An Honor to Train:
The Professional Identity of Army Trainers

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ABSTRACT

One's identity is often closely tied to one's profession. It is one of the first questions typically asked when meeting someone new. It is often how we introduce ourselves and often included in introductory-type information when asked. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the professional identity of civilian (non-enlisted) U.S. Army trainers. Professional identity is a dynamic concept; developed and refined by a professional's interaction with the environment and with reflection and examination of that interaction. To examine the concept, participants in this study were asked to describe what it meant to them to be trainers for the Army. Results indicate that Army trainers have a strong connection to the Army and have a deep commitment to their students; many of whom are soldiers. Training soldiers for potentially dangerous missions motivates these trainers to provide quality instruction to their learners. Based on study findings, conclusions were drawn, and implications for researchers and practitioners in the field of human resource development (HRD) were presented.

Keywords: Military Training, Professional Identity, Trainer, Workplace Training

1. INTRODUCTION

"Professionally, who and what am I?" (Curle, 1969, p. 9). This is a question that many professionals have asked themselves at one point or another in their careers. One's identity is often closely tied to one's profession. It is one of the first questions typically asked when meeting someone new. It is often how we introduce ourselves and often included in introductory-type information when asked. "My name is (name here) and I'm a/an (occupation here)". Yet, the concept of identity is much more complex than the simple stating of one's profession might imply. Identity is a multi-faceted concept that

is both fluid and contextual (Pointner, 2009). However, despite the importance of professional identity, and the significance it plays in life, a paradox is this: "Modern scholarship pays surprisingly little attention to the significance of the identity group (called) "occupation" for the identity forming process, although a person's profession plays a very important role in his or her self-fashioning. When we meet new people we often judge them according to the jobs they have as much as we are judged by them in terms of what we do" (Pointner, 2009, p. 12).

While it may be easy to judge people very quickly, based on the jobs they have (Pointner, 2009), the concept of professional identity in

itself, is more complex. Professional identity is comprised of many different characteristics and may include several sub-identities (Vloet, 2010). Issues of professional identity become even more complex when the context in which one operates as a professional is considered. In this study, the context is the United States Army, and the profession is that of educator or trainer.

The following quote is found in the opening paragraphs of The U. S. Army Learning Concept 2015 (ALC 2015), a document which outlines the Army's strategy and vision for learning over the next several years: "We live in a much more competitive security environment. This means that we have to learn faster and better than our future adversaries. Stated a bit differently, we must prevail in the competitive learning environment" (ALC 2015, 2011, p. i). Key in meeting the long and short-term goals noted in the ALC 2015 are experienced faculty and instructors with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to teach the myriad of subjects necessary for today's Army to function. Also important is the development of instructional designers, educational support, and educational program managers; all of whom ensure the Army's training function runs smoothly.

Considering the size of the Army adds another dimension to this equation. As of August, 2011, there were 467,110 active duty enlisted personnel in the Army, and all receive ongoing training throughout their careers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). When compared to Fortune 500 companies, it would rank number two in terms of size (number of employees) (Fortune, 2011). Adding to that number are civilian employees, contractors, and a host of other entities that participate in Army training. The Army's training function is enormous, simply given its size. This is the environment and the context in which Army trainers must perform. However, there is a paucity of existing research on those trainers, and therein lies the problem. In order to provide continuing professional development for existing trainers, and to recruit and prepare new trainers, more must be known about the Army training profession and those who are in this profession. An understanding of the trainers, themselves; what motivates them, how they see their positions, and how they came to be Army trainers, is necessary in order to provide professional development that meets their needs. In order for the Army's training-related strategy to move forward, given all the aforementioned variables, more must be known about those trainers who are critical to its success.

2. PURPOSE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The role of trainer for the U.S. Army is more important and more complex now than ever before. But what does it mean to be a trainer for the U.S. Army? The purpose of this study is to examine the professional identity of U.S. Army trainers. In describing the professional identity of teachers, Vloet (2010) notes "A professional identity is not a fixed characteristic and is never complete; it is a dynamic process instead. It is about continuously (re)interpreting meaningful experiences from the teacher taken from his or her practice and biography" (p. 84). Sub questions (documented below, as if they were posed to trainers) were designed to have respondents consider their practices and biographies as Army trainers. This consideration is important, as researchers describes the process of developing professional identity as one of ongoing growth, characterized by learning from experience and reflection and dialogue with colleagues on that experience (Vloet, 2010; Cross, 2009; Brooke, 1994). Indeed, the role of self is important in the process of professional identity development (Trede, Macklin & Bridges, 2012), and De Weerdt (2006) posited that reflection is a key process in professional identity development, as it bridges the gap between experience and identity. Sub questions are as follows:

1. From a professional identity standpoint, what meanings do you ascribe to your position of trainer for the U.S. Army?
2. What factors affected study participants' decisions to become U.S. Army trainers?

3. How has graduate-level study in human resource development influenced your understanding of the concept of Army trainer?

Why study professional identity of Army trainers over trainers in any other organization? There are several reasons why studying trainers in the Army is different than studying trainers in any other organization. First, as mentioned earlier, in terms of sheer size and scope of activity, the U.S. Army is an organization unlike any other in the world. This means that the size and scope of training-related activities are also unlike any other. Persyn and Polson (2013) note that there are over 800 types of jobs in the military. This means that trainers instruct soldiers and other Army stakeholders on thousands of topics, from cooking to tank maintenance. Many of the topics taught are related to the health, physical safety, and well-being of the individual, which also makes Army training different than training in a typical workplace environment. Finally, the relationship between the individual and the organization makes the training function unique. Soldiers are not simply employees of an organization. Rather, they become part of a community, and they (and their families) are subject to rules governing where they go, what they do, where they live, what they wear, and with whom they socialize (among other rules) (William R. Abb, LTC (Ret) personal communication, September 14, 2012). The culture of the Army makes those who are Army trainers different than traditional workplace trainers.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature that informs this study is comprised of several sub-sections. In order to understand the concept of Army trainer, a review of literature on the history and background of the Army trainer is included. Because this study examines the professional identity of Army trainers, a separate review of literature focuses on the concept of professional iden-

tity. The review of literature on professional identity culminates with specifics on literature regarding the professional identity of those in education-related professions, including human resource development (HRD) practitioners. When examined together, both major sections of this review of literature provide a backdrop for this study. The history of Army training provides content on the environment in which the Army trainer works. The review of literature on professional identity examines the concept in a general nature, and then specifically relating to professions associated with teaching and learning. Examined all together, the concept of professional identity, set in the Army environment, sets the stage for this study.

3.1. Professional Identity

Despite its importance, Vloet (2010) found that a clear definition of the concept of professional identity does not exist. Rather, research on professional identity has developed from theoretical installations on the concept of identity, in itself. "Identities are defined by the self but they are the product of the interaction between the self and others. How others perceive an individual or group affects the self-definition of that individual group" (Huntington, 2004, p. 23). In other words, identities are determined by an individual and also by the social context in which that individual finds him- or herself. Because identity can be contextual, the number of identities a person can have, or take on, is limitless (Pointner, 2009). However, some identities are more prominent than others. "A minimal account of [identity groups] will include one's national and ethnic membership, religion, sex, occupation, social class, age, family status and political-party affiliation" (Zavalonni, 1973, p. 82). Bragg (1976) defined professional identity as: "the acquisition of the specific competence in knowledge and skill, autonomy of judgment, and responsibility and commitment to the profession that is shared by all full-fledged members of the profession and that also mark for the group and for outsiders the individual

as a member of his chosen profession" (p. 11). Trede, Macklin and Bridges (2012) posit that "professional identity is a way of being and a lens to evaluate, learn, and make sense of practice" (p. 374). Lewis (2008) described the process of professionalization as "an informal process begun by practitioners who perceive there to be exacting standards required of their activities which make it necessary to exclude amateurs" (p. 428). Others have suggested that core elements for a professional group are "a set of shared values, a body of scientific knowledge, and a system to apply that knowledge" (O'Flaherty & Ulrich, 2010, p. 8). Characteristics of the professional as noted by McKeon, Gillham, and Bersani (1981) include expertise, autonomy, commitment, identification with the profession and with fellow professionals, ethics, and maintenance of professional standards. They also note that the setting of the professional (or the workplace) is key in considering the development of professional identity (1981). The importance of the workplace in examining professional identity was echoed by West and Chur-Hansen (2004), who argued that the workplace has a great influence on professional identity. O'Flaherty and Ulrich (2010) also believed that "professionalism implies a form of service to those who can benefit from an application of the specialist knowledge." (p. 8).

The concept of professional identity has a long history, and Pointner (2009) posited that the concept was even more important in medieval times than it is today. As evidence to his assertion, he noted the number of family names that were derived from one's profession. Professions including miller, tailor, baker and smith, among many others, became peoples' family names. This is a testament to the importance of professional identity in those times (Pointner, 2009). Early definitions of professional identity focused on specialized training and techniques, a body of knowledge grounded in theory, authority, codes of ethics, cultural norms, and licensing, among other things (Fidler, 1995). However, Fidler (1995) noted that in the mid 1970s, new views of the

concept of professionalism began to appear in the literature. At this point, "professions were viewed not as occupations that possessed individual attributes but as work occurring within specific context: social and cultural forces, competing professions, and expertise" (p, 38). This understanding of the concept is similar to that of Allan and Lewis (2006), who believed that identity continues to change throughout our lives, is socially constructed, and is "dependent on discourses and interactions within our social and professional contexts" (p. 844). Settings such as the workplace influence how individuals construct ways of being that are acceptable and appropriate (Allan & Lewis, 2006). Indeed, Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) note that professional identity is built or developed over time, and is based on the individual's experience, along with reflection and discussion with other professionals about that experience. Trede, Macklin and Bridges (2012) concur: "Professional identity development is fostered by the authentic experiences of students in the workplace. It manifests in the intersection between personal and professional values" (379).

There has been research conducted on the professional identity of educators. Vloet (2010) identified several characteristics of teacher identity. She posited that professional identity in teachers:

1. Is formed through a dynamic process where teachers continuously interpret and reinterpret their experiences.
2. Implies an interaction between person and context.
3. Consists of several sub-identities that are more or less in harmony with each other.
4. Would ideally be generated based on self-direction ('agency'); teachers should play an active role in their professional development. (Vloet, 2010, p. 70).

Other researchers have categorized elements of teachers' professional identity. Mitch-

ell (1997, cited in Lovitt, 2007) categorized professional identity as follows:

- **Representation:** A reflection of the teacher's daily demeanor, behavior or conduct with students. Included in representation is positionality with students, as well.
- **Preparation:** The teacher's preparation for the position, including identity tied to the teacher's knowledge base, and training and formal education the teacher has had.
- **Dedication:** The teacher's commitment to his/her work, organization, and to the profession, in general.
- **Collaboration:** Work with others, including planning, teaching, and working with other teachers (Mitchell, 1997, cited in Lovitt, 2007).

Firestone (1996) also examined components of teachers' professional identity. He categorized those components into two major domains: The cognitive and the organizational. The cognitive domain includes the teacher's knowledge of his/her subject area and of pedagogy. The organizational domain includes the teacher's relationship and involvement in the larger group and its values. Groups may include the teacher's department, school, and profession, as a whole (Firestone, 1996). To these two domains, Lovitt (2007) added an emotional domain, which includes emotional components of the teacher's jobs. These emotions may include satisfaction, vulnerability, and "other psychic rewards of feeling one is performing a valuable service to society" (Lovitt, 2007, p. 33).

The concept of sub-identities was expanded upon by Swennen, Jones and Volman (2010), who noted that sub-identities may involve the context in which the person works (the organization, department within the organization, and the location of the organization) and different job duties associated with the profession. For example, the identities of human resource development (HRD) professionals may involve sub-identities as teachers or trainers.

The professional identity of those involved in HRD was first discussed by Curle in the late 1960's. In a 1968 report, he called for better preparation for those engaged in human resource development, but also recognized that there is a diverse body of knowledge and skill required for this position. He posited that a broad social science background, in addition to an understanding of educational issues, and skills in administration, were all important for those in HRD. However, with regard to professional identity, he noted that HRD professionals "suffer from problems of identity, because the label of professional planner is new and unrecognized" (p.55). He continued by noting that "we are still in the opening phases of a new form of intellectual endeavor" (p. 56) but he was hopeful that the newly-coined term "HRD professional" would help clarify the identity of those involved in the profession (Curle, 1968). Hindering the concept of professional identity, however, is the fact that HRD is multidisciplinary. In 1969, Curle noted that "Another aspect of the problem concerns the academic identity of the HRDE planner (human resource development and educational planner). His friends have mastered a recognized corpus of academic knowledge as economists and sociologists, for example, but he has usually gleaned information from a number of disciplines" (p. 43).

Since the sixties, many in HRD have written about the professionalism, and about various aspects of professional education (Cervero, 1988; Houle, 1980; Merriam & Brockett, 2007). However, discussions specifically about the professional identity of those in HRD have been absent from these writings.

3.2. The Army Trainer

Early trainers in the Army were subject-matter experts, who "drew on their technical educations to show American soldiers the way to perform tasks to European standards" (The Army Historical Foundation, 2001, p. 155). The beginning of the Civil War saw both the north and south desperate for trained leaders. Because of this shortage, many informally-trained leaders (or gifted amateurs, as they were called at the time) came forward and performed at superior

levels. After the war ended, many of these amateurs stayed with the Army to teach others. The combination of formally-educated teachers and gifted amateurs transformed the way the Army conducted training (The Army Historical Foundation, 2001). However, in military culture, subject-matter expertise remained the primary qualification for an educator throughout the early 20th century. Weible (1944) subscribed to the theory that good instructors must be subject-matter experts and leaders, even noting that "Every officer or non-commissioned officer must be able to teach" (p. 10). Following the Vietnam War, a system of criterion referenced instruction was developed. This allowed trainers to be more focused, as content became more standardized based on position. (The Army Historical Foundation, 2001). In the 2000s, the Army began to focus more on educational credentials of trainers, however, a 2011 report by the Department of the Army found that there were still some trainer-related challenges that the Army faced. In this report, the Army concluded that often, instructors were more subject-matter experts than trainers, who were lacking an understanding of basic educational principles related to instructional design, teaching strategies and evaluation (Persyn & Polson, 2013).

A noteworthy aspect of the ALC 2015 is the emphasis it places on the roles of trainer and instructional designer. Throughout, it highlights adult education principles, educational psychology, and instructional design. "Decisions regarding instructional strategies and media selection must be made by experts, based on the audience, level of experience the learner brings, and the content of the learning" (p. 14). The role of trainer in today's Army has undergone significant change since the early days of the Army. That role continues to evolve, to focus increasingly more on education as well as subject-matter expertise. "Adult education is the blueprint for the next generation of military education in the (ALC 2015) (Zacharakis & Ban Der Werff, 2013, p. 96). However, none of the evolution discussed is possible without a focus on, and an understanding of, the profession of

Army trainer. This study aims to address this issue.

3.3. Literature Review Summary

There is a good deal of existing research on the history of trainers in the Army. Research on professional identity is plentiful as well, although research on professional identity of those who work in education, including HRD is scarcer. The research that does exist focuses on the concept in general terms, but not on trainers in specific environments. This study seeks to fill gaps in research on the study of professional identity of trainers; specifically U. S. Army trainers. The study is all the more timely given the Army's increased emphasis on training, as demonstrated by the ALC 2015. If the Army's vision for training is to be successful, more must be known about Army trainers.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study was based on research on the professional identity of educators conducted by Vloet (2010). Mitchell's (1997, cited in Lovitt, 2007) categorization of the elements of professional identity was also a basis for this study, as were Firestone's (1996) domains of professional identity (including the additional domain added by Lovitt, 2007).

5. METHOD

This is a basic qualitative research study. Merriam (2009) notes that a characteristic of basic qualitative research rests on the fact that individuals construct reality through interactions in their social worlds. Basic qualitative research examines "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). This is an appropriate method for examining concepts like professional identity, which involves individuals' perceptions based on reflection and interaction with their environments. The goal

of basic qualitative research is to understand something (Merriam, 1998). In this study, it is to understand the perspective and views of the subjects with regard to their professional identity.

This study employed the use of document analysis. Data used in the study were assignments collected from students in the Army Cohort program. Information on the program is presented, followed by data collection, analysis and management procedures.

Sample participants in this study were students who work as trainers and/or instructional designers for the U.S. Army and who are also enrolled in the Army Cohort Program. That program will be described, followed by descriptions of the students (the Army trainers) in the program.

The Army Cohort Program is a program of graduate-level study that is the result of an initiative between the Army and a large university in the southeastern part of the United States. The program began in 2007. Each fall semester, a new cohort of 15-25 students enters the program. All are civilian (non-military) employees and all are involved in Army training as trainers, curriculum developers and program administrators. The two-year graduate program consists of 12 specifically sequenced graduate courses, and course topics include adult learning theory, instructional design, instructional technology, training systems engineering, and web design (among other topics).

There are two types of Army trainers who take courses in this program: Careerists and Interns. Careerists have had formal military experience, and have left or retired from that service. Upon leaving or retirement, they took jobs as civilian employees for the Army. As Army employees, many either taught or planned programs for the same subjects they taught while active-duty military. Others have moved to peripheral positions, such as program developers or program managers for the Army.

Interns are the second major group involved in this program. The Army Intern Program is a program that recruits young professionals for training and instructional design-related positions in the Army. Some have worked – perhaps briefly – in human resources, training and development, or other areas of personnel administration. Data from 72 students; 35 careerists and 37 interns, were used in this study.

6. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The introductory course in the Army Cohort program is entitled "Seminar in Training and Development". Seventy-two students completed that course during the years 2007-2010. In the course, students study the concept of training, and a variety of components related to employee training and employee development. As part of coursework, students are required to examine what it means to be a trainer for the Army. They are asked to reflect on their identities as trainers for the Army and consider the elements that comprise that identity. They are also asked to reflect on how they got to their positions. Students are required to complete this assignment twice; in short writing assignments that are due both at the start of the semester and at the end of the semester. The purpose of having students complete the assignment twice is so they can reflect on how (if at all) the course affected their views on topics noted above.

This assignment was developed because of research that found reflection to be a powerful tool in the development of teaching skills. Also known as action learning, "This method is employed when teachers are encouraged to inquire in a systematic and purposeful way into their own teaching" (Cross, 2009, p. 73). Several researchers have concluded that reflective practice is an important component of professional identity development, as well (Trede, Macklin and Bridges 2012; Cross, 2009).

All students who completed the "Seminar in Training and Development" course from 2007-2010 were required to complete this reflective assignment (n=72). These assignments were used by the researcher to address research questions posed in this paper.

6.1. Data Analysis

Content analysis was employed to analyze data. Content analysis is "an analysis of the written or visual contents of a document (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001, p. 408). "By examining the contents of one or more documents, the researcher can determine the occurrence of various words, statements, concepts, pictures, images, and ideas" (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001, p. 408). Important first steps in content analysis are a plan for determining what data is to be analyzed, organizing the data, and developing pertinent categories of information. Category development can be done in advance or categories may emerge as the researcher analyzes the data (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001).

A total of 144 documents were examined for this study; seventy-two from part I of the assignment and 72 from part II. The process of content analysis revealed that respondents' beliefs about professional identity fell into similar categories as those in Firestone's (1996) study on professional identity. To those two categories, the emotional domain, added by Lovitt (2007) was considered as well.

6.2. Data Management

Data for this study was initially in the form of course assignments from students. As assignments, they were stored on the computer of the researcher. When it was determined that these course assignments would become part of a research project, the study went through the approval process (and was ultimately approved) by the Institutional Review Board at the researcher's university. Once the data became part of a research study, it was moved to university supported electronic storage space.

7. DISCUSSION

Each of the three research questions will be discussed individually.

Research Question 1: From a professional identity standpoint, what meanings do you ascribe to your position of trainer for the U.S. Army?

The question of meaning gets to the respondent's ideas about his/her professional identity as a trainer for the U.S. Army. Upon review of models that categorized professional identity (described in the literature review and conceptual framework sections), responses to this question were best categorized using Firestone's (1997) domains of teacher identity, which were cognitive and organizational. Lovitt's (2007) additional category, the emotional domain, was also included in this analysis.

7.1. The Cognitive Domain

In discussing what being an Army trainer meant to them, most respondents listed a variety of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Cognitive domain-related topics discussed included the following:

1. Subject-matter expertise
2. Knowledge of training and instructional design
3. An understanding of the leaner
4. Continuing professional development

There's not one thing, by itself, that makes someone a trainer, and a lot of respondents noted the variety of "pieces" that, all together, made them Army trainers. Many did note their backgrounds as subject-matter experts in the fields in which they taught, as well as their knowledge of teaching methods, so in a basic way, being a trainer for the Army means having that combination of knowledge and experience as subject-matter expert and as teacher. Neither construct (subject-matter expert and instructor), by itself, was deemed to be more important than the other, although several respondents did note that instructors who did not have experience "doing" the things they were teaching typically didn't have the credibility

to be effective teachers. This was especially true of military-type subjects, and instructors who had actually served in places like Iraq and Afghanistan had added credibility when teaching these types of subjects.

A working knowledge of instructional design, as a discipline, was discussed by many respondents as an important component of professional identity. Careerists discussed the fact that when they went from "doing" to "teaching", knowledge of the instructional design process was important in making that transition.

An understanding of the learner was noted as important by many respondents, as trainers have to be able to use strategies and methods that are appropriate to the level of learner present. This understanding, in the context of Army training, is critical for several reasons. Soldiers in the Army are often taught topics on which they have no prior knowledge, simply because these subjects are not taught anywhere else. Often, subjects taught are risky or dangerous when used in practice. Some subjects involve a good deal of safety-related training (the use of specific artillery, weapons, and other munitions, for example) and others involve things like combat skills and survival skills for extreme types of environments. One respondent noted, "If the training fails, the soldier's life may be at risk. There is no room for error with Army training. This makes understanding the learner all the more critical for Army trainers.

Participation in continuing professional development was noted as an important aspect of the trainer's professional identity, as well. Many respondents noted the importance of staying current on their teaching skills and subject-matter expertise. As one respondent stated, "The best trainers are really lifelong learners." Both formal and informal learning opportunities were noted as helpful, and trainers believed that the networking and informal contacts made with other trainers was as important as the formal educational opportunities in which they participated. Membership in peer groups and the accompanying opportunities to share stories and experiences, compare practice, and

develop relationships helped trainers to feel part of the profession.

The motivation to excel as a trainer was taken to another level by many respondents, and this is where the cognitive domain seemed to overlap or intersect with the organizational domain. Many Army trainers are responsible for preparing soldiers for dangerous situations, and that responsibility is one they take very seriously. "Realizing that training for combat operations could mean the difference between life and death for our young men and women, I think we have a responsibility to ensure the soldiers are provided with the best possible training". It was in the ability to connect the trainer's job with the bigger picture of overall Army operations that the two different components of the trainer's professional identity, the cognitive and organizational (Firestone, 1996) came together. It was when looking at this bigger picture that the emotional domain (Lovitt, 2007) also appeared.

7.2. The Organizational Domain

The organizational domain was addressed by many respondents, and in some cases, it overlapped with the emotional domain (as well as the cognitive domain, which was discussed in the above section). The organizational domain includes the instructor's relationship and involvement in the larger group and its values (Firestone, 1996). In this study, the organizational domain included the following:

1. The Army as an organization
2. The environment in which the organization operates (or in which the soldier interacts).
3. The connection between the organization, the environment, and society.

Constructs associated with the organizational domain were discussed by many respondents, and on several levels. An understanding of the Army as an organization was noted as important, along with an understanding of the environment in which the organization operates, or the environment in which the learner

(or soldier) may find him- or herself. All will be discussed in this section.

From an organizational standpoint, things like hierarchy, Army bureaucracy, policies and procedures were all noted as helpful for trainers to understand in order for them to be most efficient and effective in their jobs. The ability to "navigate the system" and get results was described as beneficial.

An understanding of the environments in which the soldier operates is critical for trainers. Soldiers in the Army can be exposed to a great deal of risk, which makes that understanding critical, as well. One respondent noted "I have heard soldiers say that if you haven't been to Iraq or Afghanistan within the last four months, that you don't know the current operational environment because it is changing so rapidly". Keeping up with the ever-changing nature of conflict means that trainers must be continually read reports and gather information from the field (as well as keeping themselves appraised of developments in their respective subjects).

When discussing the organizational domain, respondents often made connections between the organization and larger entities, including the nation and the world. That connection was often made as follows: Trainers teach soldiers, who, in turn, work to keep peace and order, and may risk their lives for the good of the Army, nation, and the world, in general. These discussions were often emphasized within an emotional domain (Lovitt, 2007) framework. One respondent summarized his thoughts on this connection as follows: "Training in the Army is of life and death importance. Training for the Army means providing the skills and knowledge to those who protect the freedom of each United States citizen". This feeling of pride in their positions was most often grounded in the importance of their work on very basic levels: The work that trainers do can help soldiers save lives. The work that they do can help soldiers maintain peace and bring stability to those whose lives are in danger or in turmoil. Working in this environment seems to be a major component of what motivates these trainers. The fact that these trainers were chosen by the Army to teach soldiers who may face these environmental conditions gives many trainers a sense of honor and privilege to be able to do the work they are doing.

7.3. The Emotional Domain

As noted in the previous section, the emotional domain was often closely related to the organizational domain. It did not overlap with the organizational domain in all cases; specifically those dealing with trainer/learner interaction. Examples of the emotional domain appeared frequently throughout these responses. Most examples were related to the emotion trainers felt when students "get it" or when they understood a concept presented by the instructor. "Seeing someone understand something or seeing them grasp a concept is truly rewarding. Being part of someone's "a-ha" moment has always been very rewarding for me personally. It creates a feeling of importance and accomplishment within me".

Question 2: What factors affected study participants' decisions to become U.S. Army trainers?

Army trainers in this program fall into two distinct categories. Careerists have had formal military experience, but have either retired or left active service and are now working as civilian employees for the Army. Interns are part of a program that recruits young professionals for training and instructional design-related positions in the Army. A major theme that emerged from this question was that both careerists and interns often had some prior connection to the Army. This finding was understandable with careerists, as most of them were retired military. Many interns had connections to the Army (or to the military, in general) that resulted in them being aware of the fact that working for the Army in a non-enlisted capacity was an option.

Many of the careerists got to be trainers for the Army while in the Army, and often, it was because they excelled in a particular subject, and were asked to teach that subject. Others were

promoted to positions that required them to train subordinates as part of their new job duties. As one respondent stated, "In my experience so far, I have never seen any young soldier state his or her ambition to become a trainer at the start of their Army career. Army training is typically a job soldiers come into after they've worked for a while and gained considerable experience". Some began training because they were following orders to do so. As one respondent noted "I guess looking back, what attracted me most to the army, and to army training is that they never asked me if I could do something, they just said do it. I think if they had asked me, I would have convinced myself that it was beyond my capabilities".

Interns followed different paths to become Army trainers. Most interns were recent college graduates, although a few had some years of work experience. Some had backgrounds as educators in formal or informal situations.

When considering how they came to be Army trainers, most respondents discussed unfulfilled needs as motivation for looking beyond their professions at the time. "While I was (working) at the bank, there was a huge void of not being able to interact or have a serious impact on people's lives". Others described a search for meaningful work as motivation to become an Army trainer. Meaningful work for these trainers was directly related to aspects of professional identity discussed earlier in this paper; including the idea that training for the Army was important to the well being of the country and that the trainer's work helped keep soldiers as safe as possible in difficult conditions. This search for meaning, part of the emotional domain of professional identity, coupled with the fact that many respondents who were interns had existing knowledge of the military (the organizational domain) and some had prior experience in education (cognitive domain) brought them to their positions as interns in this program.

Question 3: How has graduate-level study in human resource development influenced your understanding of the concept of Army trainer?

Responses to this question were significantly different based on the position held by the respondent. Although both groups did discuss what they had learned, the themes that emerged were different for interns and careerists, so each will be discussed separately. Intern responses to this question typically fell within the cognitive domain, as described by Firestone (1996). Respondents most often discussed what they learned about the training discipline, and discussed the discipline in more detail than they had in their initial (start-of-semester) papers.

Some interns pointed to increased understanding of training-related concepts as changes that they experienced throughout the course. Concepts such as adult developmental models, learning styles, and training program development-related concepts and models were all discussed, and often specific examples in great detail were provided. With regard to that understanding, one respondent wrote "I find that my awareness of simple ideas and perspectives has more clarity. My comfort level in my work environment has been impacted on a positive note as well". Increased clarity, confidence, and comfort level on the job were recurring themes noted by interns as significant benefits of their participation in the course.

The importance of reflection was discussed by several interns, as well. One respondent noted "It has been by reflection of personal experience through which I have gained much comprehension". Some interns described "light bulb moments" they had during the course. One student wrote "I had never given thought to the idea of looking at the aspect of training from the perspective of the trainee; I just thought it was (as) simple as going into a classroom and conducting a presentation". The many different roles of a trainer was a common theme, as well. One student noted "As this course progressed I learned the infinite roles and responsibilities of a trainer".

While interns typically discussed what they had learned about training and development,

careerists more often discussed how what they knew about training and development was either reinforced or explained in terms they may not have been able to verbalize. Many careerists discussed the idea that they were actually doing things discussed in class, but had not considered why they were doing those things (other than that they believed it was good practice to do them) nor verbalized them in formal manners.

8. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Discussion and implications will focus on study findings and will be examined by themes that emerged from the research. Limitations of this study are important to note at this point, as they put the discussion and implications sections in proper context. Data collected for this project came from student assignments, so it is possible that students wrote their reflections on these topics to please the instructor rather than to present their true feelings about these topics. It is possible that respondents may have exaggerated their feelings for these same reasons, as well. Also, lack of prior research on this specific topic in the context of the military limits the foundation for the understanding of the research problem.

Peoples' identities are closely tied to what they do in the military. "For most people, their jobs are what they do; in the military it more deeply defines who they are" (William R. Abb, LTC (Ret) personal communication, September 14, 2012). Based on the findings of this report, the same can be said for those who work in military environments, like the trainers discussed in this paper. As has been the case with previous research on the subject of professional identity, the concept of professional identity of Army trainers was found to be multidimensional and consisting of several sub-identities. The most common theme of Army trainers' professional identity was the connection they had to the Army itself, and the strong identity they have as part of the Army. Another common theme was the significance of their work, and the connec-

tions they drew between that work as trainers and the "greater good" or keeping soldiers and civilians safe, and promoting peace and order in the nation and world.

Because of the unique nature of this training position, and of the topics researched in this study, there are several implications that are important to researchers and practitioners. A review of existing literature demonstrated that there is a paucity of research on the concept of professional identity of educators who work outside of primary and secondary education. In that regard, this study adds to the body of research on this topic.

It is interesting to speculate about the importance of organizational and cognitive factors in this study, given that the organization is one in which loyalty, dedication and commitment are extremely strong. Results of this study show that the trainer's commitment to the Army was very strong. It was a reason why careerists remained associated with the Army and a reason why interns took positions as civilian employees for the Army. That commitment and association with the Army was an overarching theme, and it seemed like a good deal of the trainer's professional identity was related to the organization. A quote from one respondent illustrated this connection: "Having a trained Army helps guarantee the welfare and safety of our citizens and our nation (and) one of the cornerstones of this successful outcome rests with the men and women who train those who protect us". On the other hand, there were no career trainers who worked in the discipline in many different organizations and ended up working for the Army. Can one domain be overly dominant, perhaps at the expense of other domains? Or is it appropriate, given the potential dangers their students may face? Army trainers have duties that can be much different than the average workplace trainer. While trainers in other organizations may feel the training they do is of life or death importance, the reality is that it is seldom the case. It is the case with Army trainers, though. They train on topics crucial to life and death, and sometimes on equipment that can be dangerous and can involve

a good deal of risk. The association with the organizational domain of professional identity seems to be a strong motivator for Army trainers. The trainer's motivation to the job, based on his/her commitment to the organization, may have positive effects on the soldiers' learning. As one respondent noted, "I need to be able to create, evaluate, and present training material for military personnel. I want the Army to be prepared and ready, so I must be prepared and ready". This connection is important for all in HRD to understand, and could be useful in the development of trainers in all organizations.

Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) noted that research on the professional identity formation of educators is relevant to those who teach and mentor educators. Knowledge of professional identity formation helps those teachers and mentors better understand the support needed by their students. One's identity as an educator, they posit, is the foundation for making meaning and for educational-related decision making (2003). This study provides information on the professional identities of Army trainers that is valuable to those who prepare new Army trainers, and who work in the ongoing professional development of existing Army trainers. Results reveal a clearer picture of how Army trainers see themselves and what motivates them to become trainers (initially) and to continue to develop themselves professionally. Prominent in focus is the connection between the trainers' activities in the classroom and the well-being of the student and the organization (the Army) and the safety of the country, overall. These trainers are motivated because they tie their training directly to what we would classify as Bloom's higher levels of learning (Ambrose, et. al, 2010) on the part of the soldier. For example, an instructor who teaches navigation skills does not see his job as teaching soldiers to read a map. Rather, he/she sees it as teaching the soldier a skill that can be applied to help that soldier navigate dangerous terrain in unfamiliar, and possibly hostile, territory. The connection is taken even further, though, as the trainer is aware that this ability may help keep the soldier safe and

alive. One student summarized her feelings as follows: "Having honor in thyself (sic) and my job, doing selfless service and being loyal to the soldiers I serve is what (being an Army trainer) means to me".

An understanding of these types of connections in Army trainers can be useful to all HRD practitioners. Organizations want dedicated employees who are invested in the jobs they perform. How many organizations have trainers that are as invested in their work as the Army trainers researched in this study? A focus on connections to the bigger picture may serve to motivate all trainers, regardless of the subjects on which they train. It is true that most trainers do not teach learners who are in potential life-and-death situations, however, connecting a trainer's performance to things like the safety or security of all in the organization, the fulfillment of learners' life goals, or learners' improved life situations may be motivating to those trainers. For trainers who do teach skills involved in potentially dangerous situations, such as trainers of police officers or fire fighters, these connections are all the more important, and should be emphasized in the training of these trainers.

From a research standpoint, findings of this study concur with findings of other studies related to educators' professional development. Specifically, findings can be categorized similarly to Vloet's (2010) study, which found that professional identity in teachers consists of several sub-identities, is related to both the person and the context, and is formed through an ongoing process of reflection and interpretation. In doing so, this study strengthens the conceptual framework associated with the development of professional identity.

The way in which this study was conducted can also be beneficial to both researchers and practitioners. This study demonstrates the powerful responses that came from Army trainers when they were asked to reflect on their professions. As noted by Cross (2009), reflective practice is an important component of professional development. Practitioners may consider reflection on practice as a method of

professional development, which could be used as a component of training and development-related activities.

From a practical standpoint, the *U.S. Army Learning Concept for 2015* (*ALC 2015*) discusses, at length, the role of trainer for the Army. It highlights the Army's increased emphasis on the importance of trainers and instructional designers with formal education in training program development and delivery. This research can provide insight into the role of Army trainer that may be beneficial in the development of future trainers.

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