community and enter vocational training programs are less likely than their non-vocational peers to enter a four-year college upon graduation (Sutton, Bosky & Muller, 2016). Yet, vocational course weaknesses of larger student dropout rates, as well as higher enrollment by white males, has been shown to be mitigated in JROTC which has a greater attraction to minorities and women (Ainsworth & Roscigno, 2005; Pema & Mehay, 2009). Rather than contribute to continued vocational stratification, JROTC appears to offer opportunities for students who otherwise are more influenced by socioeconomic components of their environment when it comes to high school completion in general education or in vocational studies.

Vocational courses in general are also at the cross-roads of meeting local job market demands, but compiling with federal expectations surrounding global citizenship and competition. Blue-collar jobs are often viewed as "bad jobs" in conversations about the global economy, but in some communities the stability, benefits, and socioeconomic status of the family highlights the reliable elements as a "good job" (Kallberg, 2011). The is a pervasive level of inequality in job opportunity when socioeconomic factors are considered, but until there is wide spread policy change, there are limits that can occur in providing students long-term opportunities with vocational education as an important consideration for opportunity (Kallberg, 2011, Ainsworth & Roscigno, 2005).

There is incongruity in meeting work force needs and pushing all students into college. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2011) recognizes that the push to tertiary education has left some countries at a strong disadvantage in building a support economy to implement some business ideas and processes. The National Education Association (2012) also identifies that only $1/3^{rd}$ of the current jobs available in the U.S. require a four-year degree, with a majority of the U.S. job market only needing skills acquired with some college or even high school. Yet, the true numbers of the job market have not reflected the overall push for "college readiness" in federal guidelines, often measured through the ACT presented by the American College Testing Program or enforced through other federal mandates (Kramer, Osgood, Bernotsky & Wolff, 2014). These elements of college readiness have been pushed at the high school level through core coursework, limiting encouragement into vocational programs.

Lateral Relationship Gap

JROTC personnel often identify as instructors rather than teachers, but share a role with teachers in having relationships with students and working within the school community. As individuals who are perceived to play a strong role in the persistence of students, inclusion of JROTC instructors in educational literature is greatly lacking. The plight of JROTC has similarities to those identified by Beddoes, Bursak and Hall (2014), in which physical education appears to have been ignored in Peer Learning Community (PLC) environment. Beddoes et al. (2014) highlights the relevance of physical education when compared to "academic" disciplines and incorporation in PLC's allows for physical education to be viewed as an academic subject. There are dissimilarities in that JROTC substitutes for some core subjects in some states, but is seen by instructors and government mandate as a course focused on instilling skills. However, JROTC still has significant relevance in ideas of PLC's focused on student interventions, community, and student retention.

Literature Gaps

As members of the school community, there is no literature or research regarding the role of JROTC instructors. This omission of JROTC instructors, sometimes considered faculty on their campuses, is concerning. Strong peer relationships have been shown to have a positive influence on students, as well as the long-term commitment of teachers Stoll, Bolam, Mcmahon, Wallce & Thomas, 2006). Furthermore, looking solely at professional environment, perceptions of alienation by employees have been shown to have a negative consequence on career satisfaction and career orientation (Chiaburu, Diaz & De Vos, 2013). Recognizing that peer learning communities can play a role in limiting isolation for instructors, as well as enhance the overall educational environment, there is an additional question as to the role of JROTC within

this environment. JROTC is perceived to provide mentorship to students and has shown positive

gains in student overall attendance of its members. Areas where JROTC has been shown to meet

with success have benefits for the entire learning community at a school, core or non-core.

Overall, JROTC research is limited and non-existent pertaining to JROTC instructors. It

is necessary to begin by exploring what JROTC instructors see as their role within their

community, as well as how they perceive that role.   Further investigation into this area can help

educational leaders capitalize on ways to connect and encourage all members of their

instructional staff to help facilitate educational success within their community. Peer learning

communities have evolved past subject specific conversations, but often incorporate elements of

grade level and school level concerns and initiatives. Further research is recommended related to

JROTC instructors and how they perceive themselves in their peer learning community, which

bridges a gap in minimal available research and creates a foundation for methods of future

inclusion.

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ARTICLE II: JROTC INSTRUCTOR PERCEPTION OF LATERAL WORK

RELATIONSHIPS

Current measures of student success are heavily weighted towards student achievement on standardized tests, which in turn are reported to various agencies and may influence individual school and school district funding. Some measures of student success are tied to student graduation rates and/or student career/college readiness. This direct emphasis on student achievement can result in the neglect of understanding teacher to teacher work relationships, which in turn can contribute to student success through teacher retention and staff longevity (Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2013). Lateral relationships, or peer to peer relationships, play a role in the overall performance of the employee (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). One peer-to-peer relationship that is seldom explored is that of Junior Office Reserve Corps Training Instructors or JROTC personnel and regular teachers on many high school campuses.

Peer-to-peer relationships, or lateral work relationships, seem to enhance the overall experience of both the teacher and the student. Teacher retention can have an increase on student scores as well as has shown an improvement in standardized testing (Kraft, Marinell & Yee, 2016; Rockoff, 2004). Professional learning communities (PLC) encourage collaborative work and help with teacher retention through creating motivation as well as engagement with professional development and the community (Turner, Christensen, Kackar-Cam, Trucano & Fulmer, 2014; Kaufman & Grimm, 2013; Nelson, Caldarell, Adams & Shatzer, 2013). Peer to peer relationships are enhanced through PLC usage, which supports teacher retention and supports higher student achievement. However, JROTC instructors, a unique group within this context are absent from academic conversations surrounding PLC's.

JROTC instructors are best grouped with non-common core courses and vocational courses. Cross-collaboration between Common Core teachers and vocational teachers is perceived to have a positive influence on student exposure to educational principals, such as reading and writing (Ramussen, 2014). Vocational instructors have also benefited from instances where administrators use peer learning techniques, such as instructional rounds, which help facilitate shared language across the school for students and includes core and non-common core courses (City, Elmore, Fiarman & Teitel, 2009). Although best situated with vocational subjects in looking at school information, JROTC is unique within this population.

JROTC Background

JROTC Presence on Campuses. JROTC is present at approximately 1,600 high schools throughout the U.S. Every JROTC program has at least one instructor affiliated with the program, more depending on the size of the school and school district. The JROTC instructor is a district employee, who may be given duties outside of his/her instruction that include "hall monitoring, chaperoning, providing event security, test proctoring, cafeteria duty, substitute teaching" (JROTC, n.d.). One study estimates that only 30% of the student participants go into the military, while only 22% go onto post-secondary institutions (Pema & Mehay, 2009). However, JROTC does show to have a positive influence on African-American male students, but overall academic achievement for JROTC is lower than their non-JROTC peers. It is vital to understand that JROTC does have a higher number of students considered "at-risk" than their non-JROTC peers, which is a substantial mitigating factor to direct comparisons (Pema & Mehay, 2009). JROTC students have also been shown to have a higher level of vocational job stability than their non-JROTC peers (Pema & Mehay, 2012).

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JROTC as a Vocational Course. The JROTC program has overcome many of the drawbacks of vocational courses, specifically with enrollment. Vocational courses have a higher dropout rate, higher enrollment by white males, and less matriculation of students to college (Sutton, Bosky & Muller, 2016). However, JROTC appears to mitigate many of the vocational course drawbacks of lower enrollment by females, minorities, and student retention (Ainsworth & Roscigno, 2005; Pema & Mehay, 2009). Yet, the biggest dissimilarity with JROTC and other vocational courses is that it is a pathway that is available that has a very limited number of individuals who continue within the military profession. JROTC participants are more likely than their non-JROTC peers to enter the military, but JROTC should be seen as a skills program, as many of the participants are ineligible to enter the military following JROTC or simply have no desire to do so (Ameen, 2009). A review of the literature has shown that for all the positive benefits JROTC programs have been shown to have on its student population, even as a unique vocational course, JROTC instructors often are left in the cross-roads of being considered a vocational course with limited Common Core emphasis on coursework, or not as a traditional vocational course because of its limited pathway to the military.

Problem Statement

JROTC Instructors straddle two worlds, that of education and that of the military. Current educational literature on JROTC instructors is minimal, with current references to the program itself and not the instructors. When referenced in educational journals, JROTC is a negative entity, enlisting and recruiting students, or existing as a non-suitable replacement for physical education courses (Adams, 2014; McGauley, 2015). Yet, research into the field needs to be considered, as lateral relationships play a role in employee retention, even outside of the

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JROTC instructor. From a general business perspective, lateral relationships play a role in employee engagement, positive communication, and can help minimize elements of stress (Johnson, Cooper, Cartright, Donald, Taylor & Millet, 2005; Kang & Sung, 2017). Overall, the more engaged employees are within an organization, the business is more successful in achieving key objectives and goals (Jensen, 2012).

As a group, teachers have been able to utilize a unique tool to help with connectivity and engagement, that of the peer learning community, or PLC. Often considered a key element of school dynamics, the PLC creates a peer learning network within a school, sometimes via subject area or grade level (Stoll, Bolam, Mcmahon, Wallce & Thomas, 2006). PLC's have been identified to minimize isolation among teachers, as well as help overall teacher technique, thus influencing student test scores positively (Rosenholtz, 1989; Shaha & Ellsworth, 2013; Sparks, 2013). In instances where PLC's have been seen to have no effect on student learning outcomes, it has been identified that it is the result of poor implementation or limited support from educational leaders on-campus (Riveros, Newton & Burgess, 2012). For all the work done on PLC's in educational research, support staff, in the form of specialty coaches, is sometimes mentioned, but never are JROTC instructors.

As individuals who are members of their educational community, the role of the JROTC instructor has limited exploration within the field of educational research. The field of research is so limited that there is no understanding of the role that JROTC instructors play on their campuses, especially from the perspective of JROTC instructors. This study will add to the field of educational research, specifically related to lateral work place relationships, as pertains to JROTC instructors. The goal of this study is to provide a foundation for understanding how JROTC instructors perceive themselves within their peer community, enabling additional

research to be initiated based on the understandings obtained. There is no research available regarding how integrated JROTC instructors see themselves within the teaching community, or even as teachers.

Purpose of the Study. The purpose of this study was to explore JROTC instructors' perceptions of their lateral work relationships. To create a dialogue around JROTC instructors' and their role within the high school community, a starting place of self-perceptions of JROTC roles must be established, specific to their role within school PLC's. The population for this study was drawn from JROTC instructors from a single Georgia school district with varying sized schools. The study sought to understand JROTC instructors' perceptions of experiences with non-JROTC instructors', perceptions of involvement with peer learning communities within their school, perception of JROTC instructors' role on campus, as well as JROTC instructors' perceptions of other staff members on their campus. JROTC instructors originate from a variety of geographic locations and military assignments and, although the results of this survey are isolated to a specific school district, elements of responses can be applied to JROTC throughout the U.S.

Methodology

Research Questions: Three research questions were explored as follows:

1) What are the perceptions of high school JROTC teachers in how they view themselves in their peer learning community?

2) What collaborative efforts do high school JROTC teachers engage in with non-JROTC instructional staff?

3) What is the role that JROTC instructors perceive themselves to have at their school?

Question 1, utilized an open-ended survey to determine JROTC school teachers'

perception of the JROTC role on their campuses. Question 2, regarding collaborative efforts,

utilized close-ended questions to identify the overall teacher professional collaboration on

campus; open-ended questions were used to identify how JROTC teachers perceive their role

with their non-JROTC learning community. Question 3, focused on the overall perception that

JROTC teachers have of their role on their campus. JROTC instructors were asked to identify

perceptions of positive, negative, involved, or aloof characteristics of themselves and peers.

Rationale of the Study. This study sought to build on the field of peer learning

communities, but with a focus surrounding JROTC instructors and their roles on campus.

Establishing a foundation of self-perception of JROTC instructors is intended to create a starting

point for inclusion of JROTC instructors in dialogue surrounding school environment and

success. This starting point seeks to understand how JROTC instructors see themselves,

especially in an educational environment in which their role may appear to be isolated or

different from non-JROTC teachers. Emphasis on PLC's within a school environment,

understanding how JROTC instructors perceive their role within this community could allow for

greater exploration of strengthening lateral work relationships between JROTC instructors, peers,

and administrators.. Military personnel could use the information to potentially address elements

of inclusion and/or perceptions within their training program for JROTC instructors.

Limitations. It is important to highlight limitations of the research. Surveys were sent

only to JROTC instructors within a single school district, all of whom fell within a similar

geographic area. Responses were also type-written, meaning that in some instances responses

may have had limitations pertaining to the respondents' proficiency with typing and/or time

provided for each response. All survey questions attempted to use very broad language, focused

on experiences, but there is recognition regarding the interpretation of questions that may have elicited varying results from respondents.

Internal Review Board (IRB) permission was not obtained from Trident University prior to the distribution and gathering of research data. Approval for survey distribution was obtained from a representative at the study site. This is a limitation to the research, in that all information provided was done so outside of the context of university supervision and approval.

Research Design. This study used the qualitative method of phenomenology; specifically, descriptive phenomenology, which refers to "the study of personal experience and requires a description or interpretation of the meanings of phenomena experienced by participants" (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). The specific methodology of phenomenological reporting and discussion is based on the methods identified by Creswell (2013) that focus on a list of significant statements, grouping of significant statements, description of "what", description of "how," and a discussion of the experience essence by the researcher. Phenomenology was chosen as the design method due to its emphasis on the perceived experiences of the participants, which this study sought to explore with JROTC instructors (Padilla-Diaz, 2015).

Population. The selection of participants was purposeful; all participants were JROTC instructors and worked within the same school district. The participant selection was a convenience sample, as the researcher had a direct relationship with the administrator of the suburban, Georgia school district selected. Schools within the district ranged in size from 1A to 6A, with portions of the district classified as rural and metropolitan as an extension of a larger city suburb.

School Classification	School Enrollment (Range)
7A	4,000-2,000
6A	2,000-1,600
5A	1,600-1,400
4A	1,400-1,000
3A	1,000-900
2A	900-450
1A	-450

Figure 1. Georgia State classification based on full-time enrollment of students. Information limited to schools that play sports (Holcomb, 2015).

Of the 30 participants contacted, 12 responded and completed the survey, representative of the 12 different high schools that are have JROTC in the school district. All participants are former military personnel as well as current JROTC instructors. This population was utilized with permission from personnel at the study site, but without Trident University IRB approval.

Instrument. Responses were solicited via e-mail with a two-week period given as a response time. The e-mail solicitation provided a link to Microsoft based Forms, which is a program that allows for a survey that has opened ended and closed ended responses, which also allows for information to be exported to Excel for researcher review. Questions consisted of demographic information and data pertaining to the school of the JROTC instructor, as well as the JROTC instructor's certifications within the field of education. Many open-ended questions were developed using the phenomenological technique of allowing for open-ended responses that have little guidance and seek to illicit experiences. After one week, a second e-mail was

distributed to all individuals on the initial list; reminding and encouraging participation from individuals who had not already filled out the survey information.

Pilot Study. The research questions were established based on a thorough literature review, where it was determined that a pilot study should occur. Due to the small sample size, the pilot study consisted of a current JROTC program from the same Georgia school district. The responses identified the perceptions of the JROTC instructors and were determined effective in the process goal of; clarity of questions and the survey instructions (Blake, 2016). This pilot study elicited more elaborate results from the participant, as well as established question clarity. This study focused on quantitative data and received a response from all schools within the school district that have a JROTC program. The starting points of all JROTC instructors, regardless of district, are the same; previous military experience, similar military training program, but variations will exist based on the school district in which the JROTC instructors have been assigned.

Data Collection Procedures. Following on-site approval, an invitation e-mail was sent to all potential participants from the administrative assistant responsible for communicating with all JROTC instructors within the selected school district. The e-mail consisted of an invitation to participate in research that   identifies the perceptions of JROTC instructors within their school environment. The link took respondents to disclosure information, as well as participant verification and agreement to participate in the survey, in the form of a consent document. A follow-up e-mail was sent to participants by the administrative assistant one week after the initial e-mail, eliciting 3 more responses. Twelve responses, mostly JROTC instructors in the school district, responded to the survey questions.

Method of Data Analysis. The method of data analysis used was that presented by Creswell (2013), specific to evaluating phenomenological analysis and representation. The researcher engaged in a narrative of personal experiences with the phenomenon under study; as per Creswell (2013) an attempt was made to separate out the researchers' personal experiences, specifically role in the military and with the JROTC program, to focus on participant experience. Data was reviewed and significant statements were listed with the data presented as horizontal and equitable to all other statements. Significant statements were then grouped into themes, or "meaning units" (Creswell, 2013). A description of the what the participants study experienced was identified, also referred to as textual description by Creswell (2013), also linked with verbatim descriptions (p. 193). A description of "how" was attempted, in some cases limited, to help situate the event (Creswell, 2013). Finally, a composite description, inclusive of the how and what, have been presented in the findings of this research was also included.

Results

Demographic Data. Demographic data, such as gender and type of school, was gathered to situate information provided in the narrative format of the survey. Questions were asked specifically about state certification of the respondents to situate information in comparison to traditional teacher credentialing.

2. How long have you been teaching in your current high school setting?

● 3-5 years	5
● More than 10 years	3
● 0-2 years	2
● 6-10 years	2
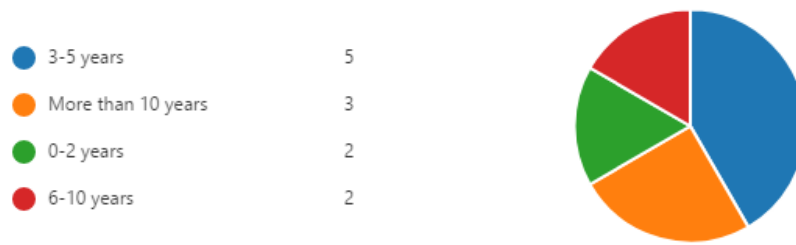
Figure 2. Instructor tenure varied by participant, with 3-5 years having the highest concentration of respondents at 5 years.

4. What is the classification of your school?

● I do not know.	3
● 2A	2
● 4A	2
● 1A	1
● 3A	1
● 5A	1
● 6A	1
● 7A	1
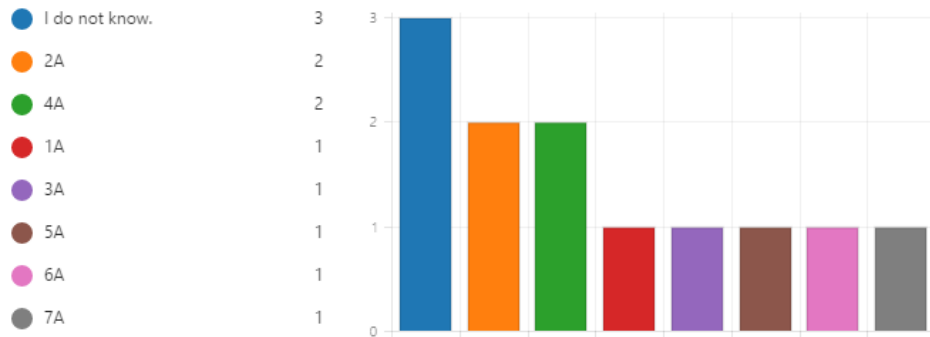
Figure 3. Indication of many respondents uncertain of the classification of their school in the traditional state size ranking.

5. Do you have a Georgia Profession Standards certification or license?

● Yes	8
● No	4

Figure 4. Most JROTC have a Georgia Professional Standards certification or license, the same certification required for traditional teachers but not required for JROTC instructors.

6. I identify as a(n):

● Either of the above	6
● Instructor	5
● Teacher	1

Figure 5. JROTC instructors were asked about specific language regarding their on-campus role, only 1 instructor identified as a teacher, whereas 41% identify solely as an instructor.

Significant Statements

A list was generated of significant statements that sought not to overlap and seek to minimize repetitiveness.

Open question: In thinking about support as a teacher, what have been your experiences with non-JROTC teachers at your current school?

- Feel valued and supported. (Statement made three times).

- Segregated and limited interaction with other teachers

- Multiple teachers not aware of job, those that are aware are supportive

- Frustration from teachers' due to pay scale

- P.E. and coaches tend to be source of conflict due to event conflicts.

Open question: What have been your personal experiences with grade level work team/peer learning communities? Please discuss your impressions and/or feelings about those relationships.

- Valued as a committee member.

- Interaction is limited to a mandatory Special Education Course for district

- Relationships and involvement are based on teacher turnover

- All cadets are different; there is a need for constant adjustment

- I do not have experience with this

- We are recognized by teachers, but not administration in terms of what it is that we do

- Lack of teacher understanding that JROTC instructors have lesson plans and specific curriculum. Thinking maps are utilized by JROTC and taught to non-JROTC teaching peers to use in classroom.

- Learning classes occurred resulting in improved instructor relationships

Open question: What do you think your role is on campus? Please discuss both formal and informal roles.

- Often contacted regarding behavior of JROTC students in classroom of other teachers

- Instructor role, mentoring young people

- Bus, file, football, color guard, flag detail, blood drive, guide for VIPs

- Function as a teacher, facilitate learning through curriculum based instruction/informally to teach from experience of the human condition

- Role models; students outside JROTC aspire to be like us. Mentorship

- Security and discipline

- Military affiliation.

- Perception that JROTC functions as a recruitment tool

Meaningful Units

Grouping of large units of information into themes or meaning units, as per Creswell (2013).

- Theme 1: Feel value and supported.

- Theme 2: Teachers are not aware of what JROTC instructors do, sometimes seen as a recruiter or free labor, combined with unawareness of pay.

- Theme 3: Mentorship plays a large role in the position.

- Theme 4: Strong relationship still with military and self-perception is as an instructor in contrast to a teacher.

Textual and Structural Descriptions

The statements: "I believe our department is instrumental in mentoring young people," is given in the contexts of a perceived role as "a disciplinarian, especially to the parents. Other statements like: "students are disciplined in JROTC," are responses that teachers inform JROTC instructors of in-class behavior.

"There are occasions where you have to educate a fellow teacher on the intricacies of your job," "they don't fully understand what JROTC does," and "teachers who have not taken time to understand the program are the ones with negative outlooks," are statements presented in the context of "pay-scale" and sense of support from the faculty.

"Mixed opinions, based on teacher turnover" regarding support occurs in the context of an instructor at a small school (1A) and with 6-10 years of experience.

"Cadets are called regularly to help out around the school," "sometimes seen as free labor," and" they think we only teach discipline, marching, physical training" are perception provided in the structural element of the role. Reference to teaching discipline is coupled with self-perception of "facilitate learning, through curriculum based instruction."

Composite Description

There is a re-occurring theme of feeling valued and supported in some context for instructors, regardless of time in the district. The value and supported varies based on the awareness level of the teachers of JROTC and in some instances, even the campus administrators' support of the program.

The theme of feeling valued and supported is contrasted with a lack of understanding of what JROTC instructors do, which can influence feelings towards role expectations and even animosity regarding pay scale. The lack of understanding is consistent, but its occurrence from either administrators or teachers varies based on the individual respondent.

There is a constant perception of being a disciplinarian, but the instructor responses indicate that there are significant components outside of this, such as building school pride, emphasis on curriculum and instruction, and being a mentor. There is only one instance in which

there is alignment between disciplinarian as a self-perceived role and that of perception of peers of the JROTC instructor role.

Discussion and Implications

The focus of this study was to explore the lived experiences of JROTC instructors within their school environments. The lived experience of JROTC can be useful in looking at the lateral work-relationships of JROTC instructors within a school context, which in turn can be used to facilitate dialogue and practices to incorporate JROTC instructors into elements of student success and community involvement (Saha & Ellensworth, 2013). Exploration was attempted related to the role of JROTC instructors in PLC's, also seen as a key element in helping students be successful, whether it is through minimizing isolation among teachers, or increasing general dialogue among peers on a grade level or subject level (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Jensen, 2012).

JROTC instructors' responses to the question "What have been your personal experiences with grade level work in in team/peer learning communities? Please discuss your impressions and/or feelings about these relationships" poses, what initially seems to be a limitation on terminology, but actually provides insight into the JROTC instructor perceptions versus educational language. Five of the 12 responses appear off-topic, meaning the responses vary from "it's an easy transition from activity duty to becoming a JROTC instructor," and "every cadet is different on an educational level, need to adjust at all times." The reason why this proves insightful is that shared language, such as learning teams, or PLC's, have become relatively common in many educational circles, are quite differently perceived for many JROTC instructors. Even language, such as instructor versus teacher is viewed differently, with only 1 JROTC instructor identifying herself as a "teacher" (Figure 4).

The few instances in which JROTC instructors identify cross-collaborative efforts, it is spoken in positive terms. "Learning classes have improved instruction" as well as "shared use of thinking maps" are the two specific mentions of teacher collaboration. One instructor identified that there is limited/no interaction with other teachers. The perception of a lack of collaboration between JROTC instructors and their peer community is important, identifying that there is a greater need for collaborative efforts to enhance lateral peer to peer relationships and gain the rewards of mutual collaboration, peer support, which in turn can help student success (Tosey, 1999; Bridwell-Mitchell, 2015; Turner, Christensen, Kackar-Cam, Trucano & Fulmer, 2014).

A result of the language difference, limited information on research question 2, "what collaborative efforts do high school JROTC teachers engage in with non-JROTC instructional staff," responses are broad and focus on specific tasks such as color guard or discipline. An additional consideration is that there is not a language difference, but the formal relationships established in teacher communities in the form of PLC's or grade level involvement exclude JROTC instructors. Additional follow-up regarding language would be needed, with clear examples of duties and tasks affiliated with PLC's used to determine whether JROTC instructors engage in activities that are affiliated with PLC's, but are not aware of its formal or informal use based on the specific term PLC.

JROTC instructors identify a gap between perceptions of what it is that they do and what it is they are perceived doing. JROTC instructors are perceived to have roles that focus on mentorship, citizenship, instruction, and teaching students. JROTC instructors' view that they are perceived to heavily focus on discipline, sometimes to the detriment of recognizing that JROTC instructors have course guidelines and curriculum in the same vein as teachers in any high school. Although some JROTC instructors perceive their role as that of disciplinarian, it is

not the primary role with which they identify, nor is it the only role. Within this theme, a

JROTC instructor identifies that there appears to be a lack of incongruity with regards to JROTC

instructors having lesson plans and engaging in teaching behaviors, as opposed to simply

engaging in discipline.

The element of discipline is also worth noting in that JROTC instructors may self-

perceive their role as a disciplinarian, this is not always the case, with one instructor identifying

that he is often sought in instances of discipline, but there is little that can specifically be done if

the student is not one of his students. The perception that JROTC instructors identify with

discipline is in alignment with increased levels of attendance by at risk students as well as

students engaging in vocational type course work increase the students overall sense of

mentorship, as well as a change in what are considered norms and values within a vocational

program (Pema & Mehay, 2012; Ali, McWhirther & Chronister, 2005; Black, 2010). However,

definitive relationships would require further research.

Future Considerations

The information gathered from this study can be used to further explore perceptions

surrounding JROTC instructors, specifically teachers and administrators' perceptions of JROTC

instruction. Awareness of the perceptual differences of JROTC instructors' experience between

what it is that they perceive themselves doing, and what others perceive seeing them doing, can

be used to inform training for both JROTC instructors as well as administrators and teachers at

schools that include JROTC. JROTC instructors have demonstrated a perception of incongruity

surrounding how they perceive themselves and how their peer instructors perceive them;

potentially overlooking elements of experience with a focus on what it is that the JROTC

instructors are paid.

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There is clearly a need to further situate the role of the JROTC instructor within the campus environment, both from a peer perspective and an administrative perspective. A case study provided by Ramussen (2014) explored the benefits of administrators and teacher engaging in instructional rounds, an element that could be a catalyst for improvement of JROTC instructor concepts of field specific language, but also of the gaps perceived by instructors of their teacher peers and what it is that the JROTC instructor does in his/her classroom. A future consideration is engaging in a program like instructional rounds, which seeks to create greater levels of understanding from and for JROTC instructors within a high school environment, having the potential to address various areas of JROTC instructor perspectives and capitalize on educational best practices.

This research has shown that there is incongruence between perceptions of JROTC instructors and how JROTC instructors perceive their peers viewing their role as a JROTC instructor.   Elements surrounding the responses of JROTC instructors also highlight questions surrounding JROTC instructors' inclusion in peer learning communities and even the awareness of JROTC instructors about peer learning communities and/or the language surrounding this specific method of collaboration. Further research is clearly needed on JROTC instructors understanding of collaborative communities, as well as exploration of specific ways for lateral relationships to be enhanced with JROTC instructors.

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ARTICLE III: TERMINOLOGY AND JROTC INSTRUCTORS

Lateral relationships within the workplace have been identified as having an influential role on the employee. These peer to peer relationships may influence the retention of the employee and overall longevity, elements which have been shown to contribute to student success on standardized tests, a common measure of student achievement (Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2013; Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Kraft, Marinell & Yee, 2016). Peer learning communities of teachers (PLC) have also been shown to increase the student standardized test scores when utilized by teachers engaged in common core courses, or classes that have a state test affiliated with a course to measure student readiness and achievement within the subject (Sparks, 2013; Goodard, Goodard & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). In instances where there is no state measurement for a class, sometimes called non-common core, or vocational courses, PLC's have shown to increase overall collegiality and engagement between teachers and can alleviate teacher frustrations with limited professional development (Kaufman & Grimm, 2013).

A review of current educational literature surrounding PLC's excludes Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) from discussions of PLC's. It should be noted that JROTC instructors, a unique position within education is also excluded from current literature regarding PLC's. JROTC instructors are present at over 1,600 high school in the U.S., with at least one instructor present for each contingent of JROTC (JROTC, n.d.). The JROTC instructor position is unique in that instructors most closely resemble vocational teachers in work experience within a field, but does not suffer from many vocational hurdles such as female and minority recruitment and retention (Pema & Mehay, 2012; Ainsworth & Roscigno, 2005). There is the additional element in which JROTC instructors maintain a relationship with their initial employer, the U.S. military.

Peer to peer relationships among Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) instructors were explored using a quantitative phenomenal study among 12 current JROTC instructors in a large Georgia school district. The research questions that were explored in that study 1) What are the perceptions of high school JROTC teachers as instructional staff members in their peer learning community at schools that currently have JROTC instructional staff? 2) What collaborative efforts do high school JROTC teachers engage in with non-JROTC instructional staff? and 3) What is the role that JROTC instructors perceive themselves to have at their school?

The initial emphasis of the study was to determine the role that Peer Learning Communities or PLC's played in the educational practice of JROTC instructors and whether inclusion was occurring. This emphasis on PLC's was to link JROTC instructors with an element that is considered key in school dynamics, creating a link within a peer learning network within a school that spanned either subject area or grade level (Stoll, Bolam, Mcmahon, Wallace & Thomas, 2006). PLC's have been a tool to reduce isolation felt among teachers and have a positive influence on teaching pedagogy and content awareness (Rosenholtz, 1989; Sparks, 2013; Shaha & Ellsworth, 2013). Extensive research and commentary has been accumulated on PLC's, but JROTC instructors have been notably absent from the dialogue, even with its presence at approximately 1,600 high schools throughout the U.S.

The results of the phenomenological study can play a key role in understanding how JROTC instructors perceive their lateral work place relationships, which in turn can help to facilitate meaningful professional growth opportunities for educational leadership in the organizing of professional development, leading institutional change, and incorporating an additional resource into the vision and goals of on-campus functions. It is also determined that

the findings of the phenomenological study provide an opportunity for improvement in lateral work place relationships, especially in addressing language gaps that maybe occurring to and from JROTC instructors with regards to the high school teaching community.

Findings

The qualitative method of phenomenology sought "the study of personal experience and requires a description or interpretation of the meanings of phenomena experienced by participants (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). The initial research questions sought to explore the perceptions of JROTC instructors and their role within their school PLC and community. Demographic data was collected, such as gender, classification of school, and title preference; instructor or teacher. Questions were also asked specifically about state certification for the instructors, to situate the response of the JROTC instructors against traditionally classified teachers.

Permission to contact JROTC instructors were provided by on-site personnel, but an internal review board (IRB) was not obtained from Trident University. Survey and survey responses were gathered outside of the framework of school approval.

2. How long have you been teaching in your current high school setting?

● 3-5 years	5
● More than 10 years	3
● 0-2 years	2
● 6-10 years	2
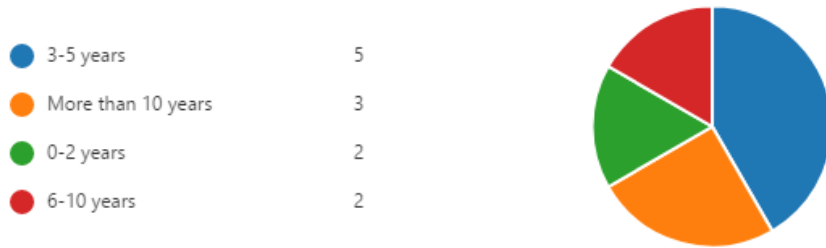
Figure 6. Instructor tenure varied by participant, with 3-5 years having the highest concentration of respondents at 5 years.

4. What is the classification of your school?

● I do not know.	3
● 2A	2
● 4A	2
● 1A	1
● 3A	1
● 5A	1
● 6A	1
● 7A	1
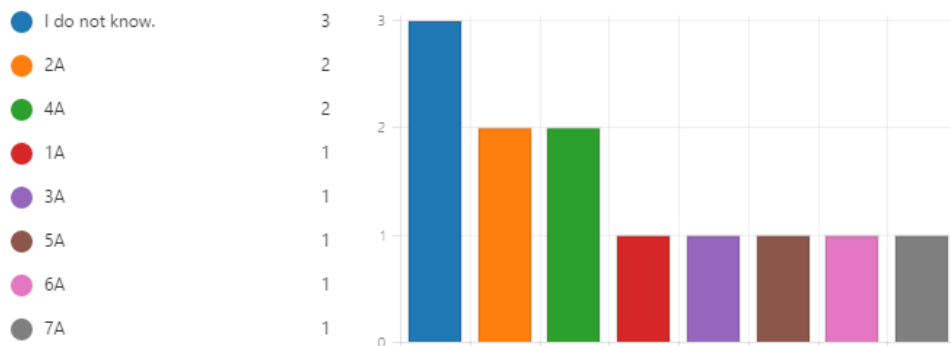
Figure 7. Indication of many respondents uncertain of the classification of their school in the traditional state size ranking.

5. Do you have a Georgia Profession Standards certification or license?

● Yes	8
● No	4

Figure 8. Most JROTC have a Georgia Professional Standards certification or license, the same certification required for traditional teachers but not required for JROTC instructors.

6. I identify as a(n):

● Either of the above	6
● Instructor	5
● Teacher	1

Figure 9. JROTC instructors were asked about specific language regarding their on-campus role, only 1 instructor identified as a teacher, whereas 41% identify solely as an instructor.

Significant Statements

A list was generated of significant statements that sought not to overlap and seek to minimize repetitiveness.

Open question: In thinking about support as a teacher, what have been your experiences with non-JROTC teachers at your current school?

- Feel valued and supported (appears multiple times)

- Segregated and limited interaction with other teachers

- Multiple teachers not aware of job, those that are aware are supportive

- Frustration from teachers' due to pay scale

- P.E. and coaches tend to be source of conflict due to event conflicts.

Open question: What have been your personal experiences with grade level work team/peer learning communities? Please discuss your impressions and/or feelings about those relationships.

- Valued as a committee member.

- Interaction is limited to a mandatory Special Education Course for district

- Relationships and involvement are based on teacher turnover

- All cadets are different; there is a need for constant adjustment

- I do not have experience with this

- We are recognized by teachers, but not administration in terms of what it is that we do

- Lack of teacher understanding that JROTC instructors have lesson plans and specific curriculum. Thinking maps are utilized by JROTC and taught to non-JROTC teaching peers to use in classroom.

- Learning classes occurred resulting in improved instructor relationships

Open question: What do you think your role is on campus? Please discuss both formal and informal roles.

- Often contacted regarding behavior of JROTC students in classroom of other teachers

- Instructor role, mentoring young people

- Bus, file, football, color guard, flag detail, blood drive, guide for VIPs

- Function as a teacher, facilitate learning through curriculum based instruction/informally to teach from experience of the human condition

- Role models; students outside JROTC aspire to be like us. Mentorship

- Security and discipline

- Military affiliation.

- Perception that JROTC functions as a recruitment tool

Meaningful Units

Grouping of large units of information into themes or meaning units, as per Creswell (2013).

- Theme 1: Feel value and supported.

- Theme 2: Teachers are not aware of what JROTC instructors do, sometimes seen as a recruiter or free labor.

- Theme 3: Mentorship plays a large role in the position.

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- Theme 4: Strong relationship still with military and self-perception is as an instructor in contrast to a teacher.

Textual and Structural Descriptions

"I believe our department is instrumental in mentoring young people," is given in the contexts of a perceived role as "a disciplinarian, especially to the parents," "students are disciplined in JROTC," as responses that teachers will inform JROTC instructors of in-class behavior.

"There are occasions where you have to educate a fellow teacher on the intricacies of your job," "they don't fully understand what JROTC does," and "teachers who have not taken time to understand the program are the ones with negative outlooks," are presented in the context of "pay-scale" and sense of support from the faculty.

"Mixed, based on teacher turnover" regarding support occurs in the context of an instructor at a small school (1A) and with 6-10 years of experience.

"Cadets are called regularly to help out around the school," "sometimes seen as free labor," and "they think we only teach discipline, marching, physical training" are provided in the structural element of other perceptions of role. Reference to teaching discipline is coupled with self-perception of "facilitate learning, through curriculum based instruction."

Composite Description

There is a re-occurring theme of feeling valued and supported in some context for instructors, regardless of time in the district. The value and supported varies based on the awareness level of the teachers of JROTC and in some instances, even the campus administrators' support of the program.

The theme of feeling valued and supported is contrasted with a lack of understanding of what JROTC instructors do, which can influence feelings towards role expectations and even animosity regarding pay scale. The lack of understanding is consistent, but its occurrence from either administrators or teachers varies based on the individual respondent.

There is a constant perception of being a disciplinarian, but the instructor responses indicate that there are significant components outside of this, such as building school pride, emphasis on curriculum and instruction, and being a mentor. There is only one instance in which there is alignment between disciplinarian as a self-perceived role and that of perception of peers of the JROTC instructor role.

The Need for Shared Language

Terminology and Success. Educational leadership in the current context of school standards are often tasked with advancing student achievement. To ultimately advance student achievement, educational leaders must determine the best way to create an environment among professional and paraprofessionals within their campuses that fosters the support of student achievement. Regardless of the position of the educational leader, the reoccurring theme of successful educational leadership includes forward-looking, inspiring, and component emerges in qualities for these individuals (Reynolds & Warfield, 2010; Thompson, 2009). Clarity of language and shared terminology are highlighted in successful leaderships, successful teams, and successful programs (Reynolds & Warfield, 2010; Wukich, 2014). Shared language plays a key role in communicating vision and direction for the work place.

JROTC Specific Language. Terminology plays a unique role in the experience of JROTC instructors. Within the study conducted a question was included to focus on demographics of JROTC instructors, specifically self-perception of title. The question, "I

identify as a(n)" and given responses of "teacher," "instructor," or "it does not matter" was

provided for a linguistic understanding of JROTC instructors perception. 5 instructors clearly

identified a preference for instructor, 6 identified as "it does not matter," whereas only 1 JROTC

instructor identified as a "teacher." This slight language subtly, which may not stand out too

many in education, appears to have a significant impact on JROTC instructors; rather than

clearly identify as "teachers," as most educators do, JROTC instructors identify clearly as

JROTC instructors, or appear not to mind a distinction.

An element of this distinction can be found in military communications, both in the style

and the terminology that is used. An individual who has been qualified as a JROTC instructor

has undergone specific certification and benchmarks met and approved by the specific branch of

service. The qualifications that have been undertaken by a JROTC instructor specifically label

him/her as an instructor, with clearly outlined duties and responsibilities surrounding the

communication of instruction (Department of Army, 2016). An individual moves

responsibilities and qualifications when titled "instructor" as prescribed within the guidelines of

the specific military branch (Department of Army, 2016). In considering that the JROTC

instructor reports to the military and is responsibility for curriculum developed by the military

he/she is still affiliated with the military, thus the title appropriate for his/her position is

"instructor" based on his/her role and responsibilities. The military, an organization that has

hundreds of thousands of employees, requires specific distinctions in expectations and

responsibilities based on titles. The specificity with which language is used throughout the

military allows for an understanding of what tasks and duties that an individual is responsible for

with clarity. Acknowledging that persons serving in the role of JROTC instructor have at least

20 years of military experience, it is worthwhile for educators to consider that those in the

instructor position may assume a clarity of roles and responsibilities, based on titles, that may not be present at a high school campus.

Education Specific Terminology. The ambiguity in terminology appears to have had implications within the phenomenological research study conducted in understanding JROTC instructor perceptions of his/her work environment. The term peer learning community was utilized in asking questions, intentionally left without a structured definition of the term, to help facilitate the meaning that the respondent made from the term. One respondent indicated that he/she has no experience with these work relationships, but multiple responses appear off topic, with one respondent indicating that "all cadets are different" and another indicating that there have been some special education classes that incorporated various individuals of the school. In-person interviews potentially could have facilitated follow-up questioning to understand the narrative surrounding these thoughts, but when provided with direct terminology of "peer learning community" responses from JROTC instructors appear to have a variety of interpretations.

Research conducted also drew an additional area of ambiguity among JROTC instructors, that of state classification of its school. Included as a demographic question for the researcher, seeking to provide a context for school attributes that information was gathered from, it was determined that 20% of the respondents or 3 out of 12 indicated that they did not know their state classification. Georgia, like most U.S. states, utilize a classification system of school size, which influences elements of funding and cost, but also is used to determine which schools a high school is eligible to compete against for state competitions. Although most educators are impacted by the classification size of a high school campus, it is interesting to note that JROTC

instructors did identify elements of perceived conflict with athletic coaches, individuals who are arguably the most impacted by the school size and classification system.

Lack of shared terminology, especially for a work position, can create ambiguity in roles and responsibilities. This has proven to be true in instances of stabling shared goals and responsibilities for an organization (Reynolds & Warfield, 2010; Wukich, 2014). Not only does the lack of shared language create hurdles to organizational success, it can extend as far as becoming ostracism, or when an organization or individuals within that organization "omits to take actions that engage another organizational member" (Robinson, O'Reilly & Wang, 2012). The idea of ostracism extends into an understanding of the idea of language clustering, meaning certain groups, both social and professional, have language types used for communication. Language is more than delivering messages, but it is a form of knowledge sharing and that allows for a meeting of emotions, power, politics, and social circumstances (Ahmad & Widen, 2015). Identities of groups are created around the language that is used and how it is understood by the organizational members. Organizational ostracism is not simply about intentionally neglecting the inclusion of others, but omissions, such a shared language and understanding of positions can contribute to this feeling of isolation and workplace barriers. The benefits of inclusion extend beyond the specific JROTC instructor, but has the potential to impact staff dynamics and satisfaction, which in turn can impact the overall student success within the school.

Perceptions of Inclusion. Language is identified as a precursor to additional responses by JROTC instructors who overwhelmingly articulated low levels of support from administrators and learning peers. Again, and again JROTC instructors perceived that their role on-campus was that they were the disciplinarian. Only one instructor had alignment between how he/she saw his

role, that of an instructor, with co-workers who perceived that as his/her role. JROTC instructors

(67%) overwhelmingly saw themselves as mentors, and if role-model is coupled with mentor,

almost all JROTC instructors saw their role functioning in this capacity. Differing perceptions of

the role of JROTC instructors were also coupled with the repeated perception that JROTC

instructors felt that peer co-workers did not know what it was that JROTC instructors did, such

as have curriculum and lesson plans of their own, as well as areas of friction with coaches over

student athlete time commitments and one instance of lack of understanding pay difference

appearing to drive tension between JROTC instructors and teachers.

There are instances in which JROTC instructors did perceive inclusion, specifically

related to tasks. Tasks that were identified included school color guard and school escorts, but

only one instructor identified a shared element of community practice, which was mind-mapping

used by students throughout the school. This one instance of mind-mapping is identified as the

only situation in which an emphasis on a component of education, rather than mechanics, is

discussed. Even if JROTC instructors are not self-identifying it, the reported perception of

mechanics of JROTC instruction are not indicative of a successful PLC (DuFour, 2004). A

disconnect is occurring with regards to the support and capabilities that a JROTC instructor can

bring to their school community, especially in self-perceived areas of leadership and mentorship

within the student population.

Need for JROTC Inclusion. Perceptions by JROTC instructors regarding a lack of

understanding regarding their function, as well as shared terminology should factor into efforts

by educational leaders seeking to implement achievement strategies on their campuses that

specifically target JROTC instructional staff utilization. This research focuses on change from

an educational leadership perspective rather than outline changes for the JROTC instructional

staff and training affiliated with their programs. The primary driver for change efforts initiated

by educational leadership is based on differing campus based strategies, as well as the ease to

implement front-line change within a district or school versus military training institutions that

may have legislative and federal drivers in-place prior to any change initiative can occur within

the program. Different strategies have been explored for campus based leadership to incorporate

within their programs. Localized front line changes are recommended, rather than a national

wide change to the JROTC training program, as the JROTC training program is an extension of

military training, focused on achieving the JROTC goals of citizenship rather than campus-based

initiatives.

<p align="center">**Recommended Strategies**</p>

Technical vs. Non-Technical Audiences. Technical talk, or talk that is specific within a

practicing field, is more likely to occur in vocational professions. JROTC instructors have had

the prior vocation of military service, having picked up a large amount of technical language

from within their military service branch and becoming even more nuanced based on the specific

service unit within the military branch. It has been learned that for professionals to be effective,

there needs to be an understanding of technical and non-technical audiences, having a decoding

of the language necessary for enhanced team work (Darling, 2003). The field of engineering has

been recommended to engage in a study of typical examples of communication that occur within

the engineering field and among engineers, a step that can be localized to school administrators

who have JROTC instructional programs (Darling, 2003).   It would be beneficial to engage in

this review on a school level (preferred) or a district wide-level assessment of communication

points between JROTC instructors and personnel. This function would serve for guidance in

areas in which JROTC instructors and school message intersect, allowing for an examination of

<p align="center">68</p>

communicative practices that maybe different for educational professionals and JROTC instructors.

Instructional Rounds. Instructional rounds have been shown to beneficial in school settings, especially in those that utilize vocational teachers. It is important to understand that cross-curricular learning can take place at a school and be implemented in addition to a PLC (Rogerman & Riehl, 2012). Not only can a short period of time be taken to determine intersections of language and conversation between administrators, teachers, and JROTC instructors, but instructional rounds incorporating JROTC instructors would allow for a greater understanding of many of the points that are perceived to be under appreciated or unknown to the rest of the school community. Ramussen (2014) has discussed the successful incorporation of instructional rounds, primarily in the aspect that they are not administrator centric and not devised to assess individuals on performance. Rather, as instructional rounds are used by young doctors, they can help to give insight into different specialty areas that may need attention, even if an individual is not entirely versed in that component of medicine (Rogeman & Rihel, 2012). Beginning the process of exposure to what it is that JROTC instructors do, can at least begin the process of creating a greater level of understanding between the professionals.

Summary

Research into PLC utilization and incorporation of JROTC instructors revealed that there is a language gap that is present in JROTC instructors and traditional professionals in the field of education. JROTC instructors have the potential to bring a significant component to their campuses in terms of mentorship and leadership to at risk populations, as well as females in vocational fields. Yet, much like traditional vocational fields, JROTC instructors in this research appear to have a minimal relationship with co-teaching and cross curricular involvement. The

perception of JROTC instructors are that they have a role, but the full extent of their role, such as lesson planning and teaching, are misunderstood or overlooked. JROTC instructor perceptions are not simply limited to their co-teachers, but extend to administrators, who in one instance were identified as a greater source of misunderstanding than co-teachers.

The language gap between JROTC instructors and teachers may be inadvertent, but can lead to elements of work ostracization and limited socialization. It is recommended that administrators undergo considerations in meeting technical language elements of JROTC instructors, or at least make themselves aware of where JROTC instructors and instruction may intersect with language that is being technically communicated by JROTC instructors and potentially misunderstood or not utilized. Ways that educators can capitalize on using this unique resource on their campus, such as increasing social relationships among teachers, is to engage in instructional rounds, which can give insight into the functions and roles of the JROTC instructors. The use of instructional rounds, not simply by administrators, can form a foundation for conversations and cross-curricular planning, which has been shown to increase overall student performance in increase teacher satisfaction.

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CONCLUSION

After reviewing literature in the field of education, business communications, and U.S. legislation surrounding the formation of Junior Reserve Officers Training, it is believed that there is a gap in literature that specifically focuses on the role of JROTC instructors within the field of education. Further investigation into JROTC instructors, specifically perceptions within their schools and peer-learning communities, it is believed that JROTC instructors would benefit from efforts on the part of educators to be more inclusive in language used surrounding education specific elements, such as peer learning communities (PLC's), as well as a greater understanding of the role JROTC instructors play in implementing their course articulation. The researcher's dissertation has consisted of three articles, each article building upon one another, creating a literature review, research study, and implications of results.

Article 1 consisted of the researcher reviewing the literature that included benefits of teachers and their role within peer learning communities, or lateral work relationships. Educational institutions, viewed as traditional corporate entities, were discussed in the context of strong lateral work relationships, specifically that peer to peer relationships can create a positive or negative effect on employee performance (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). Specifically narrowed to education, work relationships were explored in the context of peer learning communities or PLC's, which seek to connect teachers to other teachers in the same subject area or across grade levels. PLC's have been shown to increase student test performance, as well as increase teacher retention, another factor that contributes to student success (Kraft, Marinell & Yee, 2016; Lopez & Slate, 2014; Rockoff, 2004).

JROTC instructors were notably absent from the field of research surrounding JROTC, but literature used from the field of education was used to look at elements of vocational

instructors in PLC's. Information was gathered pertaining vocational teachers' roles within PLC, most notably that research conducted by Ramusseen (2014) identifies that the use of vocational teachers in supporting Common Core standards have been shown to benefit schools. Ramusseen (2014) also discusses the role that instructional rounds play in supporting vocational teachers, specifically rounds made by teachers and administrators in watching vocational teachers in their classrooms or in their work environment, thus increasing common language and awareness on the job responsibilities of vocational instructors (City, Elmore, Fiarman & Teitel, 2009). Overall, peer learning was shown to play a role to fellow teachers, but also learning plays a role in administrators' management of the educational environment.

JROTC was identified as having some unique characteristics from vocational studies. Specifically, JROTC has a government mandate for its creation and implementation (JROTC, n.d.). Furthermore, JROC appears to overcome student success issues of traditional vocational programs, such as long-term enrollment by students, as well as a larger enrollment of female and non-white male students (Pema & Mehay, 2009). JROTC students do not have a higher GPA than their non-JROTC counterparts, but the program has been seen to have a higher student population that is considered at risk, or more likely to drop out of school (Pema & Mehay, 2009). JROTC has been identified as being primarily a skill based program, in alignment with its core mission of instilling citizenship and leadership (Ameen, 2009).

There are mixed reactions to JROTC within the public. Administrators and JROTC students have a positive perception of JROTC programs (Morris, 2003; Weaver, 2012). However, JROTC has often been a target by peer teachers, concerned that JROTC is seeking to recruit low-income and minority students to the military (McGauley, 2015; NNOMY, 2014). JROTC, specifically JROTC instructors, have also come under criticism in states that have

offered or attempted to offer JROTC as a substitute for physical education. The primary

arguments against JROTC instructors have been that individuals can become JROTC instructors

without state teacher certifications and that JROTC is not as physically demanding as traditional

physical education courses (Adams, 2014; Lounsbery, Holt, Monnat, Funk & McKenzie, 2014).

Aside from the critical responses to JROTC and JROTC instructors, there appeared to be no in-

depth research into the individual experiences of JROTC instructors, even as JROTC continues

to be present at over 1,600 high schools throughout the U.S.

Article 2 reviewed elements of JROTC, specifically consideration as a vocational course,

as well as the qualifications of JROTC instructions; notably 20 years of military service and the

absence of JROTC instructors and their perceptions of lateral work relationships. As full-time

employees within an educational setting, JROTC instructor's perception of work relationships

are important in that they play a role in engagement, positive communication, and even

addressing areas of stress (Johnson, Cooper, Cartright, Donald, Taylor & Millett, 2005; Kang &

Sung, 2017). Since no investigation specifically into JROTC instructors have occurred, there is

no knowledge on whether or not JROTC instructors recoup the positive benefits associated with

PLC's, such as greater campus engagement and student success (Rosenholtz, 1989). As

academic benefits have been afforded students who have instructors with greater periods of

engagement, it is necessary to further explore the position of the JROTC instructor.

The researcher conducted a survey of current JROTC instructors at a large partially rural,

partially urban, school district located in the southern U.S. 12 JROTC instructors were

interviewed using a respondent styled survey that was distributed via e-mail. Information that

was gathered provided insight into the lived experiences of JROTC instructors at multiple high

schools throughout a single school district, as well as perceptions of their environment. It should

be noted that site permission was granted for distribution of surveys, but surveys were distributed prior to internal review board permission from Trident University.

Instructor survey results were gathered and analyzed using a phenomenological analysis and representation method. Based on exploring significant statements, textual and structural description, a composite description of feeling valued and supported within their school, specifically finding that the more JROTC instructors perceive their peers knowing about their position, they felt a greater sense of value. The composite description also identified that value and support plays a role in that JROTC instructors perceive that there is a lack of understanding in what it is that they do, both from teachers and administrators. JROTC instructors also identified that there was a re-occurring theme of being perceived as a disciplinarian, while one JROTC instructor did perceive him/herself to be a disciplinarian. However, a majority of JROTC instructors perceived themselves to being mentors and leaders.

JROTC instructor responses to specific questions about his/her role in PLC's resulted in five of 12 responses appearing off-topic; meaning that they did not specifically respond with elements considered part of a traditional PLC. The interview results give insight into a language difference between the researcher and JROTC instructors, specifically as to the meaning of PLC and how it is incorporated on campus. In instances where it appears that JROC instructors are familiar with the term PLC, it is explained that they have minimal interaction with other teachers, or in one instance, cross-collaboration had been perceived as beneficial. Language also plays a role in instructor responses, with a majority of JROTC instructors identifying themselves as instructors or teachers, rather than instructor alone.

Article 3 has an emphasis on the need for shared language between JROTC instructors and educational leadership. Clarity of language has been identified as a necessary component for

successful leadership, successful teams, and successful program implementation (Reynolds & Warfield, 2010; Wukickh, 2014). It is identified that terminology plays a unique role in the experience of JROTC instructors, as five out of 12 instructors identified a preference for the term "instructor" over teacher and only one instructor identified his/herself as a "teacher." There is an added emphasis on language clarity because of JROTC instructors experience within the military, specifically in the distinct nature of military communications in both style and terminology. Individuals who are JROTC instructors have very specific duties and responsibilities as an instructor, a label given due to their having met very specific Department of Army qualifications and certifications. JROTC instructors are responsible to their school principals, but still have a reporting requirement to the military, which means that he/she still must engage in very specific military communication. Considering that the military employees hundreds of thousands of individuals, the clarity and specific language is necessary to minimize ambiguity, an element that educational administrators and peer to peer professional may not realize.

Limited amount of shared terminology may result in inadvertent work ramifications. Shared language contributes to organizational success, but may cause feelings of exclusion of members who are not privy to the specific language or communications (Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2012). This element of exclusion extends to perceptions of JROTC instructors regarding administrator and peer understanding of the curriculum and role played by JROTC instructors. Recommended strategies are provided that address training that specifically addressing element of language for JROTC instructors and school administrators, as well the use of instructional rounds by administrators and peers to get an understanding of what is occurring in JROTC instructors' classrooms.

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