Technical Report 1384

Productive Discourse to Enhance Army Strategic Planning

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14. ABSTRACT
Discourse is important for Army operational activities such as strategic planning, but little is currently known about when discourse is required or the factors that predict productive discourse in the operational Army. We examined discourse in current Army doctrine and the group processes literature and then used three methods to collect information about discourse in the operational Army: focus groups, a survey, and systematic observation of groups engaged in planning. We found that the application of discourse in the operational Army is pervasive across all rank levels and different types of units. The requirement for discourse increases at higher rank levels and varies based on the job, leader, and event. We also found that productive discourse is more likely in climates that are positive, respectful, and inclusive, and less likely when the concerns of discussion participants are not addressed, when the right people are not included in the discussion, and when there are low levels of participation in the discussion. Results from the systematic observation of planning groups suggest that participation in discourse is often limited. Implications for leader training and development are discussed, and a discourse assessment measure—developed from the literature review and results of the research—is presented.

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PRODUCTIVE DISCOURSE TO ENHANCE ARMY STRATEGIC PLANNING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Requirement:

Despite recognition of the value of discourse in certain areas of the Army, little is currently known about the requirements for discourse across various operational Army activities or the predictors of productive discourse within these activities. Discourse is an important element in critical group activities such as planning, problem solving, and decision making.

Approach:

This research first examined the role of discourse in current Army doctrine and the group processes literature, after which the research used three different methods to collect information about discourse in the operational Army. In the first method, the researchers conducted a series of focus groups that captured information from 52 Soldiers about their experiences with discourse. The Soldiers also completed a background form and survey that captured information describing specific meetings the Soldiers recently attended. Finally, raters systematically observed discourse in groups of Soldiers who were conducting the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) in preparation for a rotation at the Army's Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) Fort Polk.

Findings:

For the purposes of this research, we defined discourse as the effective verbal interchange of ideas among three or more people that occurs to achieve an objective. We defined productive discourse as the *effective* verbal interchange of ideas among three or more people that occurs to achieve an objective. We found that the application of discourse in the operational Army is pervasive across all rank levels and different types of units. The requirement for discourse increases at higher rank levels and varies based on job, leader, and event, such as training and deployments. We also found that productive discourse is more likely in discussion climates that are positive, respectful, and inclusive, and less likely when discussion participant concerns are not adequately addressed, when the right people are not included in the discussion, and when there are low levels of discussion participation. When describing recent meetings, nearly all Soldiers indicated that the meetings were useful for sharing information and allowed people who wanted to speak the chance to do so. However, results from the systematic observation of 8 planning groups during the Leader Training Program at JRTC suggested that participation in discourse was often limited. For instance, participation fell as low as 22% during one 30-minute observation session. Based on relevant literature and the research findings, a discourse assessment tool was developed that can be used by leaders or observers to assess the effectiveness of discourse during a meeting.

Utilization and Dissemination of Findings:

Findings of this research enabled the development of a tool that facilitates the assessment of discourse during a meeting. Leaders can use the tool to evaluate discourse in meetings and guide

their self-development with respect to facilitating productive discourse. Observers can use the tool to assess others on the effectiveness of discourse during a meeting and provide developmental feedback to participants regarding productive discourse.

PRODUCTIVE DISCOURSE TO ENHANCE ARMY STRATEGIC PLANNING

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PRODUCTIVE DISCOURSE TO ENHANCE ARMY STRATEGIC PLANNING

Introduction

Despite a recognition of the value of discourse in certain areas of the Army, such as strategic planning (e.g., U.S. Army Design Methodology [ADM; U.S. Department of the Army, 2015a]) and after action reviews (AARs), little is currently known about the requirements for discourse across various operational Army activities or the predictors of productive discourse within these activities. For example, the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP), a hallmark element of Army missions, is a complex planning process that involves each level of leadership working within and across staff groups to conduct mission analysis and develop courses of action (COAs) in order to address a problem or objective. Succeeding at MDMP requires not only cognitive processes, such as analyzing and integrating many pieces of information, but also collaborative processes such as collecting and sharing information and ideas in order to ensure that all of the requirements and capabilities of the unit and environment are taken into consideration. Collaboration and discourse are important elements of success in tasks such as MDMP that require planning, problem solving, and decision making (e.g., Forsyth, 2018; Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012; Toader & Kessler, 2018; Williams-Woolley, Gerbasi, Chabris, Kosslyn, & Hackman, 2008). Better understanding of the role of discourse across the Army, therefore, can provide useful insight into the role of discourse in unit performance and success. This research examined the requirements for discourse and predictors of productive discourse in the Army. We will first define discourse and consider its role in current Army doctrine and planning, and then describe the results of qualitative research that was conducted to collect information regarding the requirements for discourse and predictors of productive discourse in the operational Army.

