

AN EMBEDDED SINGLE-CASE STUDY: IDENTIFYING JROTC TEACHERS'  
LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT INFLUENCE SECONDARY LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENTS

by

NaAngela Lolee Sue O'Neal

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

[Doctor of Education]

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study was to identify the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. This study's central question was: How can JROTC teachers' leadership practices and behaviors influence innovative classroom instructions? The conceptual framework was Kouzes' and Posner's leadership model on positive leadership transformation. The research was conducted to identify factors attributed to the problem that leadership used by the JROTC teachers was ineffective, despotic, and irrelevant to modern students' needs. The methodology used a qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study design because the inquiry was appropriate for descriptive studies to describe a phenomenon's features, context, and process. This study identified how a purposively selected sample of ten JROTC teachers effectively integrated leadership practices into their teaching. The setting was five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia. Semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussions were used to develop a detailed description of each case. Themes and coding were used to analyze the data collected to be compared to the school culture as a cross-case analysis. There was a literature gap on the effectiveness of leadership practices within the JROTC program. This study confirmed that JROTC teachers were instrumental in effective leadership practices because students were transformed by growth mindsets and ideologies that shift their worldviews as they obtained new information. Therefore, teachers provided the structure for promoting critical reflection and empowerment that created growth mindset transformations based on the student's unique needs while promoting awareness of leadership practices and innovations.

*Keywords:* jrotc, leadership practices, leadership challenge model, transformation

**Copyright Page**

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## Dedication

I dedicate this manuscript to all my supporters who have prayed, motivated, guided, and loved me throughout this journey. First, I must acknowledge my late mother, Mary Nancy Shaw Johnson, who always indulged me in using her as a sounding board, knowing she never knew what I was talking about, but was a great listener. In addition to my mother's support, I would not have endured the completion of my dissertation had it not been for My Lady, Mrs. Rose Lomax, who often felt out of her league because she did not understand the dissertation process. I enjoyed explaining information to her, which helped me to maintain focus. I must thank my sister, Luvjoy Johnson, who uniquely balanced my doctoral work, teaching career, and family responsibilities as a second mother to my sons. My friends, Ms. Gwendolyn Pendergrass, Mrs. Latonia Dean-Thomas, and Mrs. Jemiko Whatley have reminded me that, while pursuing an advanced degree is important, my family and faith should be my top priorities. My family was understanding and inspiring. To my husband, SGM (Retired) Curtis O'Neal, I am so blessed for the person I have become because of you. The late evenings of writing, the times you have forgiven me for totally ignoring you, and your inspirational words have made my efforts seamless. To my sons, Olilandros O'Neal, O'zionne O'Neal, and Orilonus O'Neal, I have watched you grow into fine young men, and I thank you, boys, for making this part of the journey easy for me because you learned to cook, clean, and entertain yourselves. I love you and thank God for my friends and family. Finally, I dedicate this work to Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Faith guided me to Liberty University, where my knowledge grows more robust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Army Doctrine Publication (ADP)

Department of the Army (DA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI)

Junior Reserves Officer Training Corps (JROTC)

National Defense Act (NDA)

National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)

Non-commissioned Officer (NCO)

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

This research identified the effective leadership practices of Junior Reserves Officer's Training Corps (JROTC) teachers while improving students' achievement and growth. Some nonacademic Army JROTC teachers felt marginalized using strategies they saw as irrelevant to their discipline (Smit & Millett, 2021). Any changes in leadership education must be aligned with current Army doctrine (Army Regulation 600-100, 2017). The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® model by Kouzes and Posner (2017) were used as a conceptual framework to explore leadership approaches and strategies within the JROTC context. This model was often referred to as the Leadership Challenge Model. I presented the background of the study and specified the context in which it will be conducted. The chapter also included the study's purpose and the problem it sought to address. Research questions were included to show the direction of the study, which will have both practical and theoretical significance. In addition, the chapter contained definitions of the key terms. A chapter summary was included at the end to transition to the following chapters.

### **Background**

When discussing leadership, effectiveness mattered when behavior styles limited the ability to lead. The positive transformation of leadership was a process that extended beyond performances and incentives but motivated followers to develop positive emotions, standards, ethics, values, and long-term goals (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Although JROTC helped students develop leadership skills and character and increase positive relationships with adult role models, studies have found some positive associations and some associations without statistically

significant results (Goldman et al., 2017). Teachers had not always embraced change with the desired level of effectiveness that influenced an institution's culture and performance.

Professional experience was indeed mediated by perceptions on the training's value (Gore & Rickards, 2020). The background section summarized the most relevant literature and provided the historical, social, and theoretical contexts.

### **Historical Context**

The Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) is a leadership program designed for secondary education, apart from some middle schools across the United States with a strong desire for achievement. The National Defense Act of 1916 authorized the JROTC program in schools enacted by Congress (U.S. Code § 3801). The JROTC program opened to other services under the Reserve Officers' Training Corps Vitalization Act of 1964. The National Defense Authorization Act of 1993 authorized the expansion of JROTC 3,500 units (Goldman et al., 2017). The mission statement of the JROTC captured motivating students to become better citizens by teaching them the values of leadership, citizenship, service learning, teamwork, responsibility, esprit de corps, discipline, and self-awareness (Goldman et al., 2017). The Cadet Command brought significant improvements to the JROTC curriculum that contributed to students' citizenship and leadership skills (Kotakis, 2016). An integral part of the JROTC program was teaching core values and developing character by shaping students' behavior and characteristics (Goldman et al., 2017). The JROTC program attributed the program's successes primarily to retired military personnel with over 20 years of military experience before becoming instructors (Meyer & Rinn, 2022).

Improved instructors provided more opportunities and academic success for the students to develop leadership skills. Improving teacher practices and leadership skills were crucial for

educational outcomes when teachers' mindsets were more receptive to professional growth (Sawalhi & Chaaban, 2019; Zalaznick, 2018,). Teachers pursuing higher levels of leadership development was also crucial because even experienced veterans had gaps in their leadership training that were more exclusive to actual training offered rather than through a college or training center (Kirchner, 2017). Therefore, the Army JROTC teachers' role and their leadership skills were critical because they effectively led themselves to lead others and achieve organizational goals and values. Military leadership had traditionally been autocratic (Harms et al., 2018). In addition, there was an inherent risk that autocratic leadership fostered a destructive and toxic organizational environment that increased stress and lower satisfaction. However, it did not necessarily entail maltreatment of followers, nor could it be assumed that only individuals with authoritarian personalities assumed this leadership style (Harms et al., 2018). This type of destructive leadership was considered active destructive leadership, which was the repeated lack of support that could trigger negative emotions, anger, humiliation, and rejection that have detrimental effects on both military and civilian organizations (Fosse et al., 2019). The lack of the equity components of fairness could have hindered growth and made teachers irresponsive to students' ever-changing, diverse needs (Zalaznick, 2018). Immunity to change was also a problem that had been discussed in the scholarship, with scholars showing that some veteran teachers tended to oppose change and innovation (Gore & Rickards, 2020; Snyder, 2017).

The transformational leadership style was a proven leadership style that the military had adapted and customized to fit their needs by paying attention to the common goals of their mission (Williams et al., 2018). Even with the volume of references in literature on the application of leadership in the military setting had been rather extensive for the past decade (Dungveckis et al., 2022; Garcia-Guiua et al., 2016; Reiley & Jacobs, 2016), more scholarship

was needed in the military education context although transformational leadership had led to an increase in academic performance (Kovach, 2019). Those leadership styles have been observed in the military for the past decades, which showed the gradual shift in military leadership practice, which could have been reflected in military education (NCO Journal, 2018). Those practices were considered essential factors for the positive transformation of leadership in understanding those theories and correctly aligning their practices to specific situations were considered the hallmarks of professional soldiers (NCO Journal, 2018).

### **Social Context**

The social implications of dealing with ineffective and irrelevant leadership practices by JROTC teachers in a military context within public education could have provided an overview of potential challenges affecting teachers, students, and other areas of education. However, research on the positive transformation of leadership in the context of cadet training and military education had been limited (Kovach, 2019; Madjan & Jayasingam, 2019). There was a concern about assuming that ineffective or disruptive leadership practices equate to high risks and costs associated with failure in the military and education (Smit & Millett, 2021). The proposed research could have benefitted other organizations because of several characteristics such as resilience, robustness, and character development of students from a military context in education to have the potential to collaborate with other organizations in this proposed research. When teachers employed transformational leadership, they became more adaptive in job satisfaction, job commitment, students' motivation, and innovative pedagogies (Kovach, 2019). Leadership that was adaptive may challenge students toward more flexible and complex qualities of mind and help them achieve better academic outcomes (Stewart & Wolodko, 2016). The concept of leadership envisioned through Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) leadership framework

was evident from the narrative of former military personnel that found value in applying their previous leadership development during their transition to academia needed to meet ongoing demands for leadership (Chargualaf et al., 2018). On the contrary, the lack of positive leadership transformation and acceptance of change may have made teachers irresponsive to students' unique needs and limited their ability to provide relevant instruction (Snyder, 2017).

The long-term social implications of this problem took time to predict. Still, it was possible to assume that ineffective and irrelevant leadership in JROTC military education may have required a more in-depth approach. The U.S. Army had already been confronted with significant internal leadership challenges, such as budget constraints, personnel reductions, high suicide rates, sexual harassment, and assault issues, among other adverse problems that required effective leadership (Campbell, 2017). In the context of JROTC, more information must be researched about the current body of knowledge about student outcomes and the positive transformation of leadership engagements. Barrow (2022) noted that effective and flexible leadership was crucial in the military's complex and hybrid context to increase students' participation in science, technology, engineering, and math educational opportunities. The need for more information about JROTC teachers' goals and values alignment and the potential challenge of delivering such transforming leadership practices to future leaders established the social implication for the problem explored in this research.

### **Theoretical Context**

At the same time, limited focus had been made on the JROTC or a military educational setting engaging in the positive transformation of leadership practices. This focus could be particularly beneficial to students and teachers and extremely valuable in the military context to address the problem of ineffective and disruptive leadership (Kershner, 2017; Smit & Millett,

2021; Fosse et al., 2019). The current research helped identify segments of the JROTC leadership practices where an understanding of ineffective leadership was disruptive to students' educational opportunities. The proposed research extended the existing knowledge in the area under study. This problem underlined the significance of military content in public education for its value and to assess related knowledge in various educational arenas. Military leadership had been driven by leadership theories that differ considerably from other leadership scopes. In most military settings, leadership in this context had been characterized as assertive, competitive, self-confident, results-oriented, and autocratic.

As a result, first described comprehensively by Lewin and Lippitt (1938), autocratic leadership had been the dominant leadership style employed in military settings characterized by strict discipline and unquestioned obedience (Harms et al., 2018). As theorized by Weber (1947), charismatic leadership also corresponded to the military nature of leadership. Scholars have acknowledged charisma as commonly applied by military personnel as leaders secure followers' trust by demonstrating competence and character, thus implying that leaders earned credibility, which had increased importance (Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Williams et al., 2018;). Sacavem (2017) proposed that leaders' positive moods explained the link between leaders' delivery styles and their charismatic performance. Noticeably, researchers have started to pay greater attention to the use of more innovative leadership styles, such as authentic leadership, servant leadership, paradoxical leadership, and others in the military context, including JROTC (Alvarez et al., 2019; Moreno et al., 2021). The effects of military leaders fostering effective leadership practices that promoted followers' engagement and proactive personalities built solid and meaningful relationships (Moreno et al., 2021). It had been shown that the transforming leadership style, first described by Burns' (1978) work and further extended by Bass' (1985) work, transformational

leadership suggested a condition rather than a state of being. In other words, a condition was referenced as circumstances surrounding something and a state of being involved in the quality makeup of something. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) Leadership Challenge Model appeared to align appropriately with military leaders' effectiveness, and their traditional focus on charisma and credibility (Williams et al., 2018).

### **Problem Statement**

The problem was that leadership practices in a military context used by JROTC teachers is ineffective, despotic, and irrelevant to modern students' needs (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998; Fosse et al., 2019; Kershner, 2017; Quinn & Meiners, 2019; Mcgauley, 2015; Smit & Millett, 2021). Some JROTC teachers still operated under a paramilitary structure that encouraged conformity and adherence (Meyer & Rinn, 2022). Although viewed as adaptable, the Army ROTC program was nevertheless prone to becoming unadventurous and conventional (Kotakis, 2016). Nonetheless, teachers should be inspired to innovate to meet modern learners' needs which were fundamental to any effective educational innovation effort (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Silver et al., 2019). This problem led to understanding how JROTC teachers aligned their leadership practices to improve students' growth.

Similarly, less research was focused on the implications of transformative learning of instruction, particularly from the teacher's perspective, that would imply such reformulation and involvement of a reflective process with critical reflection on an experience (America et al., 2021). Raabe et al. (2020) pointed to the gap in knowledge on the leadership experiences of ROTC military leaders, which did not afford adequate research to look at the problem from their perspective. Evidence suggested that school leadership practices of military veterans called for further examination (Kamarck & Arriaga, 2020; Quinn & Meiner, 2019). The lack of

transparency within the JROTC leadership practices may have negatively affected the JROTC quality. Educators needed to use strategies that supported rather than hindered change that could impact the level of knowledge individuals may not have yet acquired (Smit & Millett, 2021; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Stewart & Wolodko, 2016). Mallick (2020) concluded that there was a need for more information on military leadership practices responding to the complexity and ambiguity of organizational changes due to the varying ways the literature could have measured success in preparing influential leaders.

Although military veterans, which constituted the core of the teaching staff in the ROTC program, were valued for their leadership skills, their actual leadership abilities may have been lacking in emotional support and progressive pedagogy involvement (Raabe et al., 2020). A study by Kirchner (2017) found that some veterans claimed their leadership practices did not match the workplace instruction strategy. Leaders participating in this study confided that they were forced to be leaders and did not receive proper formal organizational instruction, which may have influenced their leadership mindset and ability to lead others creatively using practical leadership practices (Kirchner, 2017). In addition, there was a growing recognition that military educators needed to cultivate judgment instead of asking for blind obedience to rules and guidelines. Studies have shown that military leaders should have focused on developing leaders with maturity and the ability to face increasingly complex challenges (Sookermany, 2017). Understanding how to transform leadership practices was necessary for leadership flexibility and creativity to create an inviting environment for teachers and students (Caniëls et al., 2018; Curtis & Wee, 2021). Peer-reviewed research and literature created the opportunity for a rigorous, in-depth qualitative research study focusing on JROTC leaders' leadership practices and perceptions in this regard.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study was to identify the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. At this stage in the research, JROTC leadership practices generally defined by retired officers and non-commissioned officers who taught high school students in grades 9-12 used the JROTC structure of citizenship, leadership, personal responsibility, character education, and teamwork (ACTE, 2021). Integrating Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) work into the leadership process clarified the understanding of the challenges needed for positive leadership practices transformation. The fundamental tenets of this model were the concepts to "Model the Way," "Inspire a Shared Vision," "Challenge the Process," "Enable Others to Act," and "Encourage the Heart" (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 12). This study was essential to address levels of motivation that caused some JROTC teachers to resist positive leadership practices' transformations. More specifically, this study sought to help explain the connection between the JROTC values and goal alignment using the positive influence achieved through a variety of practices, which have been described in detail in the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® model by Kouzes and Posner (2017). This model was one of the most influential transforming models of the past decade and had been recognized by many researchers (Ahmad et al., 2017). The study described the distribution and leadership practices that contributed to the current body of knowledge relating to positive leadership practices transformation within the JROTC program to deliver effective instruction. Specifically, it helped identify JROTC teachers' leadership practices to foster supportive environments conducive to learning.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study described of the contributions to the body of knowledge to identify better how JROTC teachers foster a culture of positive leadership transformation practices that influenced military classroom instruction from a theoretical, empirical, and practical perspective. In addition, exploratory embedded single-case studies also provided an in-depth description of a social phenomenon within the real-world context of a bounded system too complex for a survey or experiment (Yin, 2018). For this study, Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) conceptual perspective of the Leadership Challenge Model helped to explore the gaps in areas of leadership practices and teachers' perspectives to understand better the advantages and disadvantages of using leadership-transformed practices in the JROTC context.

### **Empirical**

Following my literature review, limited studies investigated effective JROTC teachers' leadership practices in secondary schools that positively influence classroom learning environments. However, studies about the JROTC's program effect on students' achievement and enlistment goals contributed to the body of knowledge with little significance (Lutz & Bartlett, 1995; Pema & Mehay, 2009; Rostker, 2014). My study related to similar studies because it focused on discussing the JROTC leadership practices (phenomenon) that could be testable descriptively based on information collected by talking to people who share everyday experiences. Accordingly, positive leadership practices and transformation focused on change and growth, which were crucial for fostering students' character development (Hart, 2021). It was essential to ensure that leadership practices were effectively and appropriately modeled in the schools (Hart, 2021). The nature of research for this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study was exploratory to understand the "how" and "what" factors to provide a deeper

understanding of the research questions. Yin's (2018) exploratory research provided a deeper understanding of a research question. Unfortunately, leadership practice transformation to improve instructional innovation within the military leadership programs created a gap that lacks knowledge of the scope and limitations of the problem (Mallick, 2020). Similar studies will also allow me to understand the problem better because other studies have helped clarify gaps and ambiguity about my problem. Compared to other studies, my analysis allowed me to establish significant correlations that might not be clear whether one thing is causing the other.

### **Conceptual**

Since leadership was a crucial component of JROTC, Kouzes' and Posner's leadership model (2017) provided the conceptual framework for this study because of its relevance to effective leadership practices. Kouzes' and Posner's five leadership practices have been researched over 30 years with positive results, which include "Model the Way," "Inspire a Shared Vision," "Challenge the Process," "Enable Others to Act," and "Encourage the Heart" (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 12). This leadership style built relationships characterized with mutual respect and confidence to overcome adversities (Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Oliphant, 2016). Importantly, transformational leadership practices allowed leaders to modify their relationships with individuals, identify the needed change, create a vision, and empower followers to act and take the lead (Afsar et al., 2017; Kouzes & Posner, 2017). It helped other teachers to reexamine their teachers' practices and inform teacher training programs to meet the organizational goals.

### **Practical**

Thus, exploring teachers' perceptions of their leadership effectiveness, which had not been made yet, helped improve leadership practices' transformation within the JROTC context.

Therefore, it was possible to suggest that this research could help school district leaders, teachers, students, and other stakeholders build better communication, leadership skills, and trust. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) model had been characterized as one of the most influential leadership models of the past decade (Ahmad et al., 2017), which means a more significant analysis of its applicability to the JROTC context may be suitable. By exploring teachers' perspectives on leadership practices, this study set the scene, identified issues and challenges associated with using Leadership Challenge Model in JROTC, and offered suggestions for further research.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study was to identify the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. I wanted to explore and identify the effective leadership practices of JROTC secondary school teachers by using Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) work. Raabe (2020) stressed the need to address gaps in the literature. Those questions also allowed addressing the overall lack of knowledge on the use of positive leadership practices transformation in the military education and training context (Castillo, 2020; Kovach, 2019). The questions allowed examining which transforming leadership practices were used and how teachers perceived them. The following were research questions guiding this study:

#### **Central Research Question**

How can JROTC teachers' leadership practices and behaviors influence innovative classroom instructions?

#### **Sub-question One**

What are some signs that there is a lack of leadership associated with the use of positive leadership transformation practices aligned with other leadership models in the JROTC context?

**Sub-question Two**

How do JROTC teachers “Model the Way” in setting a positive example by creating a collaborative team environment?

**Sub-question Three**

How do JROTC teachers inspire others to share their vision of the future goals?

**Sub-question Four**

How do JROTC teachers “Challenge the Process” of others to improve future goals and bring about positive changes?

**Sub-question Five**

How do JROTC teachers “Enable Others to Act” to create positive relationships?

**Sub-question Six**

How do JROTC teachers “Encourage the Heart” by celebrating the successes and achievement of students with rewards and recognitions?

**Definitions**

The following definitions elucidated the meaning of relevant terms used throughout this research.

1. *Exploratory case study* – case studies allow researchers to fully explore an in-depth, multifaceted understanding of a phenomenon at a particular research site (Stake, 1995).
2. *JROTC*– (Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps)- a government program designed for high schools and selected middle schools at military academies. This program aims to

instill in cadets the values of responsibility, citizenship, and a sense of accomplishment (ACTE, 2021).

3. *National Defense Authorization Act*- legislation that Congress specifies the annual budget and expenditures on how military funding can be spent (Goldman et al., 2017).
4. *Purposeful sampling* – a type of nonprobability sample. The main objective of a purposeful sample is to produce a sample that can be assumed to be representative of a larger population (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
5. *Transformational leadership* – a leadership style used to influence followers to identify needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration. The leader executes the change in collaboration with committed members of the organization (Campbell, 2018). Transformational leadership includes observable practices for various levels used by people to achieve excellence (Cheng et al., 2018; Oliphant, 2016).

### **Summary**

Chapter One included an overview of the problem was leadership in a military context used by the JROTC teachers was ineffective, despotic, and irrelevant to the modern student's needs (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998; Fosse et al., 2019; Kershner, 2017; Quinn & Meiners, 2019; MCGauley, 2015; Smit & Millett, 2021). The background information addressed the extent of the problem. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study was to identify the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. There was a need to better understand classroom leadership practices by better engaging Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® model. This framework explained an understanding of how the JROTC goals and values aligned with positive leadership practices improving learning

environments. The gap in the literature showed that positive leadership practice transformation became paramount in reinvigorating JROTC instruction. Still, insufficient research existed on teachers' goals and the value of various leadership practices using Kouzes' and Posner's Leadership Challenge Model. Finally, Chapter One concluded with the definitions and summary. This qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study used semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussions with teachers to collect the necessary data and answer the research questions. The next chapter provided an overview of what had been studied and what research gaps needed to be addressed.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

This chapter presented a review of the literature. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study was to identify the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. The problem was that leadership in a military context used by the JROTC teachers is ineffective, despotic, and irrelevant to the modern student's needs (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998; Fosse et al., 2019; Kershner, 2017; Quinn & Meiners, 2019; Mcgauley, 2015; Smit & Millett, 2021). The chapter began with a conceptual framework associated with the effective leadership practices of Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) work. Following the conceptual framework, I synthesized the literature on effective leadership practices and addressed the literature gap. The literature review provided written representations of leadership practices and the various theories contributing to those practices. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) Leadership Challenge Model served as a framework for analyzing the current leadership practices and recommendations for JROTC leaders to improve their leadership practices based on the identified gaps and challenges. I addressed the significance of understanding relative values and importance and how this theoretical positioning influenced an individual's perspective. Although there was voluminous literature and data regarding leadership practices, there was a lack of qualitative research on identifying effective leadership practices of the JROTC teachers that positively influenced classroom learning environments.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Kouzes' and Posner's (1987) Leadership Challenge Model guided this research study's theoretical framework. Kouzes and Posner (1987) cautioned that Bass' (1985) work failed to

address an organization's culture and followers' characteristics. Kouzes and Posner (1987) proposed specific behaviors that exemplary leaders display. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) research spans over 30 years researching leadership practices and behaviors. This conceptual framework inspired a fundamentally new way of thinking and studying leadership practices. The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® model (Kouzes & Posner, 1987) began to shift away from the pure trait theory of Thomas Carlyle (1902) reckoned that the importance of Great Men was that people have inheritable traits to produce certain specific patterns. Kouzes' and Posner's (1987) concept moved toward an acceptable functional leadership approach to see what characteristics people wanted to see in their leaders instead. The appealing theme under this conceptual framework was that this exemplary leadership model was no longer for specific individuals but for any leader and worker in any situation (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Kouzes' and Posner's (1987) work, which continued to be published throughout the 1990s, was informed by interviews with about 5,000 leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Therefore, leaders must develop self-awareness, social awareness, and interpersonal skills to work in a demanding setting. The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® model had been referenced to facilitate the gradual shifting of a leader's practices to independent self-development (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

### **Leadership Challenge Assessment**

Additionally, Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) work presented a paradigm built upon five practices that defined exemplary leadership. Their data describing exemplary leadership practices have been held up for over 30 years studying thousands of leaders in various leadership positions around the five practices of leaders. There were behaviors leaders had performed, according to Amer (2022), that could have assisted leaders in cultivating their leadership behavior. Kouzes and Posner (2017) researched the practices of "Model the Way," "Inspire a

Shared Vision,” “Challenge the Practice,” “Enable Others to Act,” and “Encourage the Heart” (p. 12). According to scholars, leadership was a relationship between those who led and follow (Alblooshi, 2021; Amer, 2017; Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

### ***Model the Way***

According to Kouzes’ and Posner’s (2017) work, the first practice of exemplary leadership was for leaders to model the way. Leaders must be believable and authentic (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Leaders must have been able to model the desired behavior, which had required leaders to know themselves first, their values and beliefs to be that example for others to emulate in the hope that others will be like them and follow their lead. Emerson (1888) could not have said it better. “A man will see his character emitted in the events that seem to meet, but which exude from and accompany him” (Emerson, 1860, as cited in Emerson collections, 202, p. 358). It was often a reality when inappropriate actions contradicted individuals' words. It did not take much to say comforting things, but it took effort to make things happen and achieve something. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) "Model the Way" exemplar asserted excellence in followers as leaders acting as role models achieving the same distinction. Modeling could also shift to how leadership was understood and could often run parallel to how leadership practices were conducted (Ahmad et al., 2017). Leadership was a culturally responsive influence vital to setting the direction of an institution (Amer, 2022).

### ***Inspired Shared Vision***

According to Kouzes’ and Posner’s (2017) work, the second practice of exemplary leadership was for leaders to inspire a shared vision. Leaders must imagine the possibilities and find a common purpose (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Leadership provided the power to sustain and translate an organization’s vision into reality (Ashfaq et al., 2021). A leader’s vision comprised

emotional values, commitments, and aspirations aimed at followers taking pride and satisfaction in their work (Newton, 2020). Leaders must plan the future with wisdom and a desire to motivate followers to translate the school vision into daily practice (Ashfaq et al., 2021). A shared vision must establish a clear purpose and direction through the followers' unique strengths, values, and beliefs (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Leaders need to understand what the organization had achieved in terms of success by undergoing a reflection of the past, present, and future to inspire a shared vision for enabling unity of purpose (Ajanaku & Lubbe, 2021).

Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) "Inspire Shared Vision" exemplar allowed leaders to share a common vision and present a foreseeable image of the institution they sought to achieve. A shared vision meant communicating directions to individuals who understood the concept and are committed to its achievement (Martin et al., 2018). This exemplar of leadership practice aligned people to create coalitions (Ahmad et al., 2017). As for leadership practice, it was achieving a vision that required keeping individuals headed in the desired direction while management of day-to-day practices drove its goals (Ahmad et al., 2017).

### ***Challenge the Process***

Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) third practice of exemplary leadership was for leaders to challenge the process. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) "Challenge the Process" exemplar of leadership practice allowed the leader to encourage creativity and risk-taking. Leaders must be willing to convert ideas into action to generate an exchange process between leaders and followers (Ahmad et al., 2017). Changes by challenging the process redefined leadership practices, institutions, resources, and individuals with a greater focus on moral discourse and social purpose in taking risks even though the risk may have been adverse (Ahmad et al., 2014). For example, challenging the process was especially sensitive for leaders because of the inherent

risks of advocating for better pay, work hours, professional evaluations, and resources through collective bargaining (Julius, 2020). Sarason (1990) advocated that people felt they were part of an organization when they had input and were more likely to take on greater responsibility when there was a commitment.

“Challenge the Process” was also about opportunities to change and improve the environment of an organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Challenging the process brought about a common purpose to agree on a shared vision and the ability to work together for change. It recognized that this process meant controversy, making identifying the importance of civil opinions paramount to allow considerations from an organization. Challenging the process allowed an organization to develop the capacity to review challenges and achieve its mission.

### ***Enable Others to Act***

Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) fourth practice of exemplary leadership was for leaders to enable others to act. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) "Enable Others to Act" exemplar of leadership practice stressed the importance of trust, collaboration, and motivation within an environment to gain followers' full participation. The leader assisted followers in acting or performing when faced with challenging goals through a shared vision and motivation (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Enabling others to act can be achieved through trust, demonstration of empathy, listening, understanding, and shared feelings (Ahmad et al., 2017). Leaders must also express their confidence in their followers' ability to perform leadership practices effectively when challenged (Amer, 2022). Leaders enable others to act by fostering collaboration and building trust to strengthen others within the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Enabling others to act was considered the leadership behavior in which trust occurred, suggesting that organizational structures and decision-making must be adaptive and responsive.

However, transactional leaders whose control spans incorporated control over an incentive system or punishment practice (Afsar et al., 2017) exercise a leadership practice that may have needed to be better adaptive. By combining multiple deliveries and learning methods, collaborative influences could be reflected in complex relational processes and essential skills as organizations became increasingly diverse (Lacerenza et al., 2018). Maya Angelou said, “You may shoot me with your words, you may cut me with your eyes, you may kill me with your hatefulness, But still, like air, I’ll rise” (Angelou, 1978, p. 45).

### ***Encourage the Heart***

Kouzes’ and Posner’s (2017) final practice of exemplary leadership was for leaders to encourage the heart. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) "Encourage the Heart" exemplar of leadership practice stressed recognizing followers' successes through rewards and celebrations. Leaders must effectively lead and balance various tasks, including identifying creativity and harnessing talents within their subordinates that are encouraged, fostered, and modeled (Ahmad, 2017). Leaders were increasingly recognizing the importance of bringing out the best in everyone by raising people's performance was more easily achieved as a process that values the development and empowerment of the individual (Martin et al., 2018). Encouraging the heart should be conducted in the direction of the vision while recognizing followers for their excellent achievements (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Grounded in the positive psychology of Robert House’s (1976) work that leaders emphasized the importance of charismatic communication linking rewarding and recognizing honorable deeds from followers promoted trust and sustainability (Yukl, 1993). It was essential to acknowledge the evolution of leadership practices was a form of positive reinforcement as followers received clear standards, celebrated success, and connected followers. A synthesis of the Leadership Challenge Model was not to view the leadership role as

exclusive, and it should have been thought of as equal, distinct functions exchanging support, winning allegiances, and forming relationships to transform both leader and follower.

### **Related Literature**

Following a comprehensive literature review, several central topics emerged germane to the study. Each central topic will be identified following each bold heading describing distinct study patterns relevant to leadership transformation practices. This exemplary leadership model was often referenced after Burns' (1978) and Bass' (1985) work that continued the transforming and transformational leadership practices ethos. In this theory, Burns (1978) compared transactional leadership with transforming leadership to show that the latter is preferred in many relations. According to the scholar, transactional leadership occurred when leaders took the initiative to contact their followers in exchange. Leaders provided followers with rewards or recognition for fulfilling the leader's desires (e.g., quality work is exchanged for salary or promotion) (Burns, 1978). Transactional leadership separated once the purpose was fulfilled, but the transforming leadership continued (Burns, 1978). Transforming leadership, in turn, was characterized by leaders engaging with other leaders and followers raising one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Burns, 1978). Unlike transactional leadership, transforming leadership considered followers' needs and focused on relationships and transformative and empowering changes. By using transformational leadership, leaders and followers developed their moral values and enjoyed increased motivation (Ashfaq et al., 2021). Kouzes and Posner (2017) posited that the behavioral aspect of leadership was a level that increases motivation and morale between both the leader and follower (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). A synthesis of the theories could consider transactional and transforming approaches being different yet related; Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) exemplary leadership model could pair together with both

transforming and transformational components for a common purpose of increasing motivation for the continuing pursuit of a higher purpose.

Before examining the application of leadership practices transformation in the military context, a brief overview of leadership styles and principles traditionally used in the military, including military education, will be discussed. The authoritarian (autocratic) leadership style was one of the oldest in the military, most suitable for active-duty military and crises (NCO Journal, 2018). Lewin et al. (1939) characterized the autocratic leadership style as tight control of decisions and activities made by the leader. Transactional leadership, which focused on the performance-based exchange of something valuable, was widely used to receive immediate followers' reactions (Burns, 1978). Bass (1985) defined *transformational leadership* as occurring when the leader elevated the interest of their followers through awareness and acceptance of the purpose beyond self-interest. Transformational leadership styles are more common today, which sought to empower the followers, promoted the initiative, and created a thriving organizational environment (NCO Journal, 2018). Some leadership styles were characterized as constructive and effective, while others may be destructive and harmful (Burns, 1978; Harms, 2018). However, military leadership had evolved significantly over several decades, becoming more flexible, sophisticated, and relationship oriented. Autocratic and transactional leadership styles and approaches are gradually replacing more appropriate ones (Sayyadi, 2021). In synthesizing the literature, autocratic and transactional leadership exercised tight control over the followers; transformational leadership sought to create innovations and added value paired with transactional leadership to redefine organizational management.

## Leadership Versus Management Paradigm

The first central topic from the literature addressed leadership versus the management paradigm. According to Rost (1991), leadership represented a paradigmatic shift toward collaborative process orientations, reciprocal relationships, and systems approaches. Rather than defining leadership conventionally, Rost (1991) described leadership practices more conceptually as an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intended real change for their mutual purposes. Over time, leadership practices occurred in any environment, allowing managers to refine their style of leading people to interact or influence others (Skripak, 2018). Rost (1991) discussed a process, an event, or a phenomenon. When leadership happened, there was an influential relationship between leaders and followers who intended fundamental changes, reflecting their mutual purposes (Rost, 1991).

Unlike Rost's viewpoint on the leadership versus management paradigm, Wajdi's (2017) work recognized those concepts as having similarities and felt that good leaders could not function as good managers. Rost's (1991) literary work also extended beyond the industrial paradigm, where management in the industrial period was not leadership but good management. Rost (1991) wanted the *Process of Relational Influence* to be influential during the post-industrial era, where leadership practices were evident in some environments. The point was that effective management or leadership was evolving for all people and cultures, and no one style or approach will be effective (Skripak, 2018).

In keeping with Rost's (1991) paradigmatic shift, leadership and management effectiveness of the JROTC programs with the ROTC programs discipline consequently utilized leadership definitions consistent with the Army and military training. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) (2019) defined *leadership* as influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and

motivation to accomplish a goal or mission and improve organizational effectiveness. As aforementioned, one issue with Rost's (1991) compilation of selected studies was, the studies were not recent. They were studies dating back many years. However, the discussion of leadership seemed consistent in permeating its definition to various environments, including military discipline.

The JROTC programs utilized similar conventional definitions of leadership, the meaning may transition differently within a military environment, but the reframing occurs mainly for those in dominant societal positions. Nonetheless, the similarities of leadership practices as taught by the JROTC teachers were that they set high standards and tailor their programs to the individual school's climate and students' needs (Barrow, 2019). The studies by Funk (2002) and Goldman et al. (2017) indicated that very few high school students were provided formal leadership training through the education process. Funk's (2002) literature stressed that many students were expected to perform essential leadership practices in several roles and avoided any academic instruction in leadership theory except for the JROTC curriculum. Funk (2002) also argued that the old feudal and leadership industrial paradigm was shifting toward a modern world where linear and circular structures predominate. In addition, there was also a need to understand the relational leadership and management climate on innovative work behavior as it also pertained to training and shaping behaviors (Dungveckis et al., 2022).

There needed to be a clearer understanding of what constituted leadership because the process was based on influencing followers (Alblooshi et al., 2021). Any definition of leadership should have consisted of the importance of processes and relationships (Ahmad, 2017). Komives', Lucas', and McMahon's (2013) combined process with relationships, posited that leadership was a relational process of individuals that attempted to make a difference for the

common good. Leadership contained unique relationships that overcame resistance to change from leadership as a relationship created by change within a social process (Alblooshi et al., 2021). The emerging paradigm that characterized leadership as a change process must have been consistent with leadership development and organizational goals (Jones & Harvey, 2017). Leaders should be able to take the initiative and develop positive functioning relationships in the organization. The JROTC program taught leadership development, training, and education (Funk, 2002). While the JROTC program provided opportunities for academic leadership curricula, cadets (students) could apply their leadership skills-set as members of their communities.

In addition, Funk's (2002) work offered a similar and robust analysis of the leadership concept drawing observations from Komives', Lucas', and McMahon's (1998) that exhaustively defined the leadership paradigm from civilian and military perspectives. *Relational leadership* is defined as leadership is a relational and ethical process (Komives et al., 2013). Their definition closely paralleled the definition of Rost (1991). A synthesis of their findings was that leadership enriched an innovative relational process between leaders and followers that was a transformative form of mutual services.

### **Contemporary Leadership**

The second central topic that emerged from the literature was a form of leadership exchange. Rost (1991) expanded on Burns' (1978) transforming leadership theory with the perspective that contemporary leadership represented value-based customs and norms of the community related to the common good (Amaladas, 2019). Contemporary leadership theory was typically associated with transformational leadership, leader-member exchange, servant leadership, and authentic leadership (Couto, 2010). The introduction of the transformational

leadership components by Bass (1985) stressed the Four I's: the importance of inspiration motivation, methods of influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Leclerc et al., 2021). The leader-member exchange (LMX) was a trust-based relationship between follower and leader for leadership effectiveness (Couto, 2010). According to Greenleaf (1977), servant leadership focused on the leader serving the followers from a customer's perspective (Spears, 1996). George's (2003) authentic leadership focused on the leader's values and beliefs to navigate changing situations through trust. A synthesis of the literature here was that these contemporary approaches showed that interdependence and acknowledgment of the shared morals, beliefs, and values made comparison across conceptual approaches challenging. For instance, the terms beliefs, morals, and values were shared, but differentiating the terminology could be problematic because those terms were based on the leader's worldview.

Some scholars contended that contemporary military leadership practices were expected to be well-informed, agile, culturally sensitive, and flexible (Sookermany, 2017). Leaders in the military education setting were now seen as inspiring subordinates to innovate, exercise initiative, take risks, and develop confidence (Sookermany, 2017). Contemporary military leaders led by example, demonstrated excellent communication skills, created a positive environment, developed others, built trust, and contributed to the development of their profession, creating transparency between upward and downward accountability (Longenecker & Shufelt, 2021). At the same time, they must preserve traditions by attaching importance to values such as loyalty, honor, integrity, respect, and courage, which should have been prioritized in non-military settings (Olivetta, 2017). Unfortunately, Olivetta (2017) noted that there seemed to be a gap between what military leaders were taught and what was expected, with the emphasis still being made on subordination and hierarchy rather than independence, empowerment, and

creativity. This literature synthesis suggested that leaders must educate themselves to perform what is required for the common good. In addition, a leader must define their values and goals meaningfully to have a purpose for the common good still.

### **Transformational Leadership Effectiveness**

The third central topic that emerged from the literature was leadership education. The JROTC Program included a combination of military and civil education. It was also essential to review the application of the five leadership practices central in Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) work in the educational setting in general. Research over the past 20 years suggested that transformational leadership practices were preferred in most academic settings (Anderson, 2017). Transformational leadership practices gradually shifted away from transactional leadership (Afsar et al., 2017). Transformational leaders were effective in promoting innovation (Al-Husseini, 2019; Elrehail et al., 2017), increasing educators' passion and commitment (Castillo et al., 2017), improving teamwork effectiveness and school improvement (Wiyono, 2018), and other areas. The Leadership Challenge Model allowed leaders to create clear initiatives and motivate others to strive for the future (Amer, 2022). Scholars emphasized that transformational leadership practices were particularly effective in equipping educators to succeed in the innovation era when the educational system evolved quickly (Anderson, 2017).

Furthermore, an interesting study was conducted by Huebner (2009), who showed that the five practices constituting Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) model were equally applicable in the military and educational settings. The scholar noted that while the military and civil educational environments were markedly different, the leadership model was universal and flexible enough to be adjusted to both. For example, the leadership practice of "Model the Way" can manifest itself in the military by wearing the uniform correctly, maintaining physical fitness, showing

high moral standards and values. “Model the Way” can be implemented in the educational setting by setting an example in teaching, sharing leadership practices, and providing mentorship (Huebner, 2009).

However, some scholars pointed to the challenges of applying transformational leadership practices in the military and educational settings. For example, Smiljanic (2016) pointed out that it implied transformation, often viewed as undesirable in strictly controlled military contexts. Ladkin and Patrick (2022) dwelled on the limitations of transformational leadership practices in the educational setting, such as critical/critical race, feminist/queer, and complexity, to name a few. Burns’ (1978) transforming leadership theory, further extended by Bass’ (1985) transformational leadership, suggested the emergence of a leadership relationship change. Burns’ (1978) and Bass’ (1985) approaches identified leaders by their actions and impact shared as an ongoing collaboration between leaders and followers based on the leader’s personality. The multidimensional structure of the theory, presented in a classic transformational approach by Bass (1985) and newer models such as the one proposed by Kouzes and Posner (2017), may prevent educators from fully embracing transformational leadership. The scholar pointed to the lack of a conceptual definition of transformational leadership, which may confuse educators (Couto, 2010). Another problem was that transformational leadership practices, such as leading by example, motivating and empowering followers, and so forth, were not distinct enough to differentiate this style from others, contributing to practice confusion (Ladkin & Patrick, 2022).

In addition, military organizations' perceived lack of flexibility may be another barrier to using transformational leadership practices. Opermann and Nault (2021) argued that although a certain degree of flexibility was welcomed in military organizations, they are nevertheless forged

by tradition and are committed to "the ethos of the past" (p. 2). Moreover, the bureaucratic nature of military organizations inhibited adaptability and flexibility and discouraged military leaders from using innovative strategies and pursuing changes. Transformational leadership practices may be perceived as threatening because they challenge military traditions and cause disorder. Some military personnel did not tolerate transformational leadership practices (Opermann & Nault, 2021). Challenges mentioned by Smiljanic (2016) and Opermann and Nault (2021) have explained why military leaders and, possibly, military educators such as JROTC teachers may be unwilling or unable to use transformational leadership practices. Again, the literature synthesis suggested that transformational challenges were present and that leaders should perform a constant comparative analysis of the self. The typical reaction to those transformational challenges should also require refinement of social responsibilities. Therefore, a leader's personality, practices, and behaviors were not independent of each other but interconnected parts that function differently.

### **Concepts Complexities for Selecting Leadership Challenge Model**

The fourth central topic that emerged from the literature was leadership expectations. Transformational leadership practices responded to the changing leadership expectations and challenges contemporary military leaders face. Some scholars maintained that this leadership style inspired, instilled ethical values, promoted innovation, and developed talents in the military (Sosik et al., 2018). Many studies have shown a strong relationship between transformational leadership practices and followers' creativity, which can be highly valued in the military (Dungveckis et al., 2022; Ruark, Blacksmith, & Wallace, 2018; Qu, Janssen, & Shi, 2015). Rost (1991) promoted the paradigm of leadership as a relationship. Utecht and Heier (1976) studied the effectiveness of task-oriented versus relationship-oriented military leaders to conclude that

positions favorable to the leadership style did not support the data. However, Utecht and Heier (1976) discovered that good leader-member relations could have been the predominant factor for successful job performance. Some leadership styles inspired leaders to move toward a positive command climate and foster more significant organizational commitment (Foti et al., 2017). At the same time, it was argued that satisfying the needs of every student and leading in an ever-changing environment required innovation that may depend on various transformational leadership practices (Al-Husseini et al., 2019; Deneen & Prosser, 2020; Supermane, 2019).

In this way, Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) model included crucial qualities for organizational learning, building a shared vision, distributing leadership, and building a school culture for reform efforts. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) model moved beyond the top-down leadership structure to more relationship-focused leadership, particularly valued in military and educational settings (Amer, 2022; Roberts, 2020; Utecht & Heier, 2017). Kouzes and Posner (2017) presented a leadership challenge paradigm focusing on leader-follower relations at different motivation levels before transforming an organization. The transformation in education required effective leadership practices and teachers yielding extraordinary leadership during challenging times that focused on the relationship between leaders and followers, creating a positive correlation with teacher effectiveness (Hart, 2021). Because the leader's and follower's relationships were theorized as parts functioning at different motivation levels, the situation played a considerable role in the effectiveness of the teacher's leadership practices. This study identified how the JROTC goals and values aligned with positive leadership practices improving learning environments.

Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) exemplary leadership model aligned with the military education values and goals to identify positive leadership practices that enabled individuals to

see their effectiveness. Students in the JROTC program were referred to as cadets. Coulter (2017) noted that military school culture sought to empower cadets to develop their self-esteem and confidence and become leaders. Military schools teach personal responsibility, independence, teamwork, and leadership, and taught through role modeling and instilling the correct values (Coulter, 2017), which have been emphasized by Kouzes and Posner (2017) as essential leadership practices.

However, contemporary leadership practices bore some risk factors associated with their uses, such as Burn's (1978) transforming approach may be unattainable because it required a dramatic social change. Bass' (1985) transformational approach needed admiration and attention through success. The LMX led other followers to be alienated because of the perception of favoritism between leaders and followers. Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership was considered community service-oriented instead of a leadership behavioral change approach. George's (2003) authentic approach risked the chance of backfiring because the trust could erode in followers if the leader tried to conceal or dismiss mistakes. At the same time, Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) work paralleled a resurgence in advocating a values-based approach between leaders and followers for a people-first process. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) work aligned their values and needs toward specific observed behaviors and interactions to see how they might be effective regardless of role (Couto, 2010). The literature synthesis here resulted from those leadership complexities forming interactions of being adaptive, relationship-oriented, enabling, service-oriented, and empowering that fostered outcomes such as learning, increased innovation, dependence, responsiveness, and creative environments. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) model expanded the boundaries of leadership complexities that emerged from certain risks factors to foster environments that supported their behavioral or leadership style approach.

## Character Development

The fifth central topic that emerged from the literature involved character development. Character development should be a commitment to every effective leader's ethical and moral behaviors focused on the biographical narratives and the practice of teaching students (Hart, 2021). Mark Buber, a philosopher and peace prize winner of 1953, contributed to the forming of character and nation-building context (Ott, 2020). Buber (1947d:104) felt that character development meant rebirth in a biblical sense beyond distinguishing right from wrong and true from false (Ott, 2020). Buber (1947d) lectured that "education worthy of the name was essentially education of character" (Ott, 2020). Buber (1947d:104) felt that education that concentrated only on an individual's knowledge or skills and not on the whole person was not education (Ott, 2020). To Buber (1947d:104), an individual's actions, wisdom, virtues, attitudes, and character needed to be developed in addition to learning knowledge. Ott (2020) described Buber's (1947d:104) definition of character as perceiving reality as a call and responding responsibly was viewed as a leader's responsibility. Character education required person-to-person relationships (Ott, 2020; Hart, 2021). Buber (1947d:104) never explained *good* or *bad* knowledge in character development, only that the leader's action is adequately related to God. Ott (2020) referenced Buber's (1947d:104) view the character education pedagogical centerpiece was a genuine dialogue. Kouzes and Posner (2017) suggested that leadership was not a monologue but a dialogue. A synthesis of character education was a collective focus on boundless responsibilities more than understanding the interhuman phenomenon and acquiring competence of authentic dialogue to develop the whole individual relationship.

## **JROTC Program**

The sixth central topic that emerged from the literature was the JROTC program. The National Defense Act in 1916 introduced the United States Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) (Leal, 2007). This Act allowed high schools to hire military personnel as instructors and provided students with military and leadership-related education and training. Despite its contribution to the military workforce training, ROTC was suspended during World War II in favor of shorter training programs but was reinstated in 1946 for several reasons: it was cost-effective, it preserved the citizen-soldier tradition, and it enabled future officers to receive quality education (Leal, 2007).

### ***JROTC History***

In 1964, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps Vitalization Act stated that the Air Force, the Navy, and the Marine Corps should establish JROTC units. In 1976, the number of units increased significantly (Goldman et al., 2017). In 1993, another Act again raised the maximum of JROTC units in the country to address the social problems. Specifically, the JROTC program was believed to provide much-needed support to the disadvantaged youth in cities affected by continuous riots (Goldman et al., 2017). As of 2016, there have been 3,390 JROTC units in American high schools, serving over half a million cadets (Goldman et al., 2017).

### ***JROTC's Goals and Objectives***

The seventh central topic from the literature was the JROTC's goals and objectives. Leadership education was taught in many forms, whether in private, public, or military school systems. The objectives of the JROTC program strive to ensure relevance to students through its leadership curriculum and examining the military and education connection (Goldman et al., 2017). The concept of coupling formal education with military studies was not an unusual

practice. The JROTC objectives intensified physical and mental training and preparation. Cadets learned various drill movements, academic subjects, citizenship skills, leadership skills, mathematics, and military history (Goldman et al., 2017). Simultaneously, the cadets learned to be responsible leaders and citizens rather than achieve leadership titles through leadership roles (Meyer & Rinn, 2022).

The JROTC leadership education emphasized indoor and outdoor activities, discipline, and service-learning projects, while providing opportunities for cadets to obtain knowledge and a sense of responsibility (Barrow, 2019). Many students without JROTC military training may not be familiar with the JROTC program, and some students became resistant to an unfamiliar military structure. The JROTC's goals of motivating cadets to become better citizens and leaders and increasing graduation rates offer endless opportunities to prepare for future careers (Meyer & Rinn, 2022). The results of the JROTC program were responsible for cadets who were sure of themselves, displaying service to the United States, values of citizenship, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment (Meyer & Rinn, 2022). A synthesis of the literature was the relationship between leadership education and the program's objectives, such as citizenship, academics, and leadership, reconceptualizing leadership as process-oriented and providing a seminal focus on cadet development. Goals represented the actionable results of the program's vision, while objectives were how the goals were reached. The JROTC program's objectives were measurable, precise, and time-based to support its goals (Meyer & Rinn, 2022).

#### ***Custom: Values, Goals, and Practices Awareness***

The eighth central topic that emerged from the literature was JROTC's custom. Becoming aware of the values, goals, and practices within the JROTC program, leaders were compelled to seek out resources and bore what sacrifices were necessary for sustained

commitment. Initially, the JROTC program was treated as a program to train officers for the reserve, but it had evolved to become more academic and leadership oriented (Leal, 2007). The program now included classes covering civics, leadership, life skills, U.S. history, geography, global awareness, and health and wellness (Goldman et al., 2017). It also included extracurricular activities, such as color guards, drill teams, JROTC Leadership & Academic Bowl (JLAB), archery, orienteering, rifle teams, and cybersecurity teams. The JROTC programs adhered to the traditional military education philosophy that education must develop a whole person. The Military Cadet Command's education philosophy drew a similar analysis to Mark Buber's (1947d) concept of developing the entire person. This philosophy focused on academics, leadership, citizenship, athletics, and military skills and knowledge (Coulter, 2017). Although JROTC programs vary depending on units and schools, they typically required up to four years of coursework (Goldman et al., 2017).

Specific values and goals guided JROTC programs. According to Section 2031 of the United States Code, Title 10 (2012), the program's purpose was "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." The program sought to prepare independent thinking, disciplined, physically fit, and mentally stable graduates. Cadets participating in this program were taught to work in teams, communicate effectively, discipline themselves, and take charge of their future (Meyer, 2022). JROTC also promoted the values celebrated in the military. Those included loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, and personal courage.

Furthermore, JROTC was unique in terms of administration and workforce. The program was administered cooperatively by schools and military services. The latter subsidized uniforms,

books, equipment, and extracurricular activities, while schools provided facilities and contributed to teacher salaries (Goldman et al., 2017). Instructors in JROTC programs were retired active-duty officers or noncommissioned officers who were certified before employment. These people were civilian employees, but their military background allowed delivering special, military-related education and training (Goldman et al., 2017). The issues behind this unique program were whether the program needed to have adaptiveness if the leadership practice failed to face new challenges. Although the JROTC curriculum adhered to specific core functions, the JROTC program must refresh itself continuously while enhancing its values, goals, and practices to shift to a more supportive environment (Meyer & Rinn, 2022). A literature synthesis was that once an individual formed a new perspective of values, goals, and practices, it became a collection of internal processes. It became dauntingly clear that those processes extend beyond the boundaries of students' civil responsibilities and leadership practices that became meaningful in their life-long practices.

### ***Balanced Leadership in JROTC***

The ninth central topic that emerged from the literature was leadership balance. This balance of military and civil leadership education was one of the critical characteristics of JROTC training (Goldman et al., 2017). JROTC was a unique program because it combined military and civil leadership practices. Marzano et al. (2005) identified educational leadership aligned with related military principles to elucidate a connection between educational and military leadership. On the one hand, JROTC cadets (students) were trained by veterans in uniform. They were taught military history and customs, underwent extensive physical training, and developed discipline, just like in the military (Pannoni & Moody, 2021).

On the other hand, there is no military obligation for JROTC graduates, and the program is not positioned as military recruitment. While cadets may improve their chances of building a successful military career by undergoing JROTC training, students are not obliged to join the military after school (Pannoni & Moody, 2021). Ongoing schools and military leadership training foster communication, teamwork, and evaluation (Barrow, 2019). An integrated social process is needed to build learning educational domains for leadership programs (Kamarck & Arriaga, 2020). Teacher collaboration also influences conceptual evolution thinking in academic and mainstream cultures for school effectiveness (Cansoy & Parlar, 2017). Leadership practices are dispersed within various organizations that require everyone to fulfill their respective roles (Ashfaq et al., 2021). A synthesis of this section is that there is an understanding of conventional teaching strategies that provides very little knowledge regarding leadership theories in an educational setting; Importantly, there is no alternative for such dispersal of leadership practices other than leaders at all levels must be prepared to assume the responsibility.

### *JROTC Challenges*

JROTC challenges were the next central topic emerging from the literature. Due to its unique nature, JROTC had been a topic for debate between those who perceive it as a valuable contribution to secondary education and those arguing that it does not belong in American public schools. Critics of JROTC maintained that it was ineffective and inappropriate in democratic, safe schools focused on academic achievement (Lutz & Bartlett, 1998; McGauley, 2015). They are also concerned that JROTC promoted authoritarian values and military-related knowledge that had little relevance outside the military sphere (Lutz & Bartlett, 1995). Pema and Mehay (2009) found that JROTC students' grade point averages (GPAs) compared to non-JROTC students' GPAs did not find any significance in GPAs. Still, the study found that the JROTC had

a higher population of students considered at risk or more likely to drop out of school. Although JROTC critics perceive the program as a mere recruitment tool for the military, this point of criticism is related to ROTC more, as the latter required its participants to enlist in the military. At the same time, JROTC is a purely civilian program (Bird, 2017). Only a tiny proportion of all JROTC cadets join the military, and the greater focus was on general physical and mental health, leadership, ethics, civil rights, and financial responsibility (Pannoni & Moody, 2021).

### ***JROTC Perceptions***

A central topic of JROTC perceptions was also an emergent factor in the literature. Nonetheless, assessing the effectiveness of JROTC on a grand scale may indicate many involving topics in leadership practices but may not be identically focused or consistent among one another. However, previous research by Boise & Howell (2009) focused only on specific military academies. Conceptually, the lack of acknowledgment of leadership practices proved disheartening because the parents of JROTC students or students in secondary schools organized within military formats did not seem to observe leadership skills and teachings. While JROTC's and ROTC's programs consisted of classroom learning, team building, training, and structured leadership opportunities, students' retention of leadership concepts was questionable. It was like students preparing for examinations but then forgetting all the essential concepts and learning once they completed their studies and taking their knowledge for granted with the notion that they did not require to retain leadership concepts. Leadership practices and mentorship were critical components, and peers and instructors were significant components of the JROTC development processes. Kamarck and Arriaga (2020) exhibit the importance of mentorship as part of leadership practice in the military and academic settings. Cadets felt more confident about themselves and their career choices, even if they did not pursue a military career. Their acquired

knowledge and training from an Army format leave them with the legacy of re-enacting the character they have developed during their secondary and post-secondary academic years. Formal or informal mentorship and role modeling assisted young cadets or future officers create a military identity. Also, it provided opportunities to view significant role models perform before attempting various tasks on their own. JROTC programs may differ in multiple schools with teachers of diverse educational and academic backgrounds, but selecting of teachers and students was critical for the integrity of JROTC's programs.

A study by Funk (2002) and Goldman et al. (2017) indicated that very few high school students received formal leadership training through the education process. The comparison between civil secondary schools and JROTC programs exhibited a significant gap, with about 3,000 high schools in the United States offering JROTC as electives in their programs. Funk's literature (2002) focused on military services offering separate programs apart from regular public schools. His literature emphasized acknowledging leadership practices for personal growth instead of leading others in a team. Funk's literature served as an example of leadership upon oneself instead of others as a team. Leadership academic programs prepared students to assume more significant leadership roles in JROTC units. Leadership training psychologically prepared students for future ventures in various fields other than the military. Only a small percentage of graduates joined the military after high school (Rostker, 2014).

### ***JROTC Effects***

The final central topic that emerged from the literature was the JROTC effects. Goldman et al. (2017) and Alper et al. (2015) have conducted a more intensive study compiling at least 12 studies, all of which employed a comparison-type methodology to render any influences on the impacts of JROTC participation on academic and non-academic results. They have found that

most compiled studies used the comparative approach among the sequence testing based on the number of schools compared, starting with a single school study up to 75-school study. Goldman et al.'s study (2017) surpassed Alper et al.'s study (2015), which attempted to determine the effects of JROTC on students by measuring the impact on quantifiable results in academic achievements and discussing qualitative effects, which was to measure more abstract aspects such as self-esteem, citizenship, and leadership. The qualitative effects were positive throughout the JROTC program when learning about influential leadership practices to determine how many students were academically suitable for leadership roles versus those not enrolled. Participation in JROTC was discovered to be associated with not only improvement in student grades but also increased graduation rate, meaning students have the motivation to participate.

Students who enrolled in JROTC in later grades exhibited negligible changes in graduation rates (Pema & Mehay, 2009). Positive results were most evident in cadets who registered early and continuous participants in JROTC. Goldberg et al. (2017) compiled with Pema & Mehay's study (2009), verifying that they found mixed results on the effects of the JROTC leadership programs. Perma & Mehay (2009) and Hu et al.'s (2008) found that programs tend to be more vocational and extracurricular than academic. The JROTC program created career-ready students. If this was the case, leadership was taught based on teachers' persistence and personal agenda instead of curriculum requirements. Nevertheless, the absence of the program's effects on academic results was also due to inadequate controls for an at-risk status of JROTC students, consisting of about one-third of all participants, and had lower drop-out and higher graduation rates. Goldman et al. (2017) did not support the findings of Alper et al.'s (2015) and Stephanie's (2010) studies to summarize the association between JROTC and student outcomes with recruitment into the military.

Goldman et al. (2017) seemed proficient and thorough in selecting the appropriate studies. They have acknowledged William-Bonds' study (2013) that compared JROTC students, non-JROTC student-athletes, and other non-JROTC students in urban high schools to determine any differences in academic achievements. William-Bonds' study (2013) found no significant differences in leadership perception among the students. The slight differences may have perceived JROTC's leadership practice as a positive outcome. The teachers of JROTC programs were not as transparent to the parents as they could have been, according to William-Bonds' study (2013) and Stephanie's study (2010). Leadership practices were indefinitely critical to military safety and success at all levels of the military, as the military was heavily associated with leadership. Leaders must strive to boost stakeholders' confidence in the program's capabilities and continue to motivate the students toward success and growth by recognizing the limitations and possibilities to strengthen effective leadership practices. Military leadership success exemplified various adaptations by other professional fields of study. Decision-making was heavily connected with military leadership's daily practices that impact their subordinates' lives. The military leadership criteria highlighted flexibility, cultural awareness, cognitive complexity, openness, broad perspectives, and the ability to tackle uncertainties with a behavioral emphasis on change.

Funk (2002) and Goldman et al. (2017) found that very few schools provided formal leadership training via the education process. On the same note, Funk (2002) found that military programs offered more effective leadership training programs than regular public school programs. The impact of JROTC participation on academic performance had been explored considerably, but the existing studies provided mixed results. For instance, Goldman et al. (2017) found that JROTC programs positively impacted academic achievement by boosting grades and

increasing graduation rates. Pema and Mehay (2009) found that participation in JROTC had negligible effects on graduation rates.

Most importantly, Pema and Mehay (2009), which agreed with Hu et al.'s (2008) study, found that JROTC programs were more vocational and extracurricular than academic. As a result, their findings indicated that JROTC programs have a less noticeable impact on the academic achievements of the participants, which did not contradict the later findings of Goldman et al. (2017). In this regard, the studies focused on the impacts of JROTC programs on academic performance produced mixed results. William-Bonds' (2013) study explored the effects of JROTC programs using JROTC and non-JROTC students. Interestingly, William-Bonds' (2013) study found no significant distinction in leadership perceptions among the involved students. Indeed, the studies focused on the effects of JROTC programs on academic achievements provided conflicting conclusions. A synthesis of this section was not to suggest that JROTC programs lacked leadership programs. Still, the arrangement of its programs lacked the pursuance of effective leadership influence or practices.

### **Literature Gaps**

Regarding the emerging themes from the literature review, the lack of qualitative research regarding the JROTC teacher's leadership practices in a classroom learning environment reflected limited scholarship. There was no scholarship on effective leadership practices using the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® model by Kouzes and Posner (2017) in the JROTC military education context. The literature had provided sufficient evidence addressing teachers' motivations and teaching practices; However, a gap still existed about how JROTC teachers' goals and values of their leadership practices aligned with effective leadership. It had been found that military educators' use of transformational leadership had not been studied extensively,

leading to a significant gap in knowledge. It was unknown how JROTC military educators assessed their leadership practices and how the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® model leadership practices contributed to the body of knowledge. This gap in research served as a strong justification for the presented study.

### ***Shared Vision***

Moreover, Metcalf's and Morelli's (2015) study confirmed that transformational leadership practices contributed to creating a vision when school leaders recruited teachers and other non-administrative staff members to participate in school leadership processes that held meetings that led to the new initiatives. The study supported evidence of transformational practices where teachers and staff members valued everyone's participation in setting up and evaluating the school's shared vision. However, some researchers inferred that leaders' usage of the transformational style from qualitative studies conducted in the general educational setting were mixed methods to advance theory. For instance, a study by Manuel (2017) examined the leadership styles of school educators using mixed-methods research. The researcher collected data using interviews to learn more about participants' perceptions of transformational leadership. The study found that educators valued this leadership style and perceived it as suitable for the educational setting. Unfortunately, Manuel's (2017) study was student research, so its reliability and validity were limited. Kouni, Koutsoukos, and Panta (2018) also used a mixed-method approach and interviewed with 171 secondary school teachers to learn about their perceptions of transformational leadership. The study found that teachers viewed transformational leadership as an effective means of building a shared vision, providing individualized support, serving as role models, and building partnerships (Kouni et al., 2018). While this study was helpful, its results did not generalize well to the Army JROTC context. The

literature synthesis also was that sharing a shared vision inspired and motivated followers. Leaders kept their followers motivated and excited toward the shared vision with their positive and energetic leadership approaches.

### ***Linking Leadership Challenge Model to Teachers' Leadership Practices***

Additionally, limited research was done on teachers' leadership practices using Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership model. A recent study by Emmanuel and Valley (2021) was one of few scholarly publications on this topic. In this study, I conducted interviews, conducted focus group discussions, and collected physical artifacts or documents with school educators (teachers) regardless of whether they exhibited the five exemplary leadership practices described by Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) study. The study found that educators used the five practices in their work, allowing them to influence colleagues, students, and organizations positively. A synthesis considered this study by Emmanuel and Valley (2021) helpful from the methodological perspective because anyone could apply the five exemplary leadership practices that reflected only the assumptions of knowledge that informed its creation. It informed the methodological choices in this study by guiding how I collected information on applying Kouzes and Posner's (2017) model in a qualitative case study.

### ***Challenge the Process***

Nonetheless, Goewey (2012) also used Kouzes' and Posner's model in educational settings, but their focus was on elementary teachers. The researchers used Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) Leadership Practices Inventory Self (LPI Self) to assess teachers' leadership. Goewey's (2012) study concluded that teachers demonstrated leadership practices were like those used by leaders in other sectors, such as business and healthcare. Goewey's (2012) study also supported the universal nature of leadership being transformed by overcoming obstacles and embracing

opportunities to improve and innovate. This study helped me understand how to evaluate educators' perceptions of Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) model. Still, it had significant limitations, such as the publication date and limited application to the JROTC secondary setting.

### **Literature Impact**

Simultaneously, the literature review helped maximize the relevance of understanding the limitations of the scholarships and identified a need to acknowledge opportunities to improve leadership transformation practices. Leadership was an essential part of JROTC in all relations. The program itself was perceived by many as a valuable leadership development program that built cadets' character, citizenship, and leadership skills (Rand Corps., 2017). Leadership was included in the curriculum, expressed as a sought-after cadet characteristic, and promoted as a contribution to the overall context of the public school (Kamarck & Arriaga, 2020). Exemplary leaders were considered to focus on helping every team member succeed with consideration for followers' input, emotions, values, ethics, standards, and more (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Autocratic leaders on the opposite end of the spectrum were characterized as controlling all decisions based on their ideas and judgments with little input from their followers (Harms et al., 2018). Both leadership styles suggested a relationship where motivation contributed to carrying out the institutional goals.

Student cadets in JROTC were assigned ranks, thus following the leadership hierarchy of the respective military branch affiliated with a unit. Cadets willing to be promoted must gain knowledge and demonstrate practical skills and leadership. When they attained higher ranks, they were expected to help instruct their peers at lower grades, meaning cadets learned functional leadership (Pannoni & Moody, 2021).

JROTC teachers exemplified leadership practices in all manifestations and contributed significantly to students' leadership growth. The JROTC teachers have decades of military service experience and served as examples of professional etiquette, personal behavior, and appearance (Rand Corps., 2017). Smith (2008) argued that teacher leadership practice was critical as students were exposed to leaders' daily influence and needed influential leaders to train discipline and demonstrate excellent results. Therefore, it was challenging to overestimate JROTC instructors' ability to lead students.

Despite the essential role of leadership in JROTC, little research had been conducted on this topic. One of the few available studies conducted by Ameen (2009) examined the perceptions of instructors, teachers, administrators, cadets, and parents related to various aspects, including leadership. The researcher interviewed JROTC cadets who believed the program was valuable for their leadership growth and self-confidence. Most JROTC teachers in the same study agreed that the program developed cadets' leadership, goal-setting, and self-discipline (Ameen, 2009). However, this study was somewhat outdated and did not focus on the five exemplary leadership practices or transformational leadership practices, so its relevance to this study was limited. Studies examining five exemplary leadership model practices in the JROTC context had been minimal. It was unknown how JROTC instructors perceived their motivation for this leadership style and how they applied it in their work. This knowledge gap suggested that this leadership style is not applied in JROTC or studied in this context. Nonetheless, more research on JROTC leaders' leadership practices was strongly needed.

### **Literature Synthesis**

This chapter aimed to analyze and synthesize the present body of knowledge systematically. The difference between Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) *The Five Practices of*

Exemplary Leadership approach and autocratic leaders relied on their motivations. Kouzes and Posner (2017) noted that leaders differed in leading others democratically. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) leadership model addressed how leaders were motivated by the good of all, recognizing that everyone succeeded by delegating control through empowerment. Autocratic leaders were motivated to control situations creating a separation between the leader and team members through coercion (Yukl, 2018). The synthesis was that Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) work could have predicted JROTC teachers' leadership practices through situational motivations. Autocratic leadership was the antithesis of Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership model regarding the situation that correlated an exchange of leadership styles. Authoritarian leadership was instrumental when leadership was quickly needed without consulting with team members to accomplish things efficiently. Autocratic leadership can also be a boon in situations lacking leadership or direction, which may have caused the team to project poor organization (Northouse, 2016).

### **Summary**

The literature review showed extensive research on transformational leadership practices in the military and educational settings. However, applying Kouzes and Posner's (2017) Leadership Challenge Model approach had not been appropriately studied in the military education context. There was a gap in educators' leadership practices and alignment of Kouzes and Posner's (2017) exemplary leadership model practices in a JROTC educational setting. There needed to be more qualitative studies to learn more about the JROTC population's subjective leadership practices. More importantly, the unique context of JROTC education had been overlooked in leadership studies. JROTC combines the elements of military and civil education. Still, it was unknown how JROTC teachers' positive effective leadership practices and

motivation to align with the program's goals affect students' growth and achievement. These were the main gaps in the literature that the presented study looked to address.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study was to identify the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. The concept model that guided this study was Kouzes' and Posner's leadership model (Kouzes & Posner, 2017), as this concept correlated to leadership practices' influence on organizational effectiveness. I collected the data with the help of semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussions. The sample for the semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussions process was obtained using purposive sampling, the intentional selection of participants based on their ability to explain a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposive sampling targeted Army JROTC teachers employed by the Virginia public school district. The research questions reflected theoretical assertions. Themes and coding were used to analyze the data collected through interviews with the JROTC teachers. This chapter involved descriptions of the research design and rationale, research questions, setting, participants, procedures, the role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical consideration. Each section was supported with scholarly literature to justify the methodological choices.

### **Research Design**

I used a qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study for this study. Yin (2018) considered case studies associated with fieldwork and not viable research methods historically. Moreover, case studies served as empirical studies investigating a phenomenon within a real-world context (Yin, 2018). A qualitative case study was appropriate for this research because little was known about the topic within a specific context, and the researcher did not know what

variables were significant (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016; Yin, 2018). This research design explained the complete set of procedures for collecting and analyzing the data. In addition, this qualitative study examined relationships between entities to gain a deeper insight into experiences. In this study, I addressed how effective leadership practices of JROTC secondary school teachers positively influence the classroom learning environment. The qualitative research design type was also appropriate for the study to understand how and why researchers made decisions, provide additional literature validation, and address the contributing factors of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I was the human instrument that collected interview results, documented analyses, and administered focus group discussions. Yin (2018) permitted collecting data from multiple sources for methodological triangulation to approach the same question (s) with different methods and replicate the study.

My research strategy of inquiry was a case study. This case study provided an in-depth analysis, bounded by time and place, and used multiple data sources to examine the phenomena within its real-life context. The type of case study was a single-case study to investigate the single context of leadership practices effectiveness among the JROTC teachers. Researchers have studied single case studies involving more than one case in its entirety (Stake, 1995). Yin (2018) proposed a multiple-case design that analyzed multiple contexts, and a single-case design was a design that explored one set of contextual conditions.

This case study was also about bounded systems. According to Yin (2018), a case was bounded by time and place. For this study, the case study was bounded by time (two months of collecting data), place (JROTC teacher's classrooms within Virginia), and phenomena within its real-life context (leadership transformational practices.) I chose an embedded single-case study to identify the effective leadership practices of the JROTC teachers to concentrate on a single

aspect involving several high schools and JROTC teachers.

### **Embedded and Holistic Case Studies**

Yin (2018) also proposed an embedded case study and a holistic case study. A holistic case was one where the case can strive to encompass all a phenomenon rather than the sum of its whole (Yin, 2018). The depth of research for an embedded case study contained more than one sub-unit or multiple parts (Yin, 2018). An embedded single-case study involved multiple parts of a single case using only one case (Yin, 2018). I used an embedded single-case study because I researched the JROTC leadership practices (case) at several different schools (multiple parts) for an in-depth understanding of the phenomena as one case.

### **Single-Case Design Rationales**

Yin (2018) formulated five rationales for single-case designs. The critical case tested a well-formulated theory. The representative or typical case was posited around routine occurrences. Third, the revelatory case related to a phenomenon that was not accessible. Finally, the longitudinal case investigated a phenomenon over time. I used the critical case rationale for this embedded single-case study to test Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) Leadership Challenge Model, a well-formulated theory.

### **Nature of Case Studies**

The nature of research for this study was an exploratory approach. Three conditions for using an exploratory case study were met, such as the purpose answered "how" or "what" questions. A researcher must have little control over events, and the focus of the research must be on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context when boundaries were unknown (Yin, 2018). Exploratory case studies were appropriate when the researcher wanted to gain an extensive and detailed description of a social phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Creswell and Poth

(2018) discussed case studies as an exploration of the researcher of a “real-life,” contemporary bounded system through detail, that involved multiple sources of information. This study followed those definitions of an exploratory embedded single-case study by examining the leadership practices of JROTC teachers regarding the use of leadership transformation practices and their alignment with JROTC goals and values bounded by time and place. Thus, leadership transformation practice was the phenomenon of interest in this study, while the JROTC program was the context. The researcher was the human instrument for collecting, coding, and cross analyzing the data (Yin, 2018).

The explanatory case study was used when the researcher wanted to present explanations of too complex phenomena for quantitative analysis (Yin, 2018). The comparative case study was used when the researcher compared two or more cases (Yin, 2018). Finally, the intrinsic case study was used to better understand a specific case by answering all questions with a particular focus (Stake, 1995). I eliminated those case study methods because they did not provide the required framework for answering the research questions and approaching the selected phenomenon of transformational leadership practices.

The exploratory embedded single-case study was chosen as an appropriate design for this study. The exploratory addressed the “how” and “what” questions when there was no single set of outcomes (Yin, 2018). There was a dearth of literature on the leadership practices of JROTC teachers, and I explored them in-depth. Exploratory embedded single-case studies provided the appropriateness for the researcher to gain an extensive and detailed description of a social phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin, 2018). I selected the exploratory embedded single-case study to identify JROTC secondary school teachers’ leadership practices using real-world context. The components of this research design consisted of the following in this order: (a) The

research questions, (b) assertions, (c) the process of analysis, (d) linking the data to the assertions, and (e) the interpretation of the findings (Yin, 2018).

### **Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis entity was used to describe or analyze the research. The unit of analysis is the phenomenon or entity being studied (Yin, 2018). It formed the basis of fundamental research and was clearly defined (Yin, 2018). The researcher understood where the inferences were derived and what population the researcher generalized (Yin, 2018). In this study, leadership transformation practices were the unit of analysis.

Furthermore, Yin (2018) discussed the following five analytic techniques: explanation building, pattern matching, logic models, time-series analysis, and cross-case synthesis. According to Yin (2018), explanation building was exceptionally robust and challenging to measure due to complexity. Therefore, this technique was not selected. The pattern matching technique compared one pattern researched to another predicted pattern before any data collection. This technique was not chosen due to the impossibility of predicting an outcome before data collection. The logic model, in turn, was used in case study evaluations and theories of change studies (Yin, 2018). This technique was not selected because this study had not sought to examine complex series of cause-and-effect relationships between the variables over an extended period. I rejected the time-series analysis because it involved many patterns used in psychological studies with single subjects. Finally, the cross-case synthesis technique analyzed sub-units as a single case with embedded units (Yin, 2018). This study used this technique to investigate teachers' leadership practices using leadership transformation techniques within the JROTC context. Since I used more than one school and more than one teacher to collect the data, the selected method was the most suitable to compare and analyze how teachers in different

educational settings used leadership transformation practices and what they thought about it.

### **Research Questions**

Several research questions guided this study. The first question was the central research question which was derived and aligned with the problem and purpose statements. The sub-questions addressed specific segments of the central research question.

#### **Central Research Question**

How can JROTC teachers' leadership practices and behaviors influence innovative classroom instructions?

#### **Sub-question One**

What are some signs of a lack of leadership associated with the use of positive leadership transformation practices aligned with other leadership models in the JROTC context?

#### **Sub-question Two**

How do JROTC teachers "Model the Way" in setting a positive example by creating a collaborative team environment?

#### **Sub-question Three**

How do JROTC teachers inspire others to share their vision of future goals?

#### **Sub-question Four**

How do JROTC teachers "Challenge the Process" of others to improve future goals and bring about positive changes?

#### **Sub-question Five**

How do JROTC teachers enable others to act to create positive relationships?

#### **Sub-question Six**

How do JROTC teachers "Encourage the Heart" by celebrating the successes and achievements of students with rewards and recognition?

## Setting and Participants

The purpose of this section was to disclose the setting and participants. The setting and participants described the parameters of the research. Pseudonyms identified the setting and all participants to protect confidentiality.

### Site (or Setting)

I limited this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study's setting to five Virginia public secondary schools. I selected those schools because of their proximity and their inclusion in the JROTC program to focus on the research. High School One, High School Two, High School Three, High School Four, and High School Five are pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. The schools were Title 1 institutions identified as receiving federal funds due to many low-income students receiving supplemental funds that met students' educational goals. The leadership structure of each high school consisted of one principal, four assistant principals, minimum of two JROTC teachers, and teachers.

The accreditation rating criteria for each secondary school had been assigned as "accredited with conditions," which required some students to seek provisional registration, complete further study, and seek general registration with 51% in math proficiency and 59% in reading proficiency for the school year 2019 (VDOE, 2020). The Virginia public school district had 44 schools with 24,868 students in grades PK, K-12 with a student-teacher ratio of 16 to 1 with an estimated 1,541 teachers (VDOE, 2020). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), the race ratio is 47.7% Caucasian Americans to 46.9% African Americans, about equal populations with 7.3% for Hispanics and 2.3% for Asian and Native Hawaiians. The median gross rent was set at \$1,025 monthly, with a median selected monthly owner cost with a mortgage of \$1,555 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

## **Participants**

Purposeful sampling was used to gather participants for this study. Purposeful sampling involved selecting participants that met specific criteria to best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants in this study were JROTC military teachers employed in the Virginia public school district with more than 20 years of leadership experience and have their approved certification to teach JROTC in high schools. The number of participants ranged between 10 and 15 with no fewer than 10 participants. The demographic information of the potential participants' age group was between 47 and 72 years of age. There were eight males and two females. All participants in this study were of mixed ethnicity.

## **Researcher Positionality**

As a JROTC teacher and former Army soldier, I continued to attend educational classes, programs, and other professional development sessions that have offered me the opportunity to understand myself better and effectively lead others. I was constantly amazed at how everything was about leadership. Our world has been inundated with the ideas of leadership, leadership styles, leadership theories, and the effects of leadership on success. There was also a perception of the lack of leadership in our society when things went wrong. I found frustration in learning that after 22 years of service, what I thought I knew about leadership would not fill up a page until I started attending Liberty University. My perception was that leadership embraced the leader's self-awareness to make all the necessary adjustments to be effective. The Army JROTC had been based on traditions and customs that have survived the test of time. Some colleagues did not embrace transformative innovations and styles, fearing the "old ways" were lost. The desire to follow absolute time-honored traditions and customs would have degraded the overall

JROTC program, stall development, and undermine students' growth and achievements even though technology and students were changing within the twenty-first century. My interpretations aligned with a study by Sookermany (2017), which showed that structural, organizational challenges in the military settings were currently less significant than the challenges associated with culture, attitudes, and leadership. Despite the vast amount of literature covering the concept of leadership, there was not enough relevant literature on the application of leadership transformation practices among Army JROTC teachers.

I used inductive reasoning as I constructed my research approach to the exploratory embedded single-case study. Inductive reasoning went from the data to the theory of extracting new nuances, knowledge, or theories from my questions. I explained how the data from the questions and responses involving the phenomenon were used between the relationships among entities that either supported or disapproved the theory. The case study identified the use of positive leadership transformation practices by JROTC teachers to understand how they perceived its appropriateness to the JROTC context or any other leadership modality. The data was collected, observed, categorized, and generalized.

### **Interpretive Framework**

The components of my research approach were my interpretive framework and paradigm, which was my philosophical perspective or worldview. I choose to interpret the data based on my interpretive framework. I analyzed my data using a pragmatism paradigm because I believed reality was constantly being negotiated, divided, or interpreted. Pragmatism was the research paradigm used to explain ideas, methods, and approaches to what have been achieved by changing reality to define a solution to the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I

explained the data as ontology, epistemology, and axiology, which will be discussed as my worldview or philosophical assumptions.

### **Philosophical Assumptions**

The philosophical assumptions were beliefs and theories that informed the researcher's study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Philosophical assumptions were described in three assumptions, so the reader understood the significance of the research. Those assumptions were ontological, epistemological, and axiological.

#### ***Ontological Assumption***

Ontology explained the researcher's beliefs about reality, existence, and being (Sayer, 2000). Ontology helped me to realize my certainty about the research. My ontology perspective was based on inductive reasoning by drawing generalized conclusions from various data using a relativism philosophy. Relativism means there was no absolute truth to the matter, but multiple realities (Rorty, 1980). The domain was the JROTC teachers within Virginia's public high school district. I narrowed the scope to generalize other secondary school settings. I conducted the research study as a doctoral student in a secondary school setting. The sample size was not exhaustive for the entire teacher population. The research limitations raised concerns about the lack of previous studies in the research area. The findings were from five high schools comprised of a low socio-economical population.

#### ***Epistemological Assumption***

Epistemology explained how researchers got their knowledge about reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My relationship to this research and how I got my knowledge or know what I knew had an emic perspective because I had an insider's approach by interviewing the participants and interpreting the results. I collected data on the JROTC teachers through interviews, document

analysis, focus group discussions, purposive sampling, inductive coding, and other strategies. I conducted a thematic analysis of the qualitative interview data and found and analyzed meaningful information. The interviewed teachers included those working in the JROTC military/career technical education classes in a secondary school setting. The study focused on teachers' positive leadership practices in understanding the participants' unique and subjective leadership practices. All participants in this study were of mixed ethnicity.

### ***Axiological Assumption***

Axiology dealt with the value outcomes resulting from the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My axiological assumptions were my subjective values and biases, which were essential in how I interpreted the data. I believed people were to be valued and heard. For example, I was a veteran and JROTC teacher who was doing a study on other veterans who were also JROTC teachers. I was sympathetic when JROTC teachers expressed their discontent when they struggled to provide effective leadership practice in the classrooms. I valued the level of quality within this study with valid and reliable evidence that connected to the accuracy of my findings. Following the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, ethical standards were conducted. The participants answered the interview questions with the highest integrity. The inclusion criteria were applied to all participants to ensure a similar experience to the study. Participants were not coerced or promised any incentives for their cooperation in the study. The present study identified JROTC teachers' positive leadership practices in a classroom learning environment. All methodological choices were discussed further in Chapter Three.

### **Researcher's Role**

It is generally acknowledged that in qualitative research, the researcher was the research instrument (Dodgson, 2019). I became part of the research by interacting with the participants

and analyzing qualitative data through critical interpretation. Their personal bias and assumptions could have influenced all essential stages of research (Yin, 2018). Therefore, the researcher's reflexivity was crucial in studies such as this one. Reflexivity in qualitative research was defined as the process of "identifying personal assumptions to ensure they do not affect the data collection and analysis" (Emmanuel & Valley, 2021, p. 10). Researchers emphasized that reflexivity was the gold standard, which contributed to the rigor and trustworthiness of the study (Dodgson, 2019). In this study, I demonstrated reflexivity through journaling, writing down all actions, thoughts, and feelings experienced during the research process. Journaling enabled the researcher to identify and acknowledge bias, thus contributing to the trustworthiness and integrity of the research (Lanham, 2021).

I am an employed JROTC teacher in Virginia and was entering my 15th year in education. I pursued a doctorate in educational leadership from Liberty University. As a JROTC teacher, the participants and I developed trusting and respectful relationships that could generate detailed data. At the same time, by sharing much of the participants' leadership practices and values, I was not immune to bias. My experience in education was not taken for granted as not to have interfered with impartial participant treatment and affected data analysis by allowing personal beliefs and feelings to interfere. Because I am also a JROTC teacher, my teaching position might influence how other JROTC teachers as participants respond to the questions. I have no authority over the participants and no prior experience at the research site so that both participants and I could feel equal.

As the human instrument, researchers used bracketing to ensure their biases will not interfere with the research (Tufford & Neuman, 2010). I used the following approaches to bracketing: (a) kept notes during data collection for quick reflections, (b) interviewed outside

sources or colleagues to allow the researcher to uncover pre-conceived assumptions, and (c) kept a reflective journal before and after data collection. Ethically, any bias was controlled by remaining objective and impartial and refraining from discussing the results or progress with participants or third parties. I did not share personal opinions and experiences with any participants during the study. No monetary remuneration was given or received from either me or participants to participate in the study. I achieved ethical integrity and professionalism by ensuring that issues such as coercion and unfair influence were prevented by protecting the anonymity of the participants and securing transparent data collection and safe data storage.

### **Procedures**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) compliance was met by granting permission (Yin, 2018) and will be placed in appropriate appendix upon approval. IRB approval was obtained before the research was conducted (See Appendix A). The Virginia public school district granted permission to research at the five high schools before any data collection could begin. This procedural section covered permissions, information about securing IRB approval, soliciting participants, the data collection and analysis plan by data source, and an explanation of how the study achieved triangulation.

### **Permissions**

Before data collection, permission from Liberty IRB, school district IRB, and the site principals in that order were obtained. Along with the inquiries made to obtain school district IRB permission first (See Appendix B), I conducted an informal telephonic call to the school district IRB to ensure feasible selected sites for conducting the research were not violating any protocols. Once I obtained Liberty IRB conditional approval for submission to the school district IRB and the site school principals' approvals, I recruited participants for this study. Consent

forms were stored upon completion (See Appendix C). Participants consented to the research before the data was collected by signing consent forms that addressed the issues of confidentiality, anonymity, ethical conduct of all parties, participant's right, and videotaping or audiotaping of the interview process (Yin, 2018). School administrators or department chairs served as gatekeepers that were asked to provide potential participants' email addresses and telephone numbers.

### **Recruitment Plan**

Upon approval, a recruitment letter was disseminated via email to prospective participants at the selected Virginia public schools (See Appendix D). Therefore, this study used purposeful sampling as the type of sample. Purposeful sampling involved selecting participants for specific situations to meet specific criteria to align with the study's problem, purpose, and research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This sampling technique allowed choosing the participants that will best contribute to the information needs of the research and provide rich and detailed data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2006; Patton, 2015). The sample pool consisted of ten secondary school JROTC teachers and directors to describe how JROTC teachers transformed their effective leadership practices that positively influence classroom learning environments. My sample size was ten participants.

In addition, gatekeepers were administrators or department chairs at the selected secondary schools to assist me with identifying and contacting potential participants for this study. A gatekeeper was any person who had legal access to the participant's data and that collaborated with the researcher to provide the required sample (Smith et al., 2006). I posted research flyers on notification boards at respective schools for 30 days, and I submitted a news release request through the district's new media for a week. Handouts about the study invited

potential participants. Those handouts were disseminated to potential participants as well as emailed to potential participants once the permissions were obtained. I also made telephone calls to solicit participation.

There were a variety of sampling techniques I could have selected. Creswell and Poth (2018) discussed the snowball sampling technique was when the research population might not be readily available, so the researcher would ask participants to find others who might fit the criteria. This technique was rejected because the people for the study are readily available. Maximum variation sampling was a method that attempted to collect data from a vast pool or range of perspectives about a specific topic (Patton, 2015). I rejected this technique to generalize the findings to the rest of the population without modifying the parameters. The sample did not represent the overall population because of the unique positions of the sampled populations. Finally, the convenience sampling technique collected data quickly based on the participants' availability drawn from the population close to hand (Patton, 2015). However, it was not appropriate for this study because my focus was on a clearly defined population with specific parameters.

### **Data Collection Plan**

This case study used semi-structured interviews, the primary data collection for all qualitative research, document analysis, and focus group discussions of collecting data. Semi-structured interviews were research methods with open-ended questions that allowed new ideas to be developed based on what the interviewee said and were most widely used in qualitative research (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Semi-structured interviews created a more informal and free-flowing conversation than structured interviews while allowing the researcher to control the conversation, which may not always be possible in unstructured interviews (Yin, 2018;

Zacharias, 2011). In addition, a semi-structured questioning format that used the face-to-face interview allowed the researcher to observe body language and other reactions to the questions (Yin, 2018). Unlike telephone interviews, online Survey Monkey, email, or Skype, face-to-face interviews helped the researcher to collect richer data and establish trust.

Triangulation supported the quality control of the case study. Triangulation involved using multiple data collection methods to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena (Patton, 2015). Triangulation was a validity procedure where researchers involved corroborating evidence from various sources to form themes or categories in a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Yin (2018), the reliability of the case study rested on (1) multiple sources of evidence, (2) utilization of a case study database, and (3) detailed care in maintaining the chain of evidence. Engaging multiple sources of evidence led to the overall quality of conducting a case study (Yin, 2018).

Therefore, I used document analysis to determine its nature and usefulness to the problem under investigation. Document analysis was a form of qualitative research in which the researcher analyzed and interpreted documents to give validity and meaning to a phenomenon (Gall et al., 2006). Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined documents as personal written communications rather than official reasons. In contrast, records were official written communication with a specific purpose (Gall et al., 2006). Primary types of documents were public records, personal documents, and physical evidence (Gall et al., 2006).

I used a focus group interview as my third data collection. A focus group interview involved thought provoking questions to a group of individuals who have been assembled for a specific purpose (Gall et al., 2006). Focus groups were used in qualitative research as a form of data collection (Gall et al., 2006). I asked questions to initiate discussion without being a direct

participant. I observed the interactions among the participants and understood their rationale, perceptions, and beliefs that the participants might not express individually. I used a database for case-study notes, documents, preliminary narratives about the data, and maintaining an evidence chain to ensure the validity of the findings. Yin (2018) supported a database for case-study notes, documents, preliminary narratives about the data, and maintaining an evidence chain. This research study used a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) database to maintain notes, tracked documents, and tracked other data collection for duplication if applicable.

### **Interviews**

Yin (2018) identified case study interviews as the most important sources of evidence because the researcher can collect rich verbal and non-verbal data. All semi-structured interviews were conducted in a quiet, confidential place to protect the anonymity of the participants, preferably away from the work setting. I reserved library conference rooms to conduct semi-structured interviews after work hours or at a suitable time for the participants. A bottle of water was the only thing provided during the interview. I sat at a table directly across from the participants with the audio recorder to record the conversation. I read the opening and closing remarks from a script for data consistency before the interview. Participants were also informed that they can send any additional information regarding the interview questions to me if they feel the need.

Open-ended semi-structured questions were used to create a conversation-like atmosphere that encourages interviewees to provide detailed answers for a deeper insight into the problem (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2018). Following the recommendations of McIntosh and Morse (2015), I formulated semi-structured interview questions to elicit concrete responses

crucial to the advancement of knowledge. The interview questions were designed to ensure validity, which showed that the interview covered the concepts it purports to measure (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The research questions covered all fundamental concepts and issues raised in the literature and research problem. The interview questions were generated from the research questions with the annotations of the central research question (CRQ), research questions (RQ), or sub-research questions (SQ) after each question. It was recommended for researchers to use an icebreaker to quickly establish a rapport on an excellent interview before the research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2012).

### **Interview Questions (See Appendix H)**

1. Please introduce yourself by providing your name, military service length, and employment length at your present job. (Ice Breaker)
2. How can you present content interestingly and engagingly? CRQ
3. How can you adapt classroom instructions that work for one class but not another?
4. What professional development experiences have you had that prepared you to work with incorporating innovation into the classroom? CRQ
5. How is your leadership style manifested in your practices and actions in the classroom?  
CRQ
6. What qualities do you have that make you a transformational leader? Please, explain.  
CRQ
7. What are the gains of using the transformational leadership style in the JROTC program?  
RQ1
8. What are the challenges of applying transformational leadership to JROTC instruction based on your experience? RQ1

9. How do you feel about your previous leadership experience preparing you to try new leadership approaches? Please explain. RQ1
10. What would you improve upon your leadership style and why? RQ2
11. How would your colleagues describe your leadership style? RQ2
12. What is a difficult situation you've faced in a leadership role, and how did you handle it? RQ2
13. How do you use your goals to help you become a better leader? RQ2
14. What do you expect from a leader? RQ2
15. How do you communicate your specific unique program's vision to students? RQ3
16. What practices and norms do you notice amongst your cadets related to your program's vision? RQ3
17. How do you know if challenging the process is an opportunity or a threat? RQ4
18. What event compelled you to challenge the process and why? RQ4
19. What are approaches to teach your cadets (students) to challenge the process RQ4
20. How do you involve others in collaboration? RQ5
21. How do you support the choices and decisions of others? RQ5
22. How do you show appreciation for excellence? RQ6
23. How do you encourage the heart in the direction of your organization's vision? RQ6

Interview questions two through six related to the central research question: "How can JROTC teachers' positive leadership practices and behavior influence innovative classroom instructions?" Those questions provided an in-depth perspective on leadership demonstrated by the participants and help determined whether those practices could be defined as positive leadership transformations, based on Kouzes and Posner's (2017) model. Marzano, McTighe,

and Pickering (1993) posited that teachers who lacked subject matter knowledge appeared insecure when required to provide practical explanations.

Interview questions seven through nine related to sub-question one: “What are the gains and challenges associated with using positive leadership transformation practices align with other leadership models in the JROTC context?” Those questions addressed how the JROTC teachers evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of using positive leadership transformation practices. In addition, those questions looked at how the JROTC teachers assessed the value of transforming their leadership practices and what challenges they experienced when implementing them in the JROTC context.

Interview questions 10 through 14 related to sub-question two: “How do JROTC teachers ‘Model the Way’?” Those questions were formulated using the five leadership practices presented by Kouzes and Posner (2017) that established protocols concerning the way people should be treated and accomplish their tasks. Those questions invited the JROTC teachers’ reflections and evaluations of their leadership practices using the selected conceptual framework. Therefore, follow-up questions such as “Please explain”; “Could you please provide an example?”; and “What do you mean by saying that...?” and others were used. Questions 15 and 16 related to sub-question three: “How do JROTC teachers inspire a shared vision?” Those questions were formulated using the five leadership practices presented by Kouzes and Posner (2017) to create a sense of commonality among the entire organization in developing goals. Those questions invited the JROTC teachers to reflect on and evaluate their leadership practices using the selected conceptual framework. Therefore, follow-up questions such as “Please explain”; “Could you please provide an example?”; and “What do you mean by saying that...?” and others were used.

Interview questions 17-19 related to sub-question four: “How do JROTC teachers challenge the process?” Those questions were formulated using the five leadership practices presented by Kouzes and Posner (2017) to search for opportunities that brought about change. Those questions invited the JROTC teachers’ reflections and evaluations of their leadership practices using the selected conceptual framework. Therefore, follow-up questions such as “Please explain”; “Could you please provide an example?”; and “What do you mean by saying that...?” and others were used.

Questions 20 and 21 related to sub-question five: “How do JROTC teachers enable others to act?” Those questions were formulated using the five leadership practices presented by Kouzes and Posner (2017) to enable others that felt confident to take control and initiative. Those questions invited the JROTC teachers’ reflections and evaluations of their leadership practices using the selected conceptual framework. Therefore, follow-up questions such as “Please explain”; “Could you please provide an example?”; and “What do you mean by saying that...?” and others were used.

Interview questions 22 and 23 related to sub-question six: “How do JROTC teachers encourage the heart?” Those questions were formulated using the five leadership practices presented by Kouzes and Posner (2017), that connected people through rewards and benefits. Those questions invited the JROTC teachers’ reflections and evaluations of their leadership practices using the selected conceptual framework. Therefore, follow-up questions such as “Please explain;” “Could you please provide an example?”; and “What do you mean by saying that...?” and others were used.

### ***Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan***

The research protocol or script containing opening remarks, and closing remarks to participants were stored securely, and only the researcher had access to the records. I opened the interview session by thanking the participants for taking the time to be part of the study, followed by the purpose of the study, and reminded them that they were free to stop at any time without fear of reprisal. I closed the interview by thanking the participants for their participation and asking them if they had any questions they would like to address. The audit trail allowed the researcher to process the chain of evidence to increase the rigor and trustworthiness of qualitative research (Yin, 2009). I maintained an audit trail for the readers to understand how I collected and analyzed the data, and the rationale for any deviation was stored. The preceded section presented a complete list of questions that I used to collect the data.

### **Document Analysis**

Document analysis was the second phase of data collection in the study. Document analysis provided stable data that the researcher repeatedly reviewed, not created because of the case study (Yin, 2018). Document analysis was also a qualitative research method, and it was an invaluable part of inquiry to obtain validity and reliability with triangulation combined with the methodologies in this study of the same phenomenon (Gall et al., 2006). I collected documents that contributed to my data collection strategy to identify effective leadership practices that positively influenced classroom learning environments. I analyzed the document's purpose and how the teacher incorporated the document (s) into the classroom. I collected personal resume' or vitae and examined the teacher's accomplishments and contributions to their professional development and how those documents correlated to a classroom learning environment. Those documents provided information on the teachers' professional growth level and required

mandatory training to serve their students better. I collected the current year's master training schedule and syllabi for each class taught to indicate what the students were learning. I analyzed customized lesson presentations, lesson plans, improvement projects, and other instructional materials to check for collaboration and student accommodations to enhance students' education and leadership opportunities. JROTC brochures and unit reports were collected as evidence for peer collaboration and shared leadership within the high school activities. I analyzed students' assessments to determine whether the teachers' written tests were a fair and reliable assessment based on the grading policy for mastery of competencies. The JROTC teachers were asked to present awards narratives or pictures that recognized students for their accomplishments that indicated the effectiveness of the class. I requested the data be stripped of all identifiers and were completely non-identifiable before I received the data.

In addition, I categorized the documents under primary documents such as public records, personal documents, and physical documents. I used a document summary form to record specific details about the documents, such as the description, theory correspondence, creation date, document compliance, frequency, internal and external coherence, and for what purpose. I assigned codes based on internal and external coherence, which meant consistency between the goals and objectives and outside disciplines. I assigned codes to the data that helped explain how the data corresponded to the theory. I accessed any new direction or perspective the data may have led me for triangulation and a better understanding of the data. Finally, I highlighted the documents with different color markers for categorization that identified emerging themes.

A document summary form summarized what the researcher had learned about the document to be examined, noting the type of document and a summary of its contents for relevancy to the research problem or if more documents were warranted (Gall et al., 2006). I

stored the document summary sheet (See Appendix G). I coordinated with school administrators and participants in advance. I did not share the document analysis results with school administrators, only the participants, who verified member checks. Member checking was the process for participants to ensure the accuracy of the transcription and other data collected evidence (Candela, 2019). The document analysis consent form, from the participants, was used to verify that the documents were in my possession. I stored the document analysis consent form (See Appendix F). The document analysis aimed to collect data on how JROTC teachers' leadership transformations occurred inside the classrooms. The data collection method allowed the researcher to compare teachers' leadership practices reflected from the interviews and focus groups to what they did in the classroom.

### ***Document Analysis Plan***

Document analysis was one of the most common methods used in qualitative research (Yin, 2018). I analyzed documents from ten JROTC teachers at each high school as a non-participant and took notes without engaging with the participants as I used a document summary form. The document analysis process began as the researcher identified the documents that were representative of the phenomenon along with the relevance and was considered how to access the documents using ethical conduct (Gall et al., 2006). I photocopied any document I could not remove from the natural setting for latter analysis. I analyzed the documents for frequency and compliance to identify recurring themes. The document collection took approximately 15 minutes.

In addition to accessing the documents, I acknowledged and addressed biases which could pose a problem during interpretation if left unchecked. The five criteria confirmed interpretation: Internal coherence (no contradiction of theoretical argument), external coherence

(acceptance of other theories), correspondence between theory and data, added information revelation, and trustworthiness confirmed validity and reliability of the data (Gall et al., 2006). Document analysis assisted in determining how the documentary practice provided an in-depth understanding of how teachers were transforming their leadership practices using Kouzes' and Posner's model.

I collected documents that contributed to my data collection strategy to identify effective leadership practices that positively influenced classroom learning environments. I analyzed the document's purpose and how the teacher incorporated the document (s) into the classroom. I collected personal resume' or vitae to examine the teacher's accomplishments and contributions to their professional development and how those documents correlated to a classroom learning environment. Those documents provided information on their professional growth level and required mandatory training to serve their students better. I collected the current year's master training schedule and syllabi from each class taught to indicate what the students were learning. I analyzed customized lesson presentations, lesson plans, improvement projects, and other instructional materials and checked for collaboration and student accommodations to enhance students' education and leadership opportunities. JROTC brochures and unit reports were collected as evidence for peer collaboration and shared leadership within the high school activities. I analyzed students' assessments to determine whether the teacher's written tests were a fair and reliable assessment based on the grading policy for mastery of competencies. The JROTC teachers were asked to present awards narratives or pictures recognizing students for their accomplishments that indicated the effectiveness of the class.

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specific details about the documents, such as the description, theory correspondence, creation date, document compliance, frequency, internal and external coherence, and for what purpose. I assigned codes based on internal and external coherence, which meant consistency between the goals and objectives and outside disciplines. I assigned codes to the data that explained how the data corresponded to the theory. I accessed any new direction or perspective the data may have led me for triangulation and a better understanding of the data. Finally, I highlighted the documents with assorted color markers for categorization that identified emerging themes.

### **Focus Groups Data Collection Approach**

I used a limited number of homogeneous participants to describe the effective leadership practices of JROTC secondary school teachers that positively influenced classroom learning environments. From the focus group, the researcher identified a list of possibilities that made a difference within a homogeneous grouping (Ochieng et al., 2018). Focus groups were a research method for generating data through group discussions (Kruger et al., 2019). Thomas et al. (1995) described a focus group as an in-depth group interview focused on a given topic using purposive sampling representation. Participants were selected based on the criteria they shared insight into a common issue and similar socio-characteristics and were very permissive to discussing the topic (Richardson & Rabiee, 2001). The importance of focus groups was very significant.

The strengths of focus groups supported sharing ideas among participants and why the participants think the way they do (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Focus groups identified to the researcher the extent of commonalities and diversity in the sources of the information (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Time constraints limited the weaknesses of focus group participants' lack of depth (Ochieng et al., 2018). According to Krueger and Casey (2015), focus groups should be considered naturalistic rather than natural. In other words, naturalism involved the appearance of

nature or realism, and nature exists within confines (Ochieng et al., 2018). Krueger and Casey (2015) recognized that focus groups were manageable, with six and ten participants as significant enough to gain various perspectives and small enough not to become disorderly or fragmented. A few studies have reported as few as four and 15 participants (Jong & Jung, 2015). Each focus group('s) duration usually lasts one to two hours, based on the topic (Krueger & Casey, 2015). During focus group interviews, participants were asked a minimum of eight questions and no more than ten questions, and verbatim audio recording transcriptions allowed for content analysis and identification of themes. Below was a list of questions I asked during the focus group discussions that were stored (See Appendix E):

Please introduce yourself to me, including your name, role, and association with your school. (Ice Breaker)

FQ1. How do you feel when you enter your classroom? RQ1

FQ2. What are the traditions and values that are foundational in your classroom? RQ3

FQ3. How do you begin to build a relationship with your students? CRQ

FQ4. What motivated you to obtain a leadership role in the school? RQ2

FQ5. How do you encourage the involvement of other students? RQ4

FQ6. What different ways can students and teachers contribute to positive classroom instructions? RQ5

FQ7. How can you motivate students to appreciate excellence? RQ6

FQ8. Is there anything else you would like to say about ways to identify effective leadership practices? (Exit)

Focus question (FQ) one establishes background information and a relationship with the interviewee. Focus question two highlights the importance of school cultures (McKinney et al.,

2015). Focus question three to eight pertains to each of the five leadership practices that could identify effective leadership practices as new initiatives toward improving classroom learning environments (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

### ***Focus Group Analysis Plan***

I sent emails to every suitable participant to confirm availability and interest. Participants were expected to complete focus group consent forms. Times and locations of the focus group(s) were determined and organized after verbal or written confirmations. Copies of email confirmation served as a reminder two days before the scheduled group. I stored a focus group confirmation letter in a locked cabinet. I sent additional invitations out in anticipation of no-shows. Focus groups have up to 10 participants (Krueger & Casey, 2015). I used a tracking form for calls, emails, and confirmation letters. Participants were offered a video conference public setting to reduce barriers to attending the focus groups.

The researcher thanked and welcomed all participants to the focus group with a prepared script to welcome participants, a reminder of purpose, and set ground rules (Krueger & Casey, 2015). I collected demographic information that correlated focus group findings at the start of the focus group session. Participants were informed that the focus group meeting was to last about an hour to allow the participants time to settle into the group chat. I was the moderator. I advised the participants a tape recorder and video recorder application were utilized to capture body language and other clues. Researchers utilized a tape recorder or video recorder application to capture body language and other clues during focus group sessions (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Researchers did not have a personal view and kept their ego out of the facilitation (Krueger & Casey, 2015). I identified steps of closing out the focus group session by thanking everyone,

closing the room, and labeling the tapes and notes while the recording was still running. I used text transcription software during the process.

### **Data Synthesis**

Data analysis in qualitative research was an inductive process of verifying, transforming, validating, and evaluating data to discover useful information to answer the research questions (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2016). It was an ongoing process that started with assessing field notes and reflective writing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) proposed using one of the following four data analysis strategies for a case study: (a) relying on theoretical propositions, (b) working data from the “ground up,” (c) developing a case description, and (d) examining plausible and rival explanations.

Yin (2018) maintained that relying on theoretical propositions as reflections of research questions and reviewed literature pointed to relevant contextual conditions that were valid approaches to qualitative data analysis. I used a theoretical orientation to underpin the research questions and literature review that guided the data analysis in this study. Yin (2018) also noted that researchers used theoretical propositions that connected and compared the study’s literature, methodology, and results.

Yin (2018) described working the data from the “ground up” as an evaluative practice on whether a pattern was noticed for the first time. Some data suggested a valuable concept or whether one thing was better or worse. I rejected this strategy because this study explored and reported the findings as a continued search for truth. Yin (2018) posited that developing a case description to organize the case study according to some descriptive framework was difficult if the researcher had not settled on any valuable concepts from the data. I rejected this strategy because I decided on the research questions and propositions for the study. Finally, examining

plausible rival explanations was using rival explanations that appeared to be most threatening to the researcher's original proposals as a strategy of the analyzed data (Yin, 2018). I rejected this strategy out of reluctance to have study results influence my findings.

I began the data analysis while the data was being collected rather than waiting until all information was collected, which aided in determining data saturation. Yin (2018) purported that analyzing each unit of analysis as it was collected helped the researcher to know when data saturation had occurred. Yin (2018) recommended analyzing data as it was collected rather than waiting for all the data obtained from the participants. I identified protocols for organizing and coding the data to analyze all procedures and data effectively.

I organized the data specific words, units, or sentences using a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) such as NVivo that developed and manipulated the data for coding purposes. Trotter (2012) described NVivo v12 as the qualitative software used by researchers for coding thematic categories and extracting themes from a research interview to answer the research question. I downloaded NVivo ahead of time to take the tutorials to be familiar with the proper use of the software. The use of two coding cycles should be utilized to prevent data subjectivity (Saldaña, 2021).

Rubin and Rubin (2012) discussed finding common themes and concepts during the interview as the first data collection steps began. I reviewed the transcripts for a general idea of emerging themes or ideas as the second step. I wrote notes in the margins of the transcripts as reminders as I verified emerging themes from the transcripts. Data from interviews, documents, and focus groups were organized, interpreted, categorized, synthesized, and coded for patterns (Saldaña, 2021). In the third step, I coded and aggregated the main ideas from the various data sources into categories and then labeled those main ideas that form the aggregate. Creswell and

Poth (2018) informed researchers what to look for from the aggregated codes of emerging categories or themes to develop a common idea.

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study was to identify the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. Findings that contradicted or conflicted with this study's aims were considered discrepant, and any discrepancy was addressed. Discrepant cases aimed to elaborate, modify, or refine a theory (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I handled discrepant findings or cases that lacked compatibility or similarity between emerging themes with triangulation. Triangulation was offered as a potential ontological explanation for discrepant findings resolution (Yin, 2018). Discrepant findings pointed to flaws in the data analysis or a deficit in the depth of participants' responses that the researcher must have resolved as a conflict to be further investigated or a contradiction that should also be abandoned, suggesting further investigation (Smith, Cannata, & Haynes, 2016).

Yin (2018) posited the need for a case study database as a separate and orderly compilation of all the data from a case study was warranted to increase reliability. I used a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) as a database to preserve collectible data and established a form of recourse for inspecting the chain of evidence raw data that led to a case study's conclusion. I maintained an orderly database to enable a more straightforward analysis.

### **Coding, Themes, and Triangulation**

Researchers analyzed open coding textual content (Saldaña, 2021). Researchers also labeled concepts and defined developing categories based on their properties and dimensions (Saldaña, 2021). Qualitative data analysis consisted of noticing, collecting, and interpreting

information (Saldaña, 2021). During the open coding phase, I took notes based on document analysis, recorded events, and gathered information from the interviews. During data breakdown, information was examined, relations compared, and similarities or differences identified for further analysis (Saldaña, 2021). The researcher labeled the concepts with common characteristics from the participants' responses, called "in vivo codes" (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Sometimes, a memo described an entire concept when a few words were not enough and separated from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). I maintained a separate file for memos. I began to analyze the codes for similarities and grouped them into categories based on shared properties following the line-by-line coding from the interviews. I stopped the line-by-line coding when it became clear that no new concepts were found. Line-by-line coding was time-consuming and tedious to find new concepts and stopped once the analyzer found no new concepts (Saldaña, 2021).

Following the open coding, the axial coding and selective coding phases had begun. Axial coding drew connections between the open codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Selective coding selected one major category that connected all the codes from the data to explain a theory underpinning the research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I captured key conceptual characteristics from open coding that defined who, what, where, when, why, and how the phenomena occurred by drawing connections between the open codes. I sketched similarities and connections before I arrived at the final model. Categories or themes were analyzed and compared between the interview, document analysis, and focus group findings. I searched for common themes during the selective coding process based on all the data by comparing the data through the categories until no new information or themes emerged.

Furthermore, in qualitative research, the coding continued until saturation had occurred

(Yin, 2018). The concept of “theoretical saturation” introduced by Glaser and Strauss (2017) meant that the researcher stopped expanding the sample after the data that had been gathered did not produce any new themes on the research topic. Some scholars believed theoretical saturation sample sizes often lie between 20 and 30 participants and are usually below 50, but the theoretical mechanism on which estimates were based was unknown (Marshall et al., 2013). Stebbins (2001) described theoretical saturation in determining sample size as when no new information was produced from additional cases. The more homogeneous the sample was, the fewer participants were needed for data saturation (Yin, 2018). However, the researcher provided even a small sample that the researcher used to make analytic generalizations about the larger population (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). In this study, I increased the transferability of the findings by reaching theoretical saturation with the help of a homogeneous sample of JROTC teachers. This study focused on depth of information, and, therefore, it was expected that this study’s sample would include up to ten participants.

### **Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research relied on the researcher’s ability that observed and analyzed data from interviews, recordings, documents, questionnaires, surveys, and other artifacts, which must have been from trustworthy sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness referred to reliability and validity techniques for the researcher to establish that the findings were credible, transferable, confirmable, and dependable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness was critical for this research. Creswell and Poth (2008) established that validity and reliability were essential elements to establishing trustworthiness and credibility in research procedures. Clear documentation of research procedures and a research protocol can contribute to transparency and trustworthiness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Yin (2018) suggested that triangulating the data and

maintaining a chain of evidence encouraged reliability. In addition, Yin (2018) indicated that journaling allowed for introspection regarding the data collected because it helped establish trustworthiness and credibility (Yin, 2018).

The strategies that contributed to trustworthiness included triangulation, direct quotes, enumeration, member checks, prolonged engagement, negative case analysis, peer expert review, and external audit (Candela, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). I used the methodological triangulation method to extract emerging themes from semi-structured interviews (participants' worldviews), document analysis, and focus group discussion. Methodological triangulation consisted of more than one method to gather data, such as documents, questionnaires, interviews, discussions, and observations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Furthermore, the researcher searched for "negative cases," which referred to respondents' experiences or viewpoints differing from the main body of evidence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Such cases were crucial for ensuring that the data analysis was unbiased and thorough. Trustworthiness established using member checks (Candela, 2019). Member checks, also known as respondent validation, involved soliciting participants' reactions to the findings and interpretations of collected data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks demonstrated that the researcher was accountable to those sharing their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checks were treated as an ethical procedure allowing respondents to voice any concerns and were also used as a strategy to increase credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I ensured the member checks were validated after I obtained the participants' signatures on the forms attesting to the data's accuracy. In addition, participants were asked to perform a member check by confirming the accuracy of the recorded focus group transcription within eight days upon receipt of the focus

group transcription. The in-person interviews and focus group discussion's transcriptions were completed for a member check review within 72 hours following the sessions.

Next, I used an enumeration of all items in the research for transparency and trustworthiness. For example, I recorded the number of times a particular word or phenomenon was presented throughout the research. Enumeration was the process of quantifying data that made it helpful for clarifying words in the report, such as "many," "some," "few," and so on (Yin, 2018). I sought peer expert review by submitting papers for internal audit and expert audit from an outside agency to maintain quality standards for suitability for publication.

### **Triangulation Explanation**

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that triangulated data used several methods for data collection to validate the findings. Therefore, I collected data through semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussion. Google Calendar was used as a communication tool for scheduling and avoiding scheduling conflicts. I emailed interview questions to all participants to inform them in advance about the content of the interviews following IRB's approval. The semi-structured interviews lasted for about one hour and were audio recorded for transcription accuracy.

The Zencast served as audio recording software and Otter.ai as a transcription service. The Google Drive cloud-based storage service help managed all transcription. To maintain the reliability and validity of the data collected, each interviewed participant performed a member check for accuracy of the transcriptions by receiving a copy of the transcription hand delivered. The researcher used the member-checked version of the transcript for data analysis (Yin, 2018). I added peer-reviewed information to validate the content. Data collection concluded in approximately eight weeks from the start date. I maintained a research protocol. A detailed step-

by-step account of how the data was collected, stored, and analyzed increased the reliability and replicability of the research (Yin, 2018). Finally, I addressed the participant's privacy and confidentiality by having locked cabinets and password-protected digital equipment, deleted raw data after the study's completion, and used the data only for research purposes.

I ensured credibility with triangulation. Transferability was how the researcher demonstrated how the findings were applied to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, this study used purposive sampling, which was applied to different contexts. Participants were identified based on their position as district-wide administrators having leadership over employees for the specific problem in the same public-school district from the selection criteria. Confirmability was the degree of neutrality in the research based on the participants' responses without personal bias or motivations from the researcher (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2016). Dependability was the study's ability to be replicated with consistent findings (Patton, 2015). I used an inquiry audit by the dissertation committee chair, an expert, to examine the research findings.

### **Credibility**

Credibility referred to the degree of data accuracy of the participant's views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). I ensured credibility in prolonged engagement, member checks, and triangulation. The researcher needed to identify any personal bias, how the bias impacted the research, and addressed any mitigation concerns to ensure credibility (Yin, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed that researchers achieved credibility through prolonged engagement, which referred to sufficient time or extended time with the respondents to understand their behaviors in the data collection process to build trust and rapport, ensured accurate data collection, and prevented data distortions. In this

study, I ensured prolonged engagement with the participants for three months through interviews, document collections, and focus groups. The following approach to credibility was executing member checks. Member checks allowed all participants to review the accuracy of their transcribed evidence, correct any errors, or give additional information (Candela, 2019). I had the participants verify their transcription accuracy along with an approved transcription confirmation sheet that was later secured in a locked filing cabinet. The last approach to establishing credibility was triangulation. Triangulation served as a good strategy for enhanced credibility. I achieved triangulation by comparing interview findings with document analysis and focus group results for similar characteristic styles or distortion in the sources. Triangulation was a qualitative approach used to examine a substantial number of various sources to compare and analyze their findings for commonality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Transferability**

In qualitative research, transferability was the equivalent of generalizability in quantitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). Transferability contained a rich description of the evidence and context to support varying contexts. A rich or thick description was where the researcher had gathered detailed information when describing a case or writing about a theme throughout the project (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transferability referred to the degree to which I described physical details, movement details, and activity descriptions. Patton (2015) explained that results could be called transferable if they had meaning to other individuals not involved in the study and can be related to their own experiences. This study was meant to describe a phenomenon of transformational leadership practices in JROTC. However, transferability supported the descriptions and allowed for generalizations and specific quotes

from the transcriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, I ensured transferability by sufficiently describing procedures and set significant details to be replicated.

### **Dependability**

Dependability referred to consistent research findings were replicated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I ensured my instruments were consistent as I followed protocols and procedures. I used one or more of the following criteria to ensure I was dependable and consistent in my research. One criterion was stepwise replication. Stepwise replication was a qualitative research data evaluation procedure where two or more researchers analyzed the same data separately and compared the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). If the stepwise replication cannot be conducted, another criterion is a code-recode procedure. A code-recode procedure was where the researcher was coding the same data twice, giving one- or two-weeks' gestation period between each coding to compare the results for consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A third criterion was a peer examination or inquiry audit for a researcher auditor to examine the process of the study and determine its acceptability to the dependability of the study. The researcher auditor investigated the data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations and investigated whether the study was supported by data and was trustworthy (Gall et al., 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability, in turn, referred to the researcher's ability to ensure the data representation was from the participant's responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2016). Confirmability was a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study were shaped by the respondents and not motivated by the researcher's bias or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that confirmability involved reflexivity. Reflexivity involved the researchers examining their judgments, practices,

and belief systems during the data collection process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reflexivity also consisted of the researcher's presence on what was being investigated and the use of an audit trail that linked case data to study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To enhance the confirmability, I used an audit trail throughout the study to demonstrate how I made each methodological decision. I used triangulation to find commonality in the data. Triangulation involved using multiple sources to ensure credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I conducted my confirmability audit at the same time as the dependability audit to determine if the data and interpretations made were supported by evidence in the audit trail. Confirmability audit was an examination by the auditor to determine if the data and interpretations made were supported by evidence in the audit trail and not fabrication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher took ethical considerations throughout all phases of the research study because it was obligatory to ensure the integrity of the research through the shared dignity, safety, and welfare of the human research participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Singh, 2018). I completed the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) training before final submission to ensure adequate protection of participants and prevent any potential risks mitigation. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that the IRB approval, any external institution's approval, and participants' approval must be granted before conducting the research (see Appendix A). Before collecting data, I requested an IRB approval from Liberty University, the participants' school district, and each participant. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested selecting an institution without a vested interest in the study's outcome not to sway the researcher. I have not chosen an institution with a vested interest in the study's outcome to enhance objectivity.

After I obtained all necessary approvals, I contacted the potential participants. Each school's administrator provided the JROTC teachers' emails with which I made contact. I informed the potential participants regarding the study's goals and their expected contribution through the information sheet, which contained the primary information about the planned research. Participants who consented to participate were asked to sign a consent form to ensure that they were aware of their rights. After that, I scheduled the meetings with each participant, preferably using the time and place suggested by the interviewees to make them feel comfortable and confident.

Yin (2018) stressed that attaining informed consent from volunteered participants was one of the essential aspects of ethically sound research. Mandel and Parija (2014) pointed out that informed consent between the researcher and the participants was a bond of trust. Creswell and Poth (2018) stressed the importance of avoiding the coercion of participants or vulnerable populations that may have been part of the research. Approximately ten teachers signed a consent form before the study for ethical and legal reasons. Teachers' consent forms upon receipt were stored. All participants were aware of all of Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and ethical liabilities before signing a consent form. All participants were aware that the study involved volunteers and that they were free to exit the research study regardless of consent.

Next, the issues of confidentiality and privacy, which were the central concepts in research ethics, were addressed in this study. I respected the participants' privacy and confidentiality by protecting confidential information such as their identity during the analysis phase. I assigned pseudonyms to each participant instead of their real names. For example, I used a coding system to identify the participants, such as the (T) denoted the teacher, and the (F) identified focus group participation.

I protected the data on the computer with a password, while written data was stored in a locked cabinet. I encrypted all data stored in the Google cloud. The consent forms with the names of participants were stored separately from the data locked in a separate drawer of the filing cabinet. Creswell's and Poth's (2018) concept of confidentiality extended past the participants to the data stored in locked cabinets being assessable only to the researcher. Therefore, after five years, I will destroy the dissertation research material by shredding and discarding the trash in separate trash bags.

Creswell and Poth (2018) advised the researcher to disclose the purpose of the study to all individuals and organizations involved and be transparent and objective throughout the data collection and analysis process. I followed the research protocol for opening, interviewing, and closing the interview process. The research protocol specifically identified the purpose of the research and informed the participants of their right to stop the interview process at any time. In this way, I followed the recommendation by Creswell and Poth (2018) to avoid deception, disruptions, and power imbalance inherent in the positions and avoid any exploitation. I avoided leading questions during the data collection phase, avoided expressing personal beliefs and attitudes, and avoided disclosing any sensitive information. I shared all results and findings with all participants for feedback and data validation their member checks. I maintained objectivity and presented all data regardless of personal views. In addition, Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested avoiding reporting only positive results. Therefore, during the reporting phase, I did not falsify data, analysis, or conclusion because it could disservice me and my community. I correctly cited sources and used appropriate language for the audience.

## Summary

Chapter Three covered the methodology of the exploratory embedded single-case qualitative study. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study was to identify the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. The problem was leadership in a military context used by the JROTC teachers is ineffective, despotic, and irrelevant for the modern student's needs (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998; Fosse et al., 2019; Kershner, 2017; Quinn & Meiners, 2019; Mcgauley, 2015; Smit & Millett, 2021). I formulated six research questions to guide the research design and addressed the remaining gaps in knowledge. The theoretical framework underpinned by The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® model introduced by Kouzes and Posner (2017) was used by me. As an extension of Burns' work that continued the transformational leadership, this theory enabled the researcher to evaluate teachers' positive leadership practices. Kouzes and Posner's (2017) concept shaped the data collection process and guided the analytic priorities.

I identified approximately ten JROTC teachers using purposive sampling to collect in-depth, detailed data. The setting for the study was five Virginia public high schools. I obtained the IRB approval from Liberty University, the public school district superintendent, and participants and followed the ethical requirements regarding informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy. The individual semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and professionally transcribed. I used a focus group template and field notes for the discussions. I interpreted the document analysis using codes, themes, and field notes to assess the topic.

I used a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) such as NVivo to enhance data management and Zencast as audio recording software. The Google Drive cloud-

based storage service managed all transcriptions. The data was labeled, coded, and categorized to identify emerging themes and patterns until no new themes emerged. The aspect of trustworthiness addressed in this study included triangulation, direct quotes, enumeration, member checks, prolonged engagement, negative case analysis, peer expert review, and external audit (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study was to identify the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. The concept model guided this study was Kouzes' and Posner's leadership model (Kouzes & Posner, 2017), as this concept correlated to leadership practices' influence on organizational effectiveness. This chapter included participant's descriptions, the data in narrative themes, a table of participants, a table presented by themes, a table presented by a model graph of themes to aid in the learning process, outlier data, research question responses, and my researcher's role within the semi-structured interviews, focus group(s), and document collections. Results from the responses from the semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and the school artifacts were presented by keywords and themes, using a coded system. The results from the data analysis included induction of coding with a complication of emerging themes, followed by a cross-case synthesis of the presented information for a final summary of the findings. Pseudonyms were used to maintain the confidentiality of the participants and schools. To ensure anonymity would not be compromised, I provided the place-setter, "Teacher," to accompany the pseudonyms for the names of the participants. The data analysis and coding revealed five major themes:

- a. Self-Reflection
- b. Responsibility
- c. Empowerment
- d. Judgment
- e. Leadership

## Participants

Participants in this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study included ten teachers for the individual interviews, with only six of the ten participants completed a focus group session. Throughout the semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document collections, participants shared factors that impacted their perceptions of the JROTC teacher's leadership practices and whether they positively influence classroom learning environments. The participants' backgrounds varied regarding years of leadership experience and employment history. Each participant was encoded into a database. The code name consisted of the prefix of the high school number. Following the high school pseudonym was the participant's pseudonym. The (T) denoted the teacher, and the (F) identified focus group participation. A general description with a database code name of each participant was presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1

### *Teacher Participants*

Teacher Participants	Years Taught Range	Database Code Name	Years of Leadership Experience	Learning Education Level (1-4)
Freedom	1-7	1-Freedom-T	21	1-2
Liberty	15-20	2-Liberty-TF	24	3-4
Destiny	30	2-Destiny-TF	23	1-2
Honor	15-20	2-Honor-TF	23	1-2
Spirit	10-13	3-Spirit-TF	23	1-2
Pride	10-13	4-Pride-TF	23	1-2
Respect	10-13	4-Respect-TF	23	3-4

Joy	10-20	5-Joy-T	23	1-4
Glory	1-7	1-Glory-T	23	1-2
Mercy	5-10	1-Mercy-T	23	3-4

### **Interviewer- Teacher Freedom**

Teacher Freedom had taught for one to seven years at High School 1 as a JROTC teacher. Teacher Freedom described effective leadership as “Leadership is incorporating real-life experiences as much as possible” (Interview, Teacher Freedom, November 17, 2022). Teacher Freedom believed that lived experiences provided a powerful resource to revitalize young minds involving autonomy, individualism, and responsibility. With over 21 years of leadership experience, Teacher Freedom believed the potential for change was real. Teacher Freedom believed the classroom was also a gateway for leadership approaches that have the potential to narrow the divide between the various levels of educational excellence for understanding leadership and improving academic quality. “It is no surprise that leadership can disguise itself in indirect ways of acting or reacting,” according to Teacher Freedom (Interview, Teacher Freedom, November 17, 2022).

### **Interviewer- Teacher Liberty**

High School 2 had undergone several employment turnovers within the past four years. Teacher Liberty had been teaching for between 15 and 20 years as a JROTC teacher. Teacher Liberty’s assessment was “I like breaking the lesson down into smaller segments, then personalizing those segments for my students” (Interview, Teacher Liberty, November 17, 2022). Teacher Liberty believed that forging a connection between a welcoming classroom effective lesson execution would subsequently determine the overall effectiveness. This JROTC

teacher also felt that “The simplistic approach will underpin the notion that the leadership process is a multifaceted, complex force” (Interview, Teacher Liberty, November 17, 2022). This teacher claimed that the classroom environment indicated that the teacher’s leadership abilities and classroom structure correlated within smaller entities and could morph into a more significant learning cluster.

### **Interviewer- Teacher Destiny**

Teacher Destiny is employed at High School 2, which had undergone several employment turnovers within the past four years. Teacher Destiny had well over 30 years of leadership experience. Teacher Destiny liked to consider how much the “classroom instructions should embody real experiences” (Interview, Teacher Destiny, November 22, 2022). This teacher described the leadership role as a leader was to empower others to become effective leaders. Teacher Destiny felt most importantly, “most leadership approaches that integrate innovation can reinforce a nurturing learning environment” (Interview, Teacher Destiny, November 22, 2022). Teacher Destiny emphasized the importance of a leader’s values, which highlighted a leader’s behavior and leadership style. Teacher Destiny believed the role of a JROTC teacher was to maintain consistent leadership practices to produce effectiveness in classroom instruction. The importance of such variables as reading, problem-solving, and collaboration in students’ development should enable students to participate fully in society and to access a changing world in a constructive and informative manner (Vegas, Winthrop, 2020).

### **Interviewer-Teacher Honor**

Teacher Honor had been teaching for 15-20 years at High School 2 as a JROTC teacher. Teacher Honor believed that exemplary leadership required innovation in the classroom. This teacher also believed that innovative ideas and changes always yielded rewards. Teacher Honor

said, “Teaching is a partnership that requires understanding the values our students bring with innovation” (Interview, Teacher Honor, November 21, 2022). Teacher Honor believed that a leader’s vision cultivated the teacher’s and student’s partnership to manage their skills and grow their potential. Teacher Honor believed in focusing on the student’s strengths and core competencies because students often got discouraged focusing on weaknesses. Teacher Honor was not advocating ignoring the areas that needed improvement, but a reality check on priorities to elevate a student’s potential and growth. For example, a student may not be proficient in executing a perfect “About Face” drill movement, but the he or she may have a strong potential for presenting a speech.

### **Interviewer-Teacher Spirit**

Teacher Spirit taught 10-13 years at High School 3 as a JROTC teacher. Teacher Spirit’s mantra was, “Stop doing ineffective things” (Interview, Teacher Spirit, November 21, 2022). Teacher Spirit felt that the most fantastic thing about leadership was rebranding the classroom culture. Teacher Spirit thought that “students need a vision, so they know where they are going and why” (Interview, Teacher Spirit, November 21, 2022). This teacher understood that leadership was required to effectively engage those students beyond a vision of rebranding their cultures and capabilities. Teacher Spirit knew the classroom did not have innovative speed without the digital aspect or internet. “Students’ capabilities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are embedded across boundaries through various platforms, so why not use this to our advantage?” (Interview, Teacher Spirit, November 21, 2022). The ability to work with students more effectively and with a sense of familiarity, was identified as a benefit of education via mixed modes (Faulconer, 2022).

**Interviewer-Teacher Pride**

Teacher Pride taught 10-13 years at High School 4 as a JROTC teacher. Teacher Pride was conscientious about redefining a leader's role by becoming the “eyes and ears of students.” Teacher Pride did not affirm that this was the only leadership approach; nonetheless, "I love to lead from the heart" (Interview, Teacher Pride, November 22, 2022). Teacher Pride loved listening to students' feedback and recommendations. This teacher felt this approach kept the lines of communication open and less hostile. Teacher Pride was enthusiastic about each student's education. Teacher Pride even gave nicknames to students as a term of endearment. Teacher Pride smiled and recalled, "They love it when I give them nicknames. You should see their pride" (Interview, Teacher Pride, November 22, 2022). Teacher Pride felt this level of acceptance built trust and a relationship. Teacher Pride also instructed each class differently because what worked well in one class did not work well in another. In addition, Teacher Pride relied on developing a relationship with students to help redefine classroom expectations so that learning took place.

**Interviewer-Teacher Respect**

Teacher Respect had been teaching 10-13 years at High School 4 as a JROTC teacher. Teacher Respect believed that innovation in teaching made a huge difference. Teacher Respect said, “I want my class to think about innovation differently.” “I believe change must happen when nothing works as it used to” (Interview, Teacher Respect, November 29, 2022). This teacher’s logic on leadership was to look beyond problems to understand how an opportunity allowed for a better classroom benefit. This teacher also believed that a leader must know when to do the right thing, which was a process. Teacher Respect also valued teaching students how something happened. Teacher Respect respected everyone.

**Interviewer-Teacher Joy**

Teacher Joy taught 10-20 years at High School 5 as a JROTC teacher. Teacher Joy had over 22 years of leadership experience. Teacher Joy taught with the desired outcome in mind while planning the steps backwards to achieve the desired goal. Teacher Joy used assessments that provided accountability for students' abilities. This teacher also used artifacts such as projects, drill execution, presentations, and leadership capabilities to assess students' growth accurately because some students lacked test-taking skills. Teacher Joy also believed in students. "Get more opportunities with partnerships than with books" (Interview, Teacher Joy, November 29, 2022). Teacher Joy took pride in collaborating with other partners and educators to obtain resources used that met the needs of students.

**Interviewer-Teacher Glory**

Teacher Glory had taught for less than ten years at High School 1, but had over 27 years of leadership experience. Teacher Glory was customer service oriented and believed excellence was the cornerstone of leadership. Teacher Glory also advocated for the value of technology and science, technology, engineers, and math (STEM) in providing enhanced learning opportunities for instructors to pass on to their students. Teacher Glory wanted the team to be the designers of the process. "We cannot change the problem alone. We will need help" (Interview, Teacher Glory, November 28, 2022). Teacher Glory believed that inspiring students, instilling goodwill, and collaborating with other teachers and partners guided change in the world. Throughout the interview process, this teacher remained inspirational with one main drive in mind, "inspire other people to do great things" (Interview, Teacher Glory, November 28, 2022).

**Interviewer-Teacher Mercy**

Teacher Mercy taught 5-10 years at High School 1 as a JROTC teacher, and had 22 years

of leadership experience. Teacher Mercy valued mentoring students to build strong bonds. This teacher believed mentoring helped students to develop their leadership and citizenship skills. Teacher Mercy thought that being a robust role model helped to empower students. “My students love to drill and try to outperform me when they get to instruct their drill team” (Interview, Teacher Mercy, November 28, 2022). Teacher Mercy also stated, “I encourage feedback from my students to reinforce their achievements” (Interview, Teacher Mercy, November 28, 2022). This teacher supported feedback from students because it helped to embrace and appreciate cultural differences when giving feedback.

### **Focus Group**

The focus group was conducted virtually with six participants. A protocol script was read to the participants before the focus group interview. The participants included five males and one female. The participants collaborated and provided dialogue in a virtual and safe environment. The participants were selected based on a significant level of involvement to identify the effective JROTC teacher’s leadership practices that could positively influence classroom learning environments. The focus group discussion questions will be in (Appendix E). Participants shared information and provided insightful dialogue in a respectful, professional, and enthusiastic environment. The findings were reported on the following pages.

### **Documentation Artifacts**

The teachers in this study were asked to present documents to assess positive learning practices and the various ways they contributed to positive classroom instruction to appreciate excellence. Coulter (2017) noted that military school culture empowered students to develop their self-esteem and confidence and become leaders. Teacher Liberty’s lesson plans have apparent engagement that empowered students by forging a connection between a welcoming

classroom environment and the lesson presentation, subsequently determining the overall effectiveness. According to Teacher Liberty, the students were most successful when working within smaller group sessions and peer coaching. Teacher Respect's and Teacher Liberty's resumes established clear past experiences and skills in building relationships with students and the community, having notable values to share that could result in future student leadership.

Documentation artifacts from the awards program consisted of the written award narratives and photos of recipients that created a unique opportunity to appreciate all cadets and recognize those who delivered exceptional leadership and performance in 71 award categories. Teacher Joy and Teacher Spirit shared continuous improvement project data that suggested which learner-centered environments needed to meet the standards, making more teachers aware that the students should set goals, identify ways to improve, and evaluate required changes in a cyclical process. The documentation artifacts collected for grading policies were district directed and remain constant amongst the JROTC teachers. Brochures and classroom survey data from Teacher Pride and Teacher Mercy showed the significance and evidence of building on the cultural and conceptual knowledge from students within the JROTC program by sharing the best of their program opportunities and commitments.

## **Results**

The challenge of identifying effective leadership practices had been a constant, like poverty, lack of stability, lack of role models, food insecurity, and more (Wolff, 2019). The criteria for JROTC teachers' instruction when teaching was the JROTC Program for Accreditation (JPA) designed to document students' growth through instructional practices (USACC Regulation 145-8-3, 2021). The results were based on several research questions that guided this study. The results also included interviews, focus group discussions, and document

collections. Data collection from interviews, a focus group discussion, and physical artifacts allow for triangulation to determine the consistency of the findings from various sources (Yin, 2018). The data was collected, analyzed, coded, and categorized to determine whether the findings aligned with the problem and purpose statements. The data will be further presented as themes. Five themes emerged and ten sub-themes were also identified.

The data analysis revealed five major themes and ten sub-themes due to saturation. Saturation occurs when no more emerging ideas emerge (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Moustaks, 1994). Those themes meant I answered only some questions and solved all the problems in understanding JROTC effective teaching practices. Those themes and sub-themes were identified by analyzing semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document collection data using NVivo software. Those themes and sub-themes are shown in Table 2. In addition, a description with database codes and themes from the data collection was presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2

*Main Themes and Sub-Themes of Positive Teacher Practices*

Theme	Sub-Theme
Self-Reflection	Objectivity
	Motivation
Responsibility	Innovation
	Teamwork
Empowerment	Relationships
	Values and Beliefs
Judgment	Perception
	Standards
Leadership	Positive
	Transformation

## **Self-Reflection**

Self-reflection was identified as a theme with 22 open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influenced secondary learning environments. Teacher Destiny stated, "Improving instructional practices through self-reflection allows teachers to evaluate their teaching practices, leadership strategies, and classroom management techniques to make changes and adjustments as needed" (Interview, Teacher Destiny, November 22, 2022). Teacher Honor stated, "Self-reflection is an important internal assessment for JROTC teachers to influence positive teacher and leadership outcomes" (Interview, Teacher Honor, November 21, 2022).

On this aspect, the teachers were asked about their reflective practices, based explicitly on objectivity and motivation in their professional development experiences, and how they prepared themselves to work within the classroom. Teacher Honor indicated that a leader's vision could cultivate the teacher's and student's relationship to develop their skills and grow their potential through motivation. By reflecting on the experiences, the other teachers checked their priorities to elevate a student's potential and growth as essential tasks. Through reflective practices, those teachers created positive climates in the classroom, taught student skills, built teacher-student rapport, and employed effective instructional strategies based on the dedication of the teacher's willingness to improve and adjust professionally and personally with the students (Coulter, 2017). In return, students also reflected critically so that they could reconstruct the tasks.

Teacher Pride from the focus group commented, "Teachers can evaluate their teaching practices and leadership strategies to create a positive learning environment that supported the student's success" (Focus Group, Teacher Pride, November 18, 2022). The focus on leadership

style, practical communication skills, and the ability to create a positive learning environment influenced cultural leadership awareness (Blake, 2016).

### ***Objectivity***

Objectivity was identified as a sub-theme with seven open codes of relevant statements, referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influence secondary learning environments. Teacher Respect stressed that "JROTC teachers have become more aware of their emotions and how they influence their interactions with students help them develop strategies for positively managing these emotions by increasing their emotional intelligence" (Focus group, Teacher Respect, November 18, 2022). Teacher Mercy felt, "Self-awareness was an ongoing process to help teachers to remain objective" (Interview, Teacher Mercy, November 28, 2022). The consensus from the focus group agreed that JROTC teachers made a habit of regularly evaluating their teaching and leadership practices to remain objective. Teacher Freedom stated, "Students' continued growth must be based on facts which should be derived from the teacher's ability to improve upon the teacher's knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses to be effective toward the students" (Interview, Teacher Freedom, November 17, 2022).

### ***Motivation***

Motivation was identified as a sub-theme with six open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influenced secondary learning environments. Motivation in nature was aligned with Maslow's philosophy of human motivation and the leadership-building focus of JROTC (Blake, 2016). Teacher Respect also discussed motivation as a different form of leadership in the classroom. Teacher Respect stated, "Motivation is about satisfying the basic human need of belonging and achievement" (Focus

Group, Teacher Respect, November 18, 2022). Teacher Pride commented that good leaders motivated their students in many ways.

### **Responsibility**

Responsibility was identified as a theme with 16 open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influenced secondary learning environments. This study focused some of its research questions on the responsibilities of the teachers in their classrooms, noting how they took on their roles as leaders in presenting content engagingly and how they adapted the classroom instructions. Responsibility was based on the subthemes of innovation and encouraging teamwork to build stronger partnerships. There was also a review of the types of leadership styles that each teacher used in their classroom actions and practices. Teacher Liberty stated, "Responsible behavior plays an important role in influencing positive teacher and leadership outcomes" (Focus Group, Teacher Respect, November 18, 2022). Teacher Joy stated, "Both the teachers' and students' responsible behavior can make the work important to those individuals" (Interview, Teacher Joy, November 29, 2022). Kouzes and Posner (2017) supported demonstrating personal excitement regarding responsible behavior. Teacher Pride believed that teachers who demonstrated a shared vision were accountable for meeting the expectations of the school (Focus Group, Teacher Pride, November 18, 2022).

### ***Innovation***

Innovation was identified as a sub-theme with five open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influence secondary learning environments. The findings from the document artifacts indicated that the JROTC teachers had students take significant responsibility with projects in engaging with their community by using

innovations when conducting continuous improvement projects that increase their learning and motivation when giving clear expectations and support. Teacher Destiny felt that at an even more extraordinary level, “Most leadership approaches that integrate innovation can reinforce a nurturing learning environment” (Interview, Teacher Destiny, November 22, 2022). Schuitema et al. (2016) noted that teachers had an essential role in creating an environment that supported student learning, especially by supporting students’ autonomy. In this way, students valued their creativity, personal interests, and choices with involvement and ownership of their work guided by their teachers. Similarly, Harms et al. (2018) noted that maintaining teacher practices increased student engagement by giving them innovative responses, modeling, and feedback opportunities. Classroom innovations were significant because they promoted active learning, motivation, and educational leadership.

### ***Teamwork***

Teamwork was identified as a sub-theme with nine open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influence secondary learning environments. Teacher Joy noted that she used collaboration that provided teamwork efforts for small group sessions to achieve a common goal and complete a task efficiently. Teacher Joy shared that "video conferencing for events, peer training, and document sharing are some examples I used in my classroom to collaborate teamwork" (Interview, Teacher Joy, November 29, 2022). "A higher-level reflection connected to teaching teamwork concepts elevates the teacher to a deeper transformative learning level" (Interview, Teacher Liberty, November 17, 2022). Moreover, educators instilled a sense of autonomy in the profession, thus allowing the educator to serve the students as change agents (Kovach, 2019). Using a professional development approach, Teacher Honor added, "It is essential to collaborate with other partners

and educators to obtain resources to meet the needs of students" (Interview, Teacher Honor, November 21, 2022).

### **Empowerment**

Empowerment was identified as a theme with 14 open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influenced secondary learning environments. "Empowerment is vital in influencing positive teacher and student outcomes in JROTC-based educational institutions to build lasting friendships" (Interview, Teacher Pride, November 22, 2022). "Empowerment refers to giving individuals the authority, resources, and support they need to make decisions, act, and achieve their goals in becoming better citizens" (Interview, Teacher Liberty, November 17, 2022). Understanding the teacher's worldview and subsequent influence on student achievement could significantly influence educational leaders that could implement a system for active student engagement and empowerment. In this way, teachers' efficacy, professional development, leadership, and effectiveness were the significant drivers of improvement plans and therefore leading to overall academic gains (Ahmad, 2017). Leaders must effectively lead and balance various tasks, including identifying creativity and harnessing talents within their subordinates that were encouraged, fostered, and modeled (Ahmad, 2017). Teachers are responsible for working with students and empowering them through discovering their abilities and talents.

### ***Relationships***

Relationships were identified as a sub-theme with seven open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influence secondary learning environments. Teacher Glory also indicated, "I used the decision-style approach in building relationships with my students" (Interview, Teacher Glory, November 28, 2022). Actively

building relationships had become an approach. The professional teacher led the students to acquire knowledge through instruction while also remaining involved in their student's learning abilities and achievements (Ajanaku & Lubbe, 2021). Military schools taught essential leadership practices of personal responsibility, independence, teamwork, and leadership and taught through role modeling and instilling the correct values (Coulter, 2017). "Positive leaders take the initiative and develop positive functioning relationships in the classroom" (Interview, Teacher Pride, November 22, 2022). In addition, "Relationship building is vital in the JROTC program because it is based on leadership development, training, and education, which can be applied to the students in building relationships" (Interview, Teacher Mercy, November 28, 2022). There was a strong relationship between student engagement and transformational leadership, mediated by building teachers' efficacy, improving instruction within the classroom, setting clear visions, and developing a sense of collaboration and community (Ajanaku & Lubbe, 2021). "Nonetheless, relationship building within the Career Technical Education (CTE) is a complex form of teamwork which the JROTC teachers are part of this team, but transparency is lacking" (Focus group, Teacher Pride, November 18, 2022).

### ***Values and Beliefs***

Values and beliefs were identified as a sub-theme with eight open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influence secondary learning environments. Teacher Destiny also insisted that "Teachers maintain consistent values and beliefs system to see the effectiveness of classroom instructions" (Interview, Teacher Destiny, November 22, 2022). The leader assisted followers in acting or performing when faced with challenging goals through a shared vision and motivation (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). "A system of values and beliefs helps all students navigate a love of learning and develop a complete range

of abilities" (Interview, Teacher Glory, November 28, 2022). Teacher Freedom indicated in the study that "Most leadership approaches that integrate encouragement can reinforce a nurturing values and beliefs system" (Interview, Teacher Freedom, November 17, 2022). Leaders must lead with integrity and values to motivate followers to translate the school vision into daily practice (Ashfaq et al., 2021).

### **Judgment**

Judgment was identified as a theme with ten open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influenced secondary learning environments. "Educators play a significant role in making decisions within their practice through professional judgment. Teachers will often use their judgment by utilizing their understanding of the classroom context and their students' capabilities for implementing the curriculum" (Interview, Teacher Destiny, November 22, 2022). In this way, the teacher could create a perception by adhering to the standards so that students can participate in their learning through engagement. Teacher Respect shared how the "Teachers' perceptions benefit students' learning environment because the teacher will be well equipped to respond to students' unique needs (Focus group, Teacher Respect, November 18, 2022).

### ***Perception***

Perception was identified as a sub-theme with five open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influence secondary learning environments. Through leadership roles, teachers become decision-makers, building on the core teaching competencies and agents of change by nurturing their students' well-being and educational improvement (Ajanaku & Lubbe, 2021). Therefore, Teacher Honor added, "Teachers' perceptions are about setting directions to help explain things" (Interview, Teacher

Honor, November 21, 2022). "The teachers, in this case, must recognize their ability to analyze and interpret their student's sensory information" (Focus group, Teacher Liberty, November 18, 2022). This approach could lead to working towards a common purpose of student achievement or a sense of agency that leads to positivity (Cherkowski, 2018). Therefore, the teachers' perception can become necessary to gather and receive data representing how students will use the information to improve student learning and enhance classroom management (Cherkowski, 2018).

### *Standards*

Standards were identified as a sub-theme with nine open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influence secondary learning environments. Teachers could also incorporate their professional knowledge and skills into designing and implementing practical assessments and establishing standards to accurately measure their students' progress and learning (Cherkowski, 2018). The findings showed that all participants took teaching seriously by following the school district's and Cadet Command's guidelines to achieve results. The assessment findings were evident from their document artifacts in obtaining full accreditation through their JROTC accreditation requirements prevented potential conflict. Understanding the accreditation standard kept the lines of communication open and less hostile. While meeting the standards, those teachers identified the unique needs of the students, adapted instruction to meet their needs, and thus led to improve learning outcomes. Through classroom sessions with a perceived standard of achievement, teachers created an environment of engagement and stimulation through learning activities (Cherkowski, 2018).

## **Leadership**

Leadership was identified as a theme with 24 open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influenced secondary learning environments. Leadership was an essential part of JROTC in all relations, with the program being perceived as a valuable leadership development program that builds cadets' character, citizenship, and leadership skills (Rand Corps., 2017). The participants in this study were asked about the types of transformational leadership qualities they use in their JROTC instruction and their challenges in the application. Teacher Freedom and Teacher Destiny expressed that effective leadership incorporates real-life experiences – a resource for revitalizing young minds through autonomy, individualism, and responsibility. Teacher Liberty described leadership as smaller segments of a whole for effectiveness. Teacher Honor believed innovation leads to exemplary leadership. In this way, the classroom formed a gateway for leadership, which improved educational quality as the students built skills and traits based on leadership.

### ***Positive Example***

Positive example was identified as a sub-theme with seven open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influence secondary learning environments. The findings noted that teachers were able to set a positive example for students as the teachers used their leadership skills in a continuous process. As a result, the document artifacts produced pictures of awards ceremonies, STEM summer camp events, and drill events confirming students being evaluated on their leadership roles and growth toward becoming good citizens. Furthermore, Teacher Liberty stated, “Formal, informal, and role modeling mentorships assist our cadets' growth and development as future leaders” (Focus group, Teacher Liberty, November 18, 2022). Teacher Glory stated, “We have leadership academic programs that are an

integral part of the state's career and technical education (CTE) model to assist students in discovering themselves, forging lasting friendships, and reaching their leadership potential" (Focus group, Teacher Spirit, November 18, 2022). "In the JROTC program, leadership is taught based on teachers' experience to maximize students' leadership potential and to develop the skills to bring out the best in them" (Focus group, Teacher Honor, November 18, 2022).

### ***Transformation***

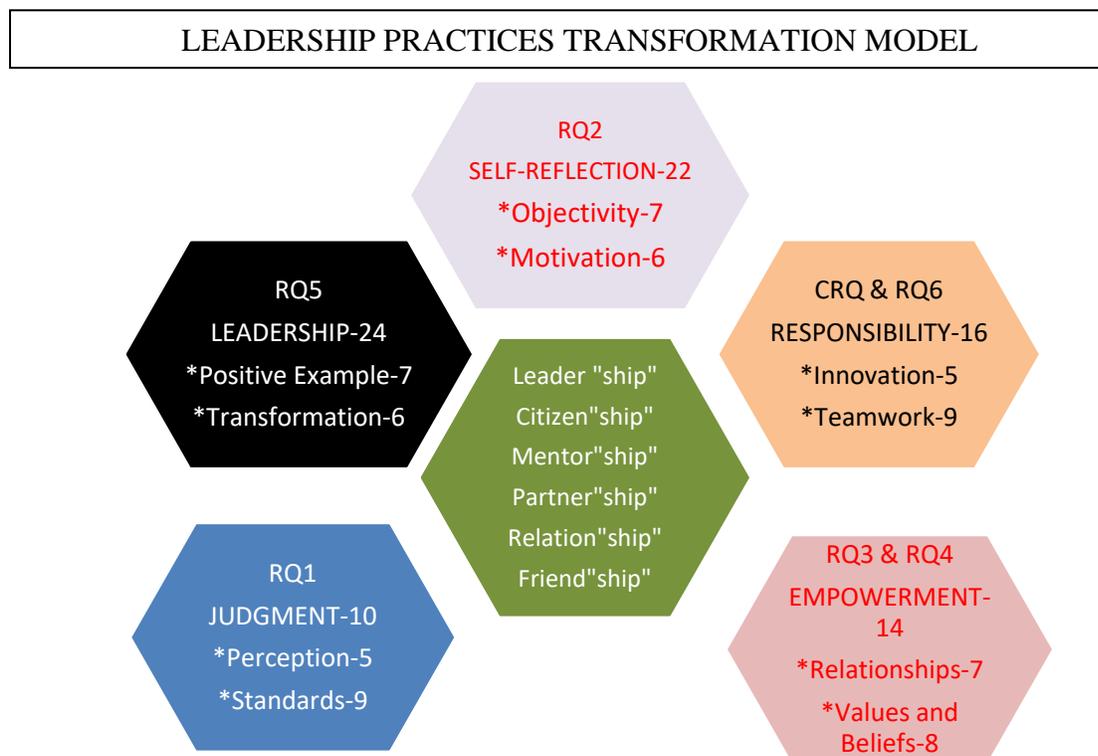
Transformation was identified as a sub-theme with six open codes of relevant statements referencing JROTC teachers' leadership practices that influence secondary learning environments. Leadership transformation was inseparable from teacher to student, with different motivations and the purpose of a common goal. From the findings, Teacher Honor said, "Teaching is a partnership that requires understanding the values our students bring" (Interview, Teacher Honor, November 21, 2022). However, Teacher Pride stated, "I welcome positive changes mostly, but find it hard to break from tradition at times" (Focus group, Teacher Pride, November 18, 2022). Similarly, Teacher Respect added,

"Because of our passion for what we do, we can embrace these changes, especially the male grooming standards and the alternate weekly uniform-wearing standards, due to the strain it puts on families to have them properly dry-cleaned weekly. We must meet our students where they are and build them up. We have ostracized far too many students because they did not look the part based on our standards. The Army is evolving, and we need to keep up or get out" (Focus group, Teacher Respect, November 18, 2022).

Teacher Liberty stated, "Leadership transformation is a two-way process in which both the leader and student are being transformed morally and ethically to achieve greater satisfaction and acceptance" (Focus group, Teacher Liberty, November 18, 2022). The findings also concluded that the teachers' significant role was transforming the student's development by improving instruction for student achievement and learning, with the teacher remaining central in instructional leadership.

The transformation concept was very important and yet underrated. The concept of transformation created a relationship within the community. This concept transformed students' ideologies and growth mindsets based on the data. This study attempted to answer questions on students' academic achievements based on leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. However, it found a transformation of innovative ideas taught in a tolerant environment driven by leaders who wanted to transform their students in positive ways. An abbreviation for the central and research questions preceded the major themes. Students were being transformed by way of "ships" through citizenship, leadership, mentorship, partnerships, friendships, and relationships. The middle hexagon represented the transformation of innovative ideas of the students based on the data to represent connections or dependencies to "ships." Each hexagon was presented with a major theme and an asterisk representing the sub-themes followed by the number of code frequencies from NVivo presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3

*Leadership Practices Connection to Transformational Behaviors***Outlier Data and Findings**

An unexpected finding that did align with my specific research questions and themes but needed to be in the context of the research problem was presented next. Teacher Pride said, “They credited us with STEM and cyber awareness training, but it would be nice to teach it” (Focus group, Teacher Pride, November 18, 2022). “I agree with you. The STEM training should be taught by our colleagues, at least, on the portion the cadets will be applying during training at camp” (Focus group, Teacher Spirit, November 18, 2022). Presently, the JROTC teachers helped facilitate other teachers in bringing STEM to the JROTC cadets by hosting summer camps.

### ***Outlier Finding***

Teacher Glory also advocated for the value of technology and science, technology, engineers, and math (STEM) in providing enhanced learning opportunities for instructors to pass on to their students. Teachers needed to understand the power and value of an engineering design process which enables their perseverance and lessens their failures. Those findings required the teachers to know the subject matter and its content which created an environment that helped the students to solve real-world problems and increased their knowledge of the content. Teacher Freedom added to this concept noting that rapid changes and advancements in technology (especially in the wake of COVID-19) have necessitated the need to embrace modern technologies in a better way.

### **Research Question Responses**

This study examined the phenomenon to identify the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influenced classroom learning environments. Participants responded from a semi-structured interview, a focus group, and artifacts collections which answered the central research and sub-questions.

### **Central Research Question**

How can JROTC teachers' leadership practices and behaviors influence innovative classroom instructions? The participants' perspective was that classroom innovation was necessary and should be consistently pursued and practiced. Teacher Honor noted that "the right leadership requires innovation in the classroom, which leads to student achievement" (Focus Group, Teacher Honor, November 18, 2022). All participants of the focus groups agreed with this statement. Improved effectiveness in teamwork and a high commitment rejuvenated passion from the teachers (Al-Husseini et al., 2017). Classroom innovations could be achieved through

transformational leadership practices, which were effective in equipping teachers to succeed in creativity (Supermane, 2019).

### **Sub-Question One**

What are some signs of a lack of leadership associated with the use of positive leadership transformation practices aligned with other leadership models in the JROTC context? The participants thought STEM classes should be a regular JROTC curriculum. Teacher Pride felt that a quality STEM program in student's education facilitated their talent development in science, engineering, technology, and mathematics if it could be taught virtually. However, Teacher Pride disagreed with too much virtual teaching, noting that "virtual learning negatively affected students because there was a lack of hands-on and practical skills in the curriculum" (Focus Group, Teacher Pride, November 18, 2022). As such, the students needed to develop critical leadership skills.

On the other hand, Teacher Joy elaborated that the students could get more opportunities when they engaged in technological learning. Teacher Joy noted that with the disruption in the learning environments today, it became crucial to use the more advanced forms of artificial intelligence in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), using sophisticated cognitive processes to understand information and build skills. Thus, that learning environment requires the leadership of the teachers who work to develop STEM and cyber awareness talent to provide support opportunities and experiences to the students so that they can reach their potential. Moreover, as indicated by Teacher Spirit, "The current learning environment became effective when there was electronic teaching and traditional face-to-face teaching, meeting the needs of the students across boundaries through various platforms" (Focus Group, Teacher Spirit, November 18, 2022).

**Sub-Question Two**

How do JROTC teachers “Model the Way” in setting a positive example by creating a collaborative team environment? The participants’ perspective was that teachers were leaders who set an example for their students in creating a shared vision to rebrand their cultures to fit the classroom context. Teacher Spirit indicated that “leadership is based on rebranding the classroom culture” (Focus Group, Teacher Spirit, November 18, 2022). As such, leadership was required to effectively engage the students beyond a vision to rebrand their cultures and capabilities where they understood that the teachers’ leadership helped to create cohesion. Contemporary military leaders were expected to lead by example, demonstrate excellent communication skills, create a positive environment, develop others, build trust, contribute to their profession’s development, and create transparency between upward and downward accountability (Longenecker & Shufelt, 2021). The teachers in this study appeared to support such a paradigm, noting that setting and leading by example ensured a better classroom environment. Culture rebranding can be viewed as encouraging change within an organization (Schuitema et al., 2016). Additionally, leaders enable others to act by fostering collaboration and build trust to strengthen others within the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). “By setting the example for students, the teachers helped the students to develop personal interests, take ownership, work with others, and appreciate each other which motivated them to learn” (Focus Group, Teacher Spirit, November 18, 2022).

**Sub-Question Three**

How do JROTC teachers inspire others to share their vision of future goals? The participants' perspective was backward planning that involved starting from the desired goal and organizing the steps to achieve the desired outcome by working backwards. In this strategy,

Teacher Honor noted that "teachers keep their students motivated and excited toward the shared vision with planning projects and ventures with the end in mind" (Focus group, Teacher Honor, November 18, 2022). Teacher Spirit also noted, "Students will be asked to collaborate with partners for resources needed to get their 'buy-in'" (Focus group, Teacher Spirit, November 18, 2022). Similarly, transformational leadership practices were significant bonuses where teachers and staff members valued everyone's participation in setting up and evaluating the school's shared vision (Metcalf & Morelli, 2015).

Moreover, the teacher leadership practice was significant because it exposed the students to the leader's influence, training them in discipline and demonstrating promising results. In this study, Teacher Mercy indicated that "A leader's vision builds strong bonds and helps them to develop their skills" (Interview, Teacher Mercy, November 28, 2022). Teacher Destiny voiced that "being a visionary leader can help empower students, transforming them into excellent leaders by keeping the focus on the result" (Focus group, Teacher Destiny, November 18, 2022). "Team members wanted to see more transparency from their hierarchy; I am talking about Career Technical Education (CTE). How does our CTE department support us?" (Focus group, Teacher Respect, November 18, 2022).

#### **Sub-Question Four**

How do JROTC teachers "Challenge the Process" of others to improve future goals and bring about positive changes? The participants perceived that they were comfortable talking to their administration about changes in addition to encouraging changes when needed in their classes. Teacher Joy stated, "The aspect is based on the teacher's self-efficacy as an instructional leader" (Interview, Teacher Joy, November 29, 2022). A positive and robust association between improving instructional practice, communicating positive expectations of student learning, and

the willingness for successful change in the classroom is essential (Manuel, 2017). Teacher Joy stated, "More opportunities occur in supporting one another as the teachers can then have more control over learning and educational policies and have the autonomy to guide and encourage their students" (Interview, Teacher Joy, November 29, 2022). Teacher Freedom notes the students' motivation and participation created a level of acceptance which built trust.

Additionally, Teacher Pride indicated that developing a relationship with students helped to redefine classroom expectations as a positive and inclusive learning culture could be created to support student success.

### **Sub-Question Five**

How do JROTC teachers enable others to act to create positive relationships? The participants perceived that JROTC teachers exemplified leadership practices in all manifestations and contributed significantly to students' leadership growth. Teacher Liberty voiced a similar sentiment, noting that the leadership process was a multifaceted complex force that cultivated and transformed the students to become better, improving their skills. Utilizing decades of experience in military service, the teacher guided the students in personal behavior, etiquette, and appearance. Teacher Joy noted, "We use our leadership roles to create effective communication about our shared vision, encourage collaboration among the students, build trust, set positive examples, encourage collaboration and teamwork, and foster creativity and innovation" (Interview, Teacher Joy, November 29, 2022). Thus, through teacher leadership, the development and implementation of effective strategies that led to improved academic performance and other positive outcomes evolved specifically based on the resources and support offered to the students by the teachers.

### **Sub-Question Six**

How do JROTC teachers "Encourage the Heart" by celebrating the successes and achievements of students with rewards and recognition? The participants perceived celebrating their students' successes as non-negotiable and imperative. Leaders used rewards and celebrations to boost morale and motivate teamwork recognized followers as a contribution to the overall context of the public school (Kamarck & Arriaga, 2020). To be world changers, Teacher Glory noted that students needed to be celebrated by their teachers, collaborate with others, and incorporate goodwill based on leadership traits and skills. Celebrated accomplishments were reinforced by the founding principles of JROTC, where the students got a sense of belonging, discipline, leadership, and character building and developed intangible attributes of self-esteem, motivation, structure, and self-efficacy (Blake, 2016). Teacher Respect noted that "It is notable that JROTC teachers played a significant role in developing leadership skills, self-discipline, and goal-setting skills, rewarding cadets for their performances bi-annually" (Interview, Teacher Respect, November 29, 2022).

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed data-coupled themes resulting from interviews, a focus group, and document collections. Those themes provided answers to the central research question and corresponding sub-questions. The first theme that emerged was self-reflection. Self-reflection was described as a form of meditation to identify and analyze the JROTC teachers' problems for solutions that significantly impact their students' learning. The second theme to emerge was responsibility, which responsibility was described as doing the tasks required of the JROTC teachers and accepting the results of their actions. The third theme to emerge was empowerment, described by the JROTC teachers to be a process that fostered authority and confidence in their

students, for their community, and for future endeavors. The fourth theme to emerge was judgment. The JROTC teachers exercised discernment in how they arrived at sensible conclusions by evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of choices. The fifth theme to emerge was leadership, defined as possessing qualities such as inspirational, supportive, and nurturing equipped to evolve any ongoing change. Teachers identified the unique needs of the students, adapting instruction that met their needs and thus led to improved learning outcomes. The findings also examined how JROTC teachers "challenge the process" of others to enhance future goals and brought about positive changes. It was noted that the teachers were comfortable soliciting their administration regarding changes and implementing them when needed in their classes. It was found that teachers kept their students motivated and excited about the shared vision by planning projects and ventures and collaborating with partners for resources. The determination was that the leadership process was a multifaceted complex force that cultivated and transformed the students to become better individuals with the development and implementation of effective strategies that led to improved academic performance.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

This research aims to identify the effective leadership practices of JROTC (Junior Reserves Officer's Training Corps) teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. Through a detailed literature review, a qualitative case study, and triangulated data collection analysis, this Chapter interprets the thematic results of the participants' leadership practices that positively influence classroom learning environments to complete this study. Ten participants' experiences address one central question and six sub-questions guiding the study by using Kouzes and Posner's (2017) five practices of exemplary leadership as a theoretical framework. The Chapter integrates interpretations and ideas to refine and interpret the study's findings. This Chapter consists of five discussion subsections: (a) interpretation of findings, (b) implications for policy and practice, (c) theoretical and methodological implications, (d) limitations and delimitations, and (e) recommendations for future research.

### **Discussion**

The study's discussion section discussed my interpretation of the findings considering the developed themes. By triangulating the data sources used in this study, five relevant themes manifested from the findings. The themes were (1) self-reflection, (2) responsibility, (3) empowerment, (4) judgment, and (5) leadership were discussed as implications relating to the theoretical foundations of the study introduced in Chapter 2. The discussion section had five major subsections that addressed the alignment of the research questions to include: (a) Interpretation of Findings; (b) Implications for Policy or Practice; (c) Theoretical and Empirical Implications; (d) Limitations and Delimitations; and (e) Recommendations for Future Research.

## **Interpretation of Findings**

The findings of this study were based on the five major themes: (1) self-reflection, (2) responsibility, (3) empowerment, (4) judgment, and (5) leadership. Identifying positive leadership practices became a complex task because interpreting the data involved many interconnected parts. Next, I analyzed the data relationships to show how the data supported or rejected the phenomenon.

### ***Summary of Thematic Findings***

Ten JROTC teachers at varying Virginia public schools shared their leadership practices perceptions through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of document collections. These three methods were used for triangulation of the data. Five themes emerged after the data was analyzed in this study. The themes were self-reflection, responsibility, empowerment, judgment, and leadership.

**Self-reflection.** Self-reflection was evident across the participants' experiences in re-evaluating their classes by reflecting and drawing implications for their classroom teaching and interactions with their students. The participants used the negative and positive aspects, sharing their thoughts with their students and getting feedback from classroom surveys. By self-reflecting on their individual experiences, the participants checked on priorities to elevate a student's potential and growth while enhancing professional relationships with their students. As Kouzes and Posner (2017) indicated, leaders must be willing to self-reflect to lead effectively.

**Responsibility.** The findings showed the significance the participants placed on classroom responsibilities, noting how they took on their roles as leaders in presenting content engagingly and interestingly and how they adapted the classroom instructions. Those teachers took responsibility for their work, utilized their knowledge, and used their skills to support and

nurture the students. The reciprocal learning relationships created by those collaborations developed as a mentor and mentee that developed the student's skill sets, capabilities, and way of thinking. Therefore, instead of a culture of compliance that may not align with the developmental needs of teachers for growth and learning, those JROTC teachers incorporated adaptation for changes in their profession by clarifying their values by setting examples that aligned their actions with shared visions and values to meet the learning needs of their students. Kouzes and Posner (2017) asserted that leaders should be willing to use actions to demonstrate what they expect from others to show commitment and relay specific values. The focus group noted that teachers who demonstrated a shared vision were responsible for meeting the school's expectations. The JROTC teachers required students' partnerships to integrate their classroom experiences into the workday. The JROTC teachers were leaders who facilitated professional learning environments by having the students participate in achieving partnerships to execute the vision.

**Empowerment.** Building citizenship skills based on values and beliefs explored the theme of empowerment. The findings also noted that the students created lasting friendships during leadership summer camps that explored the empowerment theme. The findings showed that the participants supported empowerment because empowering students made the experiences more representative through drill competitions, community service, and STEM training. Kouzes and Posner (2017) advocated for better collaboration opportunities if leaders empowered all members. The findings also supported building relationships to ensure everybody knew what was required to see the task at hand fully. There was the expectation for each student to have the responsibility of performing tasks that made their specific function successful. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) exemplar of "challenging the process" provided the pathway for

seeking innovative ways to change and grow while learning from mistakes. The findings also supported that the JROTC program had been developed and maintained based on the values and beliefs of motivating young people to become better citizens. These assumptions occurred through learned behavior when values and beliefs were essential elements in maintaining satisfaction (Kouzes and Posner, 2017).

**Judgment.** This study determined that teachers often used their judgment by utilizing their understanding of the classroom context and their students' capabilities. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) exemplar "enable others to act" fostered collaboration by building trust by sharing power and discretion that involved open-mindedness. In addition, the findings also supported the participants' perceptions that were beneficial to students' learning environments. The collective goals of the teachers and students were reached when the teachers had the knowledge, motivation, and necessary discretion to respond to the diversity of student needs. Therefore, instead of using a one-size-fits-all curriculum, they included a learning forum that aimed at achieving the goals of each student and fostered their growth as per the students' capabilities through peer-to-peer small group collaborations.

**Leadership.** The findings supported that leadership within the JROTC classrooms was a two-way communication because student leaders were empowered by being decision-makers. Leadership as a two-way communication positively influenced trust and student engagement within the JROTC programs. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) exemplar "encourage the heart" addressed how leaders helped to build positive and supportive environments by inspiring others to do their best and achieve extraordinary things. Kouzes and Posner (2017) also noted that transformational leadership had a positive relationship with affective learning, subordinate satisfaction and participation, cognitive learning, and the perceived credibility of leaders. The

leadership practices in the classroom became a resource for revitalizing young minds through autonomy, individualism, and responsibility. In addition, the findings also supported leadership transformation with interactive teaching to enable the students to take an active role in their education with the direct, immersive method. Teachers designed their classrooms for the facilitation of learning and independent thought, utilizing problem-based and practical knowledge to encourage their students (Cranwell et al., 2017).

### **Implications for Policy or Practice**

This study presented a detailed description of the effective leadership practices of the JROTC in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influenced classroom learning environments. Their experiences developed as a foundation of reinforced leadership practices surrounding how the JROTC teachers experienced and understood the harmonic notion that most effective leaders used distinct leadership styles and approaches. I based the implications on the well-formulated description that each leadership style or practice was used in the proper context at the critical right time. As I explored and analyzed the phenomenon, the JROTC teachers' voices expressed through their experiences were captured with such flexibility and passion as high results-focused performances.

### ***Implications for Policy***

The central aim of this study was to address the lack of research evidence on the experiences of the JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influenced classroom learning environments. This study's findings provided an in-depth analysis of the JROTC teacher's leadership practices. The JROTC teacher's leadership practices benefited individuals' engagement, affirmation, motivation, satisfaction, and performance. Accordingly, this study made a practical contribution to the body of knowledge by

identifying positive leadership practices as well as empirical data which may redesign district-level policies and procedures on integrating STEM during the school year curriculum and not just during summer camps along with identifying available resources from the CTE model that would be transparent to the JROTC programs.

The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) recognized the core tenants of the JROTC program within its CTE model. The school district policy and procedures must adapt changes to help support the JROTC program's needs more engagingly and with transparency. The lack of transparency on how the CTE model supports the JROTC indicated a trend that made it more difficult and likely to continue. "What or how does the CTE department support us post covid-19?" (Focus group, Teacher Honor, November 18, 2022). The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, which later became the Perkins V in 2018, allowed Congress to appropriate about \$1.3 billion annually in state formula grants for developing and implementing CTE programs (Congress, 2018). The JROTC is considered a congressional youth citizenship program integral to each state's CTE model (ACTE, 2021).

Actively building relationships became an approach the professional teacher implemented to lead the students to acquire knowledge (Ajanaku & Lubbe, 2021). The current study indicated that positive leaders took the initiative and developed positive functioning relationships in the classroom. Thus, teachers within the system needed to focus on incorporating instructional practice that ensured improved student performance. "The CTE coordinators should be more transparent in their support to build a stronger relationship between the JROTC department and transformational leadership. One example of this could be financial support for trips, summer camps, and equipment for CTE students who are also JROTC cadets" (Focus group, Teacher Respect, November 18, 2022). Thus, the teachers worked hard to maintain

consistent values and beliefs system to see the effectiveness of classroom instructions. Teacher's goals could be achieved through a shared vision and motivation (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Amaladas (2019) posited that professional standards gave teachers a common language with leaders to describe instruction with a shared understanding of effective practice. Therefore, the school districts and the state could set policies to ensure educational standards for professional learning built explicitly on transformational leadership and transparency. Teachers worked to fulfill their duties to students in response to their needs, fostering trust relationships, and competence in school leadership. The policies needed to focus on the ethic of care and integrity based on a productive strategy and skillfully engaging initiatives.

### ***Implications for Practice***

The results of this study have indicated that the leadership role of the teacher in the classroom was based on enhancing students' outcomes in society and education. The positive effects of students' determination determined their leadership roles. Through this study, it was determined that the JROTC teachers had students take significant responsibility in engaging with their community by using innovations when conducting and engaging in leadership roles, continuous improvement projects, service-learning projects, drill leadership competitions, and Color Guards honors that increased their learning and motivation when giving clear expectations and support. Evidence provided by Benigno et al. (2022) suggested that technologies provided opportunities for inclusive education, where learners' needs were met to gain the skills to integrate into society and education. Harms et al. (2018) noted that classroom innovations were significant because they promoted active learning, motivation, and educational leadership. Innovation meant that with technological nuances in the classrooms, there were positive

outcomes of inclusion, strengthening, and broadening the sense of empowerment and shaping educational processes.

Community-centered professional learning environments fostered values or norms for lifelong learning. This collaboration provided teamwork efforts for small group sessions to achieve a common goal and complete a task efficiently. This study found that it was essential to collaborate with other partners and educators to obtain resources to meet the needs of students. Such partnership required educators to take opportunities of collaboration and learn from other knowledgeable colleagues in concrete and meaningful ways. Thus, effective teachers were identified through evaluations, knowledgeable on their practice capabilities, and skilled in navigating their professional learning communities (Amaladas, 2019). The policy for practice required teachers to go through community-centered professional education to become better teachers. Amaladas (2019) highlighted that within professional learning communities were teams that provided supportive interactions based on leadership roles and encourage communication about shared values, student learning, instructional practice, and innovative ideas.

Academic leadership programs became an integral part of teaching as the teachers also evaluated their learning experiences and got evidence-based feedback on their professional development learning. Moreover, follow-up coaching was used to help teachers to refine their teaching practices. Similarly, leadership teaching programs became essential in guiding teachers as they work towards their learning to guide and instruct their students. Leadership training was also conducted based on teachers' experiences to maximize students' leadership potential. As the teachers in this study noted, leadership involved several partnerships that required understanding the values of their students. In addition, the significant role of the teachers was based on transforming the student's growth mindset by improving instruction for student achievement and

learning. Therefore, school district policy directives recommended that the teachers go through academic leadership programs to build on their teaching strategies aimed at improving the performance of their students.

### **Theoretical and Empirical Implications**

The purpose of this section was to address the theoretical and empirical implications. The implications from the study asserted that most students were motivated when the leader had demonstrated to be a good role model, been respectful, and acknowledged their students' positive achievements. It became evident that the strategies used by the JROTC teachers at the various schools within the Virginia public schools had been underrepresented.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study extended Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) Leadership Challenge Model theory as a framework to examine leadership practices in business organizations to inside the classrooms for mobilizing leaders to create extraordinary results. This study confirmed that Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) Leadership Challenge Model, a well-formulated theory, can incorporate students to learn and improve as the JROTC teachers emphasized their leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. The JROTC leadership practices centered around optimizing the five exemplars of Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) model in influencing positive teacher and leadership outcomes in JROTC- based educational institutions. The findings indicated that students' challenges became well-documented successes through leadership roles, drill performances, oral presentations, academic assessment successes, and so much more based on having a suitable support system with positive teacher relationships and, thus, positive outcomes. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) Leadership Challenge Model indicated similar deductions, which also noted the gains in emotional and

social well-being which occurred when there was the active involvement of followers improving their learning experiences and outcomes, reinforcing their engagement levels, and building upon stronger relationships when they "challenge the process."

Additionally, the findings supported that when teachers fostered change toward students' collective and individual emotional well-being, holistic development, learning improvement, and innovation was provided. Furthermore, the findings provided feedback used by the JROTC teachers to adopt and strengthen leadership behaviors when those teachers recognized their student's contributions during After Action Reviews (AAR), promotions, and award ceremonies. Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) exemplar "encourage the heart" supported recognizing the contributions that individuals made with rewards and other celebratory events to recognize followers' accomplishments. This study also added to the novel contribution in that the participants expressed their leadership practices in beneficial and specific ways to improve student growth and achievements through their transformative practices by transforming their student's growth mindsets and ideologies.

### **Empirical Implications**

The findings in this study also showed that by promoting a reflective process, input and integration were provided through better feedback communication. Therefore, practical communication skills and positive learning environments influence cultural leadership awareness (Blake, 2016). In this way, teachers created learning environments based on the well-being of their students as they promoted awareness of leadership. Similarly, research by Maelan et al. (2018) indicated that the student-teacher relationship varied in the importance that teachers placed on discussing a range of matters with their students that went beyond study-related topics to form solid bonds that contributed to their well-being. The findings also indicated that JROTC

teachers regularly evaluated their teaching and leadership practices to remain objective. The ACTE (2021) showed that through practical reflection, teachers knew what they were looking for in their evaluations along with understanding their instructional decisions. Also, a teacher in the focus group commented that good leaders motivated their students in numerous ways while identifying their strengths and collaborating with them in promoting their performance.

Studies have also explored the potentially destructive and negative impacts of leadership practices and behavior (Mackay et al., 2017). Those destructive practices have been indicated to cause adverse outcomes of destructive leadership behavior, with detrimental effects on individuals and the organization. Other studies inquired about the susceptibility to abusive behavior in the military concerning the hierarchy that dictated the need for strict socialization and required adherence to the rules (Mackay et al., 2017). As noted by Mackay et al. (2017), the military is highly likely to have cases of abusive supervision and general mistreatment where there is the high risks and costs associated with failure in military operations and training may cause the leaders to engage in more aggressive and assertive behavior as they look to ensure effectiveness. On the other hand, some leaders may become passive, overwhelmed, and avoidant, negatively impacting assignments and safety (Sacavem et al., 2017). In understanding the significance of utilizing transformational leadership strategies, the JROTC teachers identified the potential areas of improvement, reviewed their strengths and weaknesses through self-reflection, and noted the significance of critical reflection in their classroom. This leadership transformation was highlighted by the different teachers in the focus group, who were informed about the significance of using leadership as a strategy for building the self-esteem of their students, introducing innovative skills, and sharing responsibilities for each other and their performances. The study indicated the JROTC teachers were prone in applying transformational leadership

practices in their educational and military settings, especially in a strictly academic environment. A strict academic environment may not always be appropriate, primarily because of the bureaucratic nature of military organizations that could inhibit adaptability and flexibility from using innovative strategies and pursuing changes. Based on the theoretical views provided, it was essential to review the aspects of transformational leadership and its use in influencing students' performance within a strict educational setting.

Also, as noted by Opermann & Nault (2021), transformational leadership practices may be perceived as a threat because they can challenge military traditions and cause disorder. Transformational leadership explained why some military educators may be unwilling or unable to use transformational leadership practices. Therefore, the study needed to review such negative implications based on the classroom setting of military education.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This review examined the effective leadership practices for JROTC teachers influencing the modern classroom learning environment. The study was limited due to my familiarity with the school and participants. I had to constantly remind myself to eliminate my biases throughout the process, so I did not insert my beliefs or preconceived notions. I ensured the participants checked the accuracy of their responses to guarantee that bias did not occur. It included a semi-structured interviews of ten JROTC teachers, one focus group of six JROTC teachers, and collection of artifacts that provided the required data to generate a comprehensive outlook of the topic. The strengths of this study were based on the adaptation of questions and circumstances for the optimization of results. The potential weaknesses beyond my control were that none of the participants recognized their imperfections, but they all showed a strong propensity for seeking self-improvement. Even the most well-implemented lesson can be circumvented. These

limitations were based on the beliefs and opinions used for data collection and analysis. In this way, the researcher speculated more on the answers based on the subjective experiences of identifying and extracting data.

Moreover, the study delimitation was based on using a qualitative exploratory single-case study within five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia, capturing a large sample of participants indicating reliability. However, the study was limited because it was based on one focus group and ten semi-structured interviews. The participants may be biased as they gave answers according to their opinions and experiences. The participants' viewpoints may conflict with the actual outcomes, and thereby negatively influencing the study outcomes. Also, the contextual multidimensional nature of effectiveness may limit the research extension to settings that need more strictness.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The study of military leadership transformation within the classroom was still new with various possibilities for future research. The findings of this study had significant implications for JROTC teachers instructed their students. The results indicated that for better professionalism, teachers needed to have learning and teaching standards that aligned with the needs of their students. The JROTC teachers' professional orientation in their leadership style cultivated trust with their students in making professional and pedagogical judgments in response to the needs of their students. Future researchers can consider the role of the JROTC teachers as mentor leaders within their entity, based explicitly on a teaching style of the students' transformations, encouraging independence in thought and aspects of building students as leaders through their experiences of empowerment and students' transformations.

Further research also needs to evaluate the support of organizations for teachers in providing leadership education to their students and building on their cognitive development in various other classroom settings apart from the JROTC programs. New studies can also review the aspects of destructive leadership that can occur within the classroom in a military environment, assessing the active and passive forms. Harmful leadership studies can also include qualitative and quantitative designs with risk factors and outcomes measures.

Transformational leadership entailed collaborating with teams more than their immediate self-interest in identifying the required changes and creating a vision that guides that change. As such, there was the motivation of individuals without micromanagement. In the educational context, educators used transformational leadership to lead by example, placed value on creating relationships and encouraged the educators and students to work towards greater achievement levels. Leadership training was based on activities developed for the improved performance of individuals, focusing on helping the individual under training to learn new skills or information. Therefore, the knowledge and understanding of leadership characteristics were enhanced through the training.

There was consistency in the literature reviewed and the findings of this study indicated the influence of effective leadership within modern classrooms. The results showed that the military impact of JROTC compelled students to meet the program's standards in physical fitness training, appearance, community service, and requirements of drill performance. The program required having an organizational structure and framework that directly influenced student achievement, academic behavior, and educational plans. In addition, the preparation of JROTC students for responsible leadership roles was based on opportunities and activities focused on discipline, knowledge, and responsibilities for the future.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study was to identify the effective JROTC teachers' leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. This study's central question was: How can JROTC teachers' leadership practices and behavior influence innovative classroom instructions? This study was based on a review of the findings defined through semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion, and document collections. The conceptual framework was Kouzes' and Posner's (2017) leadership model on positive leadership transformation. The research rejected factors contributing to the problem that JROTC teachers use of leadership to be ineffective, despotic, and irrelevant to the modern students' needs.

This study introduced a Leadership Practices Transformation Model based on the functional leadership practices that transformed students to ensure effectiveness. The model provided a tool for understanding the intricate phenomenon of leadership practices starting with self-reflection, responsibility, empowerment, judgment, and leadership. This study confirmed that JROTC teachers were instrumental in effective leadership practices because students were transformed by growth mindsets and ideologies that shift their worldviews as they obtained new information. Therefore, teachers provided the structure for promoting critical reflection and empowerment that created growth mindsets transformations based on the student's unique needs while promoting awareness of leadership practices and innovations to influence positive classroom learning environments. This study purported that the JROTC students were being transformed in their ideologies and growth mindsets by way of "ships." These "ships" were citizenship, leadership, mentorship, partnerships, friendships, and relationships.

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## Appendix A

### IRB Approval

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 6, 2022

Naangela O'Neal  
[REDACTED]

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-1201 An Embedded Single-Case Study: Identifying JROTC Teachers' Leadership Practices That Influence Secondary Learning Environments

Dear Naangela O'Neal, [REDACTED]

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

**Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB.** Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,  
[REDACTED]

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**

## Appendix B

### School District Approval

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
Manager, Testing and Data Systems

**Date:** October 21, 2022

**Re:** Research Study Approval

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The following evaluation study has been approved for implementation in the [REDACTED] provided that the conditions listed below are met:

**Title:** **An Embedded Single-Class Study: Identifying JROTC Teachers' Leadership Practices That Influences Secondary Learning Environments**

**Researcher:** NaAngela O'neal

The researcher is conducting a qualitative study to understand the impact and effect of JROTC teacher's leadership practices impact on classroom learning.

By exploring teachers' perspectives on leadership practices, this study can identify challenges associated with using the Leadership Challenge Model in JROTC and offer suggestions.

**Conditions:**

- It must be made clear that participation in the study is completely voluntary.
  - Must obtain principal approval.
  - Must have an IRB approval letter submitted to [REDACTED] Academic Programs & Supports department prior to implementing study including recruitment.
  - Teachers may not forfeit district or school PD, management, obligations to participate in the study.
  - Pseudonyms must be used for the school division, schools, and all participants in any reports or publications about the study or its findings.
  - Send [REDACTED] Testing & Data Systems a copy of the final study and all other documents which reference the study.
  - [REDACTED] should not be identified by name in research study.
  - A copy of the final report of the study must be provided to the school division upon completion and prior to publication.
  - We are providing this information to you so that you will be informed about it before its implementation. Please feel free to contact [REDACTED] if you have questions.
-

## Appendix C

### Participant Consent Form

#### Consent

**Title of the Project:** An Embedded Single-Case Study: Identifying JROTC Teachers' Leadership Practices That Influence Secondary Learning Environments

**Principal Investigator:** NaAngela L. O'Neal, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be working in a leadership role as a JROTC teacher/supervisor within the Virginia public school district. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research.

#### What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory embedded single-case study is to identify the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. An interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be audio recorded for transcription.
2. The in-person interview transcription will be completed for a member check review within 72 hours following the session. Participants will be asked to review and return the transcripts to the researcher within eight days to ensure interview accuracy. Participants will take approximately 15 minutes or less to review their transcripts.
3. Participate in a face to face or video-conferenced focus group discussion interview at a convenient place and time for 6-10 participants (45 minutes).
4. Perform a member check review of the face to face or video-conferenced focus group discussion transcription session that will be completed within 72 hours following completion of the session to review and return the transcripts to the researcher within eight days to ensure interview accuracy. Participants will take approximately 15 minutes or less to review their transcripts.
5. Schedule document collection at the participants' place of employment to collect lesson plans, syllabi, JROTC brochures, unit reports, master training plans, students' assessments, awards narratives, and improvement projects to identify effective leadership practices. I am also requesting that the data be stripped of all identifiers and be completely non-identifiable before I receive the data. The document analysis will take approximately 15 minutes. Participants will be asked to verify copies of the documents provided to the researcher on a document collection form.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from participating in this study.

Benefits to society include expanding the knowledge base to identify the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively

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influence classroom learning environments. There are several characteristics such as skills-based careers, college preparation, and character development of students from a military context in education to have the potential to collaborate with other career and technical education in this proposed research.

**What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the documents.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential using pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

**How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number in the next paragraph. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is NaAngela L. O'Neal. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [REDACTED].

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED]

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted ethically manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after signing this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. Therefore, I consent to participate in the study.*

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Subject Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature & Date

Liberty University  
IRB-FY21-22-1201  
Approved on 9-6-2022

## Appendix D

### Recruitment Letter

August 21, 2022

Dear JROTC Teacher:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of conducting this research is to better understand the effective JROTC teacher's leadership practices in five U.S. public secondary schools in Virginia that positively influence classroom learning environments. This study's central question is: How can JROTC teachers' leadership practices and behavior influence innovative classroom instructions? I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be a JROTC teacher/supervisor working within a Virginia public school district. If willing, participants will be asked to participate in a recorded in-person interview and 6-10 participants will be selected for a focus group discussion. It should take approximately 45 minutes to complete each procedure listed. In addition, you will be asked to present documents such as lesson plans, syllabi, JROTC brochures, unit reports, master training plans, students' assessments, award narratives, and improvement projects to identify effective leadership practices. I am also requesting that the data be stripped of all identifiers and be completely non-identifiable before I receive the data. The document collection will take approximately 15 minutes. Participants will be asked to verify copies of the documents provided to the researcher on a document collection form. Further, participants will be asked to perform a member check by confirming the accuracy of the recorded interview transcription within eight days upon receipt of the interview transcription. Likewise, participants will be asked to perform a member check by confirming the accuracy of the recorded focus group transcription within eight days upon receipt of the focus group transcription. The in-person interviews and focus group discussion transcriptions will be completed for a member check review within 72 hours following the sessions. Participants will take approximately 15 minutes or less to complete the review of their transcripts. Names and other identifying information will be requested for this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please complete the attached consent form and return it by handing it to me in an envelope. Please contact me at [REDACTED] For more information to schedule an interview and/or focus group session, please sign, and return the attached consent document to me.

A consent document is attached to this email for potential participants expressing an interest in participating. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me during the interview/focus group sessions.

Sincerely,

NaAngela L. O'Neal  
Doctoral Candidate



## Appendix E

### Focus Group Session Instrument

*An Embedded Single-Case Study: Identifying JROTC Teachers' Leadership Practices*

*That Influence Secondary Learning Environments*

Please introduce yourself to me, including your name, role, and association with your school. (Ice Breaker)

FQ1. How do you feel when you enter your classroom? RQ1

FQ2. What are the traditions and values that are foundational in your classroom? RQ3

FQ3. How do you begin to build a relationship with your students? CRQ

FQ4. What motivated you to obtain a leadership role in the school? RQ2

FQ5. How do you encourage the involvement of other students? RQ4

FQ6. What different ways can students and teachers contribute to positive classroom instructions? RQ5

FQ7. How can you motivate students to appreciate excellence? RQ6

FQ8. Is there anything else you would like to say about ways to identify effective leadership practices? (Exit)



## Appendix G

### Data Collection Sheet Explanation

*An Embedded Single-Case Study: Identifying JROTC Teachers' Leadership Practices  
That Influence Secondary Learning Environments*

I will collect documents contributing to my data collection strategy to identify effective leadership practices positively influencing classroom learning environments. I will analyze the document's purpose and how the teacher incorporates the document (s) into the classroom. I will collect personal resume' or vitae to examine the teacher's accomplishments and contributions to their professional development and how these documents correlate to a classroom learning environment. These documents will also provide information on their professional growth level and required mandatory training to serve their students better. I will collect the current year's master training schedule and syllabi for each class taught to indicate what the students are learning. I will analyze customized lesson presentations, lesson plans, improvement projects, and other instructional materials to check for collaboration and student accommodations to enhance students' education and leadership opportunities. JROTC brochures and unit reports will also be collected as evidence for peer collaboration and shared leadership within the high school activities. I will analyze students' assessments to determine whether the teacher's written tests are a fair and reliable assessment based on the grading policy for mastery of competencies. The JROTC teacher will be asked to present awards narratives or pictures recognizing students for their accomplishments that could indicate the effectiveness of the class.

In addition, I will then categorize the documents under primary documents such as public records, personal documents, and physical documents. I will use a document summary form to record specific details about the documents, such as the description, theory correspondence,

creation date, document compliance, frequency, internal and external coherence, and for what purpose. I will then assign codes based on internal and external coherence, which means consistency between the goals and objectives and outside disciplines. I will assign codes to the data that will help explain how the data corresponds to the theory. I will also access any new direction or perspective the data may lead me for triangulation and a better understanding of the data. Finally, I will highlight the documents with assorted color markers for categorization to help identify emerging themes.

## Appendix H

### Semi-structured Interview Session Instrument

*An Embedded Single-Case Study: Identifying JROTC Teachers' Leadership Practices*

*That Influence Secondary Learning Environments*

1. Please introduce yourself by providing your name, military service length, and employment length at your present job. (Ice Breaker)
2. How can you present content interestingly and engagingly? CRQ
3. How can you adapt classroom instructions that work for one class but not another?
4. What professional development experiences have you had that prepared you to work with incorporating innovation into the classroom? CRQ
5. How is your leadership style manifested in your practices and actions in the classroom?  
CRQ
6. What qualities do you have that makes you a transformational leader? Please, explain.  
CRQ
7. What are the gains of using the transformational leadership style in the JROTC program?  
RQ1
8. What are the challenges of applying transformational leadership to JROTC instruction based on your experience? RQ1
9. How do you feel your previous leadership experience prepared you to try new leadership approaches? Please explain. RQ1
10. What would you improve upon your leadership style and why? RQ2
11. How would your colleagues describe your leadership style? RQ2
12. What is a difficult situation you've faced in a leadership role, and how did you handle it?  
RQ2

13. How do you use your goals to help you become a better leader? RQ2
14. What do you expect from a leader? RQ2
15. How do you communicate your specifically unique program's vision to students? RQ3
16. What practices and norms do you notice amongst your cadets related to your program's vision? RQ3
17. How do you know if challenging the process is an opportunity or a threat? RQ4
18. What event compelled you to challenge the process and why? RQ4
19. What are approaches to teach your cadets (students) to challenge the process RQ4
20. How do you involve others in collaboration? RQ5
21. How do you support the choices and decisions of others? RQ5
22. How do you show appreciation for excellence? RQ6
23. How do you encourage the heart in the direction of your organization's vision? RQ6