Defining Discourse and Productive Discourse

In order to examine both discourse requirements and predictors of productive discourse in the Army, it is first necessary to define *discourse* and *productive discourse* to ensure we are clear and consistent in our use of the terms. There are a number of closely related terms that refer to communication between or among people, including: discourse, discussion, dialogue, and conversation. Unfortunately each of these terms can be defined in a variety of ways (see Tables 1 and 2). The dictionary defines discourse as an interchange of ideas and implies it is synonymous with conversation. The educational literature generally takes a similar view, defining discourse as a broad category of communication; however, it is not viewed as synonymous with conversation, which is defined as not necessarily having an objective. Army education has adopted a similar definition and defines discourse as encompassing a number of more specific types of communication (e.g., discussion, dialogue). In yet another domain, the communication discipline argues that discourse (consisting of language, ideas, and social practices) reproduces organizational power and knowledge within the organizational language system. In this way, organizational discourse is both enduring and historically situated (Connaughton, Linabary, & Yakova, 2017).

Table 1

Summary of Definitions of Discourse

	Source		
Term	Dictionary (Merriam-Webster)	Education	Other
Discourse	Verbal interchange of ideas, especially: conversation	• All communication and interaction in the classroom (e.g., Griffin et al., 2013; Lam et al., 2009; etc.) • All verbal interaction in Army War College seminars: conversation, discussion, dialogue are subcategories) (Meinhart, 2014)	• The candid exchange of ideas without fear of retribution that results in a synthesis (U.S. Department of the Army, 2008, p. 15) • An ongoing series of discussions that result in collaborative idea generation and synthesis to improve group problem solving (U.S. Army Research Institute, 2016) • In the discourse analysis field: using language for written and oral communication (Gee, 2011) • Language, ideas, and social practices that reproduce organizational power and knowledge within the organizational language system; discourse is enduring and historically situated (Connaughton, Linabary, & Yakova, 2017)

Table 2

Summary of Definitions Related to Discourse

	Source		
Term	Dictionary (Merriam-Webster)	Education	Other
Discussion	The act of talking about something with another person or a group of people: a conversation about something	• Specific exercise in class that involves verbal interaction (e.g., Griffin et al., 2013; Lam et al., 2009; etc.) • More structured communication than conversation and moves the seminar to closure on a given issue (Meinhart, 2014)	• Serious communication in which participants are mutually responsive to each other (Bridges, 1988; Dillon, 1994)
Dialogue	A conversation between two or more persons; an exchange of ideas and opinions	• Free and creative exploration of ideas that promotes learning (Meinhart, 2014)	• Free and creative exploration of ideas (Senge, 1990)
Conversation	An informal talk involving two people or a small group of people; the act of talking in an informal way	• Most basic discourse, informal communication in unstructured manner (Meinhart, 2014)	• Communication that is informal and aimless (Bridges, 1988; Dillon, 1994)

It is clear from considering these definitions that there are many terms that are related to and overlapping with discourse and there is not one universally accepted definition for productive discourse. Because we are interested in understanding productive discourse—that is, effective discourse—we will choose to identify discourse as a form of interaction that has an objective. This enables us to interpret productive discourse as discourse that achieves its objective. Beyond that stipulation, we will maintain a broad and inclusive definition for discourse, using the following definitions for the project:

> **Discourse:** *verbal interchange of ideas among three or more people that occurs to achieve an objective*
>
> **Productive Discourse**: *the effective verbal interchange of ideas among three or more people that occurs to achieve an objective*

Given that the delineation between the terms discourse and discussion in the literature are blurred, and given that researchers and other writers often do not precisely define what they mean by the term discourse or discussion, we will include documents and research in our review that use terms other than discourse. The most commonly used term is discussion. We will next consider how discourse is addressed in military doctrine.

Discourse in Military Doctrine and Practice

As indicated, there is specific recognition of the importance of discourse in areas of the Army such as AARs and ADM. ADM is an interdisciplinary approach to planning and problem-solving that incorporates ideas associated with critical and creative thinking, leadership, decision-making, and organizational learning (U.S. Department of the Army, 2015a). The ADM process involves group work that requires exchanging ideas and developing shared understanding across both small and larger groups. ATP 5-0.1 *Army Design Methodology* describes the importance of an honest and candid exchange of ideas, and the importance of ensuring that individuals are willing to listen to others, value differing points of view, and take and offer different perspectives. While direct top-down communication may be most efficient in certain contexts, complicated and complex contexts require leaders to engage in problem solving discussions with various stakeholders (e.g., see Snowden & Boone, 2007).

While ADM focuses on methods to understand and frame problems, other military publications on the operations process, such as ADRP 3-0 *Operations* (U.S. Department of the Army, 2017), address the standard MDMP process. Fundamental to MDMP is exchanging ideas across different command and staff levels. MDMP is an iterative planning methodology that integrates activities of the commander, staff, subordinate headquarters, and other partners. This integration enables the commander and staff to: understand the situation and mission; develop, analyze, and compare courses of action; decide on the course of action that best accomplishes the mission; and produce an order for execution. Throughout the planning process, the commanders and staff need to have productive exchanges to develop and finalize the operations plan. For example, ADRP 5-0 *The Operations Process* (U.S. Department of the Army, 2012a) describes the importance of having the staff work together to brainstorm possible improvements to the plan, and having commanders, Soldiers, and other partners collaborate, actively engage in dialogue, and share and question information to better understand situations and make decisions. ADRP 5-0 defines dialogue as involving the candid exchange of ideas or opinions among participants to encourage discussion in areas of disagreement. ADRP 5-0 also emphasizes the importance of having Soldiers feel free to communicate openly, which includes sharing ideas that contradict the opinions held by those of higher rank. Probing questions (e.g., how does X relate to Y) help participants explore ideas, understand problems, and uncover assumptions.

Similar to ADRP 5-0, ADRP 6-0 *Mission Command* (U.S. Department of the Army, 2012b) emphasizes that collaboration and dialogue are keys to success throughout operations. ADRP 6-0 introduces the concept of "multidirectional communication," which is more dynamic than traditional hierarchical communication methods and can help commanders and staffs to learn, exchange ideas, and create and sustain a shared understanding. Dialogue is used in communication and collaboration to create and maintain a shared understanding, resolve potential misunderstandings, and assess the progress of operations.

Another planning reference, ATP 2-10 *Plan Requirements and Assess Collection* (U.S. Department of the Army, 2014) includes multiple references to the importance of planners engaging in dialogue as they refine and adjust their products. ATP 2-10 specifically lists the staff providing "feedback" as a critical ingredient in the planning process in order to maintain information collection effectiveness and alert leaders of deficiencies that need to be corrected.

There are Army manuals that provide guidance on preparing for and holding meetings as well, such as TC 25-30 *A Leader's Guide to Company Training Meetings* (U.S. Department of the Army, 1994). The content of this manual focuses specifically on factors such as the objectives of the meeting, who should attend, details to prepare in advance, and information to have for the meeting. There is no guidance in TC 25-30 on how to create and sustain discourse (or dialogue/discussion) in the meeting, which may be because the authors did not view it as needed or because it simply was not a focus of the manual.

FM 7-0 *Train to Win in a Complex World* (U.S. Department of the Army, 2016) describes an AAR as a dynamic, candid, professional discussion. FM 7-0 emphasizes that no one, regardless of rank, has all of the information or answers. Therefore, Soldiers need to learn from each other during the AAR. FM 7-0 suggests that the leader should only enter the discussion when necessary, and that the leader should encourage people to give honest opinions. The leader also should reinforce the fact that it is permissible to disagree. Mastiglio, Wilkinson, Jones, Bliss, and Barnett (2011) studied Army practices surrounding AARs and found a need for training on the conduct of AARs within professional education programs. Although Mastiglio et al. found that facilitators were generally effective, some facilitators were more effective than others at conducting AARs for a number of reasons, including the ability of the facilitators to stimulate discussion, create a positive environment, foster participation from the group as a whole, help Soldiers reflect on planned goals, and synthesize the lessons learned from the AAR. When facilitators do not engage in these activities, AARs can become a lecture instead of a discussion, limiting the usefulness of such AARs (Salter & Klein, 2007). Mastiglio et al. (2011) discussed the need for training in effectively leading AAR discussions.

From the perspective of leader competencies and leader development, doctrine and training do not specifically refer to the importance of discourse, but they do mention the importance of competencies that are related to discourse. For example, FM 6-22 *Leader Development* (U.S. Department of the Army, 2015b) contains a section on communication. FM 6-22 describes communication as essential to all leadership competencies, and that communication enables leaders to relate better to others and be better able to translate goals into actions. FM 6-22 lists four components of communication: listening actively, creating shared understanding, using engaging communication techniques, and being sensitive to cultural factors in communication. The inclusion of these components suggests that learned skills are important to productive discourse.

Across these descriptions found in various Army doctrinal and training documents, only ADM (U.S. Department of the Army, 2015a) specifically uses the term discourse and addresses the role of discourse in the problem solving process. Many documents, however, describe the importance of discussion, dialogue, and collaboration as part of the planning process. Also, Army doctrine specifically describes the importance of methods of communication for successful

leadership. Thus, there is evidence of a specific recognition of the importance of discourse to planning, as well as a general recognition of skills related to discourse, such as communication.

The Effects of Discourse on Planning, Decision Making, and Problem Solving

Although use of the term *discourse* is rare in the group process literature, use of the term is common in the organizational communication literature. Research on group processes has shown the importance of discourse for success in organizational team activities such as planning, decision making, and problem solving (e.g., Forsyth, 2018). The amount of time a group spends on discourse has been found to influence the quality of the group's decision (e.g., Harper & Askling, 1980; Katz & Tushman, 1979). Also, experimental laboratory research has found that a group's discourse while working on a problem was more important to solving the problem than the level of training the group had on the task (Lanzetta & Roby, 1960). In an investigation of groups working on a college project, Harper and Askling (1980) found that successful groups had a higher overall rate of discourse, and that the quality of the group's product was positively correlated with the participation rate in the group. Not only is discourse important, but encouraging a diverse set of opinions within the discourse is predictive of higher performance in problem solving (Toader & Kessler, 2018). When experts are members of a team, research has demonstrated that the experts volunteer more information than non-experts during group discourse. However, the introduction of information by experts does not necessarily increase the amount of information shared. Rather, experts' sharing of information unknown to other team members can depress contribution and information exchange among the team's non-experts (Franz & Larson, 2002).

For groups conducting planning, the collaborative element of the planning process is critical and provides benefits for group performance beyond task expertise (Williams-Woolley, et al., 2008). Leaders can facilitate discourse in planning and decision-making by acknowledging the value of individual opinions, asking participants for their perspectives, and expressing a desire to hear opinions that differ from ones that were already expressed (e.g., Meissner, Schubert, & Wulf, 2018; Sprain & Ivancic, 2017). While questions can be used to encourage contributions and improve discourse, it is important to note that questions can also be used strategically to limit contributions or interactions by driving decision making in specific directions. So, it is important that questions are used appropriately to enhance collaborative decision-making (Halvorsen, 2018). It can also be helpful for leaders to remind group members that information exchange during the meeting is important (Van Ginkel, Tindale, & van Knippenberg, 2009).

Certain actions during meetings serve as roadblocks to productive discourse. Consistently criticizing others or complaining during team meetings has been associated with lower team productivity (e.g., Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012). In order to focus participants on making productive changes, the leader or facilitator should direct group discourse away from complaining by participants (Lehmann-Willenbrock, Beck, & Kauffeld, 2016; Lehmann-Willenbrock, Meyers, Kauffeld, Neininger, & Henschel, 2008). Another roadblock to productive discourse is the tendency for group members to comment on contributions of other members. When this tendency occurs, team members can waste time by cycling through information already shared in the group (Stasser, 1992). Finally, groups that continue to meet over time are

more likely to develop group-level norms, routines, and practices that can be hard to dislodge or alter (Ervin, Bonito, & Keyton, 2017).

While productive discourse during meetings has a positive effect on group outcomes, research also suggests that productive discourse does not happen easily, because it requires skill, motivation, and practice (Forsyth, 2018). Di Salvo, Nikkel, and Monroe (1989) conducted a critical incident analysis of the perceptions of full-time employees regarding factors that limit the effectiveness of meetings and found that key problems included lack of skill in communicating (e.g., failing to listen to others), egocentric behavior (e.g., dominating the meeting, intimidating), low engagement (e.g., not participating), negative attitudes and emotions (e.g., being disrespectful), and interruptions (e.g., interrupting each other, side conversations). Williams-Woolley et al. (2008) echoed the importance of communication skills for the success of planning meetings, indicating that it is important to provide group members with guidance or instruction on how to collaborate.

Whereas productive discourse is associated with good decisions, lack of productive discourse can create ineffective group results at best and historically tragic results at worst (e.g. Bay of Pigs invasion as described by Janis, 1982). Janis labels this extreme lack of productive discourse *groupthink*, describing it as a group situation in which members are so focused on keeping or reaching unanimity that they do not discuss alternative decisions or courses of action. In these situations, although participants of a group privately hold differing opinions about something, the participants fail to share such opinions in the meeting and the group discourse remains focused on only one plan or approach. As mentioned, leader actions have a significant impact on encouraging or discouraging discourse. In a laboratory investigation of group problem solving, Moorhead (1982) found that groups with an open style of leadership proposed a greater number of possible solutions and discussed a greater number of relevant facts prior to reaching a solution. The open style of leadership included the leader not disclosing to the group his/her solution to the problem before obtaining recommendations from others in the group and making two statements during the session about the importance of airing all possible viewpoints in order to reach a wise decision.

In summary, research on group processes suggests that discourse is critical to effective planning, decision-making, and problem-solving activities, and there are specific characteristics that are associated with productive discourse. The amount of discourse that takes place is as important as the level of participation from those involved. Although the quantity of these two factors is important, the type or quality of actions during discourse is also important. Positive actions include participants listening to others during the discourse; being respectful in interactions and not interrupting others or having side conversations; and not allowing one or two individuals, especially leaders or experts, to dominate the discourse. From the perspective of leaders or facilitators, it is important to emphasize to the group that individual opinions are valued and that there is value in hearing multiple viewpoints and exchanging information. Asking questions is an important element in building discourse and specifically asking participants for their perspectives is helpful. These questions, however, should generate multiple ideas for solutions or answers in productive discourse, rather than having participants repeat information that has already been shared or continue to ask more questions. Lastly, actively monitoring participation during discourse can be helpful in recognizing and stopping problems

that arise with low participation. This monitoring could either be done by the leader or by someone designated by the leader.

With an understanding of these characteristics and relationships as a foundation, we examined discourse specifically in the Army, using qualitative research methods to collect information from Soldiers regarding the requirements for discourse and the predictors of productive discourse in the operational Army.

Method

In two data collections using two samples of participants, we used three different methods to collect information about discourse. In the first data collection, we used focus groups and a survey. In the second data collection, we used systematic observation to observe discourse in groups conducting MDMP in preparation for a rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC).

Participants

Focus groups and survey sample. Data were collected from 52 Soldiers in 18 sessions. Soldiers were Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and officers, who ranged in rank from Sergeant (SGT) to Sergeant Major (SGM) and First Lieutenant (1LT) to Colonel (COL). Details regarding the participants' ranks and types of unit can be seen in Table 3. Soldiers from Combat Arms (CA), Combat Support (CS), and Combat Service Support (CSS) units were represented[1].

Table 3

Participants' Rank and Type of Unit for Focus Groups and Survey

Rank	Combat Arms	Combat Support	Combat Service Support	Missing	Total
Sergeant	2	2	5		9
Staff Sergeant	2	2			4
Sergeant First Class		1	5	1	7
Master Sergeant	2	1	3		6
Sergeant Major		1	1		2
First Lieutenant	5	4	3		12
Captain	3	1	1		5
Major	3		1		4
Lieutenant Colonel	1		1		2
Colonel	1				1
Total	19	12	20	1	52

[1] One Sergeant First Class (SFC) did not provide his/her unit type.

In order to examine data by rank level, subjects were grouped into the following categories: Junior NCOs included SGT and Staff Sergeant (SSG); Senior NCOs included SFC, Master Sergeant (MSG), and SGM; Junior Officers included 1LT and Captain (CPT); and Senior Officers included Major (MAJ), Lieutenant Colonel (LTC), and Colonel (COL). These groupings and their branch/unit types can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Summary of Participants' Rank Group by Type of Unit for Focus Groups and Survey

	Rank Group									
	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer		Total	
Unit	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Combat Arms	31	4	47	8	14	2	71	5	37	19
Combat Support	31	4	29	5	21	3	0		24	12
Combat Service Support	39	5	24	4	64	9	29	2	39	20
Total	100[a]	13	100	17	100[a]	14	100	7	100	51

[a] Total % adds to a bit more or less than 100 due to rounding.

Observation sample. Data were collected from eight groups of Soldiers participating in meetings as part of the Leadership Training Program (LTP) for Brigade leadership in preparation for a JRTC rotation. The sizes of the eight meetings ranged from 4 to 17 participants and included both NCOs and Officers. There were a total of 83 participants across the eight meetings. Because some Soldiers attended more than one of the meetings, the total number of unique Soldiers was lower than 83. We did not know the exact number of unique Soldiers per meeting because participation was anonymous and our interest was in the group processes rather than individual participants. Meetings included two Brigade course of action development (COA DEV) meetings, one Brigade war gaming, one Target Synchronization meeting, two Battalion Fires COA DEV meetings, one Battalion Fires war gaming, and one Battalion Fires leadership planning meeting (see Appendix E for descriptions on these types of meetings).

Measures

Focus group protocol. The focus group protocol included a series of questions to guide a discussion regarding meetings that include discourse. For ease of understanding, the term *discussion* was used rather than *discourse* during the focus groups. Participants were provided with the definition of *discussion* as "the effective verbal interchange of ideas among three or more people that occurs to achieve an objective." Protocol questions asked participants to describe the various meetings with discussion that they typically attend, the objectives of the meetings, and their experiences with discussion meetings at combat training centers (e.g., JRTC) and in individual training courses.

Background information form. A background information form captured information regarding the focus group and survey participants' rank, type of unit, number of meetings

attended each week, type of meetings, the command level of the meetings, amount of discussion in the meetings, and effectiveness of the meetings.

Survey. A meeting description survey asked the focus group participants to think about a work meeting they attended in the last two weeks that included discussion and then describe various aspects of that meeting such as the objectives, people who attended, clarity of goals, amount of discussion, usefulness of the information exchanged, and climate of the meeting. Each participant was asked to complete up to two meeting description forms. A total of 96 meeting information forms were collected from the 52 participants. Table 5 shows the distribution of the meeting descriptions based on participant rank and type of unit. Table 6 shows a summary of the forms collected by the four rank categories and type of unit.

Observation protocol. Four raters collected interactional data on the eight meeting groups. Prior to the LTP observation, raters completed a training session that involved watching 30 minutes of a jury deliberation meeting, coding the jury participants using a coding sheet, and discussing areas of agreement and disagreement. This training session was conducted to ensure that each rater would rate the observation in a way that was consistent with every other rater. During the LTP observation, smaller groups were observed by one rater and larger groups were observed by two raters. For groups with two raters, each rater observed and provided ratings for half of the members of the group. Raters used a coding sheet to rate participant actions after every 30-minute period during the meeting[2]. A copy of the observation coding sheet that was used can be seen in Appendix A. The coding sheet contains 12 items (Items 1-12) that are from the Interaction Process Analysis (IPA, from Bales, 1951), as well as nine experimental items (Items 13-21) that were based on concepts of interest from other Army research. Meetings lasted from 30 minutes to 4 hours, resulting in the shortest meeting being rated only one time, and the longest meeting being rated eight times.

[2] The raters chose a 30-minute time period because they thought 30 minutes would be the longest period of time in which they would be able to accurately keep track of the meeting activities.

Table 5

Number of Meeting Information Forms for Each Rank and Category

Rank	Combat Arms	Combat Support	Combat Service Support	Missing	Total
SGT	4	4	10	0	18
SSG	2	2	0	0	4
SFC	0	2	10	2	14
MSG	3	1	6	0	10
SGM	0	2	2	0	4
2LT	10	8	6	0	24
CPT	6	2	2	0	10
MAJ	6	0	0	0	6
LTC	2	0	2	0	4
COL	2	0	0	0	2
Total	35	21	38	2	96

Table 6

Number of Meeting Information Forms for Each Rank Group and Category

Rank	Combat Arms	Combat Support	Combat Service Support	Missing	Total
Junior NCO	6	6	10	0	22
Senior NCO	3	5	18	2	28
Junior Officer	16	10	8	0	34
Senior Officer	10	0	2	0	12
Total	35	21	38	2	96

Observation self-rating form. After seven of the eight meetings, participants were asked to complete an assessment of 11 aspects of the meeting including topics such as meeting objectives, participation, and usefulness of the meeting.[3] The assessment form can be seen in Appendix B. Participant rating forms were completed either immediately after the meeting or the following day. Not all participants from each group completed an assessment, with the

[3] The lack of time following one of the meetings did not allow for the completion of participant assessments.

completion rates ranging from 44% to 100%. In one case two personnel who were not rated as part of a group completed the assessment form. It is likely in this case that the personnel had observed the meeting from the sidelines so believed they were involved in it, but had not been active participants in the meeting.

Analyses

Focus groups. Coding of responses was conducted on the data using four focus group topics: Descriptions of Meetings with Discourse, Meeting Goals and Objectives, Meetings at JRTC/NTC, and Training in Discourse. These topics were chosen primarily because they would provide information on where discourse is required in the Army and whether or not Soldiers are trained in discourse. Within each of these four topics two or three specific coding activities were conducted, for a total of ten coding categories completed on the qualitative data. Six of the categories captured descriptive responses (i.e., words that participants used when responding to the question), and four of the categories captured evaluative responses (i.e., whether the participant's response to a question was positive or negative). The categories can be seen in Table 7.

Two raters coded data from each focus group with respect to the identified categories. Percent of agreement was calculated for each coding category as the percentage of times the coding of the two raters agreed across the 18 groups and ranged from 78 to 100% (see Table 7). Following the initial independent ratings, the raters conducted consensus discussions to investigate rating differences and achieve 100% agreement.

Table 7

Qualitative Analysis Topics and Coding Categories

Coding Topic	Coding Category (Type of Coding)	Initial Rater Agreement
Descriptions of Meetings	Number of meetings (Descriptive)	83%
	Planned/unplanned? (Descriptive)	100%
	Differences across subgroups/situations (Descriptive)	83%
Meeting Goals and Objectives	Types of objectives (Descriptive)	100%
	Objectives clear? (Evaluative)	94%
	Meetings effective? (Evaluative)	72%
Meetings at JRTC/NTC	Types of meetings (Descriptive)	100%
	Effective/ineffective (Evaluative)	78%
Training in Discourse	How have you learned about it? (Descriptive)	89%
	Would training be useful? (Evaluative)	89%

Observation data. The rating scale for items 1-12 of the IPA (Bales, 1951; see Appendix A) is: 0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = always/often. A participation score was calculated for the

group based on the percentage of participants who received at least one rating of "1" or "2" during a given rating segment for one of the 12 rating categories.

The 12 items were then grouped according to four dimensions (Bales, 1951):

- Positive interaction: Items 1, 2, 3
- Negative interaction: Items 10, 11, 12
- Questions asked: Items 7, 8, 9
- Answers provided: Items 4, 5, 6

For each participant, scores for these four dimensions could range from 0 to 6. A group score was then calculated for each of these dimensions by simply taking the sum of the group participants' scores. Thus, the group score for each dimension could range from zero to the quantity that was six times the number of participants in the group. Two difference scores were then calculated:

- The Positive/Negative Score (Bales, 1951): this score was calculated by subtracting the Negative interaction score from the Positive interaction score. A positive score on this dimension indicated there were more positive than negative comments, and a negative score indicated there were more negative than positive comments. Group process research indicates that groups should have a positive score for this.
- Question/Answer Score (Bales, 1951): this score was calculated by subtracting the Answers provided score from the Questions asked score. A positive score indicated that more questions were asked than answers provided, and a negative score indicated that more answers were provided than questions asked. Group process research indicates that groups should have a negative score for this. While questions are a critical part of discourse, productive discourse should generate multiple answers for each question that is raised, thus resulting in more answers than questions.

Given that a positive Positive/Negative Score is desirable and a negative Question/Answer Score is desirable, the model for productive discourse in groups would expect a strong correlation between these two difference scores (Bales, 1951). Because data were only available for eight groups during this observation, these data are presented to describe trends.

Results

Results are presented across four key topics: discourse requirements, predictors of productive discourse, experiences with discourse at JRTC, and training and development in discourse.

Discourse Requirements

Most personnel in each rank group reported that they attended 10 or fewer meetings per week. Only a few respondents reported attending 11 or more meetings per week (see Table 8). Junior NCOs and Junior Officers were more likely than Senior NCOs and Officers to attend five

or fewer meetings per week, and Senior NCOs and Senior Officers were more likely to attend six or more meetings per week.

Table 8

Number of Meetings per Week Reported in Survey by Rank Group

	Rank Group									
	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer		Total	
Meetings per Week	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
0 – 5	69	9	65	11	47	7	43	3	58	30
6 – 10	23	3	24	4	53	8	29	2	33	17
11 – 20	8	1	12	2	0		14	1	8	4
21 – 30		0		0		0	14	1	2	1
Total	100	13	100[a]	17	100	15	100	7	100[a]	52

[a] If added, column amounts add to 101% due to rounding.

Out of the total number of meetings, Officers and Senior NCOs reported attending slightly higher percentages of meetings that involved discourse, compared to Junior NCOs, with just less than half (41%) of Junior NCOs reporting that only 0-20% of the meetings they attended involved discourse (see Table 9). On the other hand, more than half of Junior Officers (58%), Senior NCOs (66%), and Senior Officers (58%) reported that 61% or more of their meetings involved discourse.

Table 9

Percent of Meetings with Discourse Reported in Survey for Each Rank Group

	Rank Group									
	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer		Total	
% Discourse in Meetings	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
0 – 20	41	5	6	1	20	3	14	1	20	10
21 – 40	8	1	12	2	7	1	29	2	12	6
41 – 60	17	2	24	4	7	1		0	14	7
61 – 80	17	2	29	5	33	5	29	2	27	14
81 – 100	17	2	29	5	33	5	29	2	27	14
Total	100	12	100	17	100	15	100	7	100	51

About half of the Junior Officers (47%) and Junior NCOs (58%) reported that there was productive discourse in more than 80% of the discourse meetings they attended (see Table 10). Senior Officers and NCOs were more likely than Junior Officers and Junior NCOs to indicate that 40% or fewer of the discourse meetings they attended had productive discourse.

Table 10

Percent of Productive Discourse Meetings Reported in Survey for Each Rank Group

	Rank Group									
	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer		Total	
% Productive Discourse in Meetings	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
0 – 20	17	2	6	1	36	5	0		16	8
21 – 40		0	12	2		0	43	3	10	5
41 – 60	17	2	18	3	14	2	14	1	16	8
61 – 80	8	1	18	3	29	4	29	2	20	10
81 – 100	58	7	47	8	21	3	14	1	38	19
Total	100	12	100	17	100	14	100	7	100	50

Junior NCOs (54%) and Junior Officers (53%) were more likely than Senior NCOs (33%) and Senior Officers (28%) to report attending Company level discourse meetings often or very often (see Appendix C, Table C-1). The reverse pattern was seen for Brigade level meetings, with Senior NCOs (80%) and Officers (57%) more likely than Junior NCOs (15%) and Officers (42%) to report attending Brigade level meetings often or very often (see Appendix C, Table C-2). No clear patterns were seen regarding attendance at Battalion level meetings (see Appendix C, Table C-3).

Soldiers were asked to list up to three of the most common types of meetings they attend in their current job. Combining all three answers resulted in 139 responses across the 52 participants. The four types of meetings listed by the greatest percentage of participants were Training (22%), Synchronization (16%), Command/Leadership (13%), and Planning/Readiness (13%) (see Appendix C, Table C-4). The type of meeting differed somewhat based on rank group, with Junior Officers more likely to attend Synchronization (28%) and Training meetings (28%), Senior NCOs more likely to attend Command/Leadership meetings (22%), and Senior Officers more likely to attend Planning/Readiness meetings (24%) than Synchronization (14%) or Training meetings (10%).

Focus group results did not show a clear pattern between the number of discourse meetings and rank group: only 6 out of the 18 groups indicated that higher ranking Soldiers tended to have more meetings. Senior Officers did generally report a uniformly high number of discourse meetings per week (see Appendix C, Table C-5), and this result supports the Background data indicating that Junior NCOs and Junior Officers are more likely to attend fewer meetings a week than Senior NCOs and Senior Officers. However, the focus group data indicated that, for most rank groups, the number of meetings attended by Soldiers in a given rank group varied widely.

Factors reported to affect the number of meetings included the individual's specific job or position, the style or preferences of the leader(s) in the unit, a specific unit or post, and whether the unit had events or a deployment coming up (more meetings are held before an event or a

deployment; see Appendix C, Table C-5). Similar factors were identified for each rank group. With respect to whether meetings were planned or unplanned, most groups indicated having a combination of both planned and unplanned meetings. This pattern was consistent across all rank groups.

Across all rank groups, the most common meeting objectives were planning and coordination (see Appendix C, Table C-6). Fourteen out of the 18 groups listed one of these objectives or both. Additional objectives included logistical issues (though in essence this objective is the same as coordination), working groups/solving problems, readiness review, various update meetings, decision making, and specific topic meetings such as personnel management, profile reviews, and maintenance tracking. There were no discernable differences between rank groups in the nature of their meeting objectives.

Meeting objectives were generally reported to be clear, though a few groups reported that objectives were sometimes not clear. Specifically, 12 of the 18 groups had an opportunity to discuss the effectiveness of meetings. Out of the 12 groups, 7 indicated that the meetings were effective, 4 indicated that some were effective and some were not, and one group indicated that meetings tended not to be effective due to changing guidance. Reasons for not having clear objectives included receiving mixed messages from leadership and attending unplanned meetings, which sometimes led to having ambiguous objectives. Responses did not differ discernably by rank group. Other reasons given for some meetings not being effective included not having the right people at the meeting, not having an effective facilitator, or not having achievable goals.

Survey results. The most common type of meeting Soldiers chose to describe on the survey was a Training Coordination meeting (31%), followed by Staff meetings (25%), and Mission Planning (18%). Eleven percent of the Soldiers selected the "Other" category. Some of the descriptions of these "other" meetings were: "1st/Last," "Company," "High risk Soldiers," "Maintenance," and "Synchronization meeting." While the majority of the Junior NCOs (59%), Senior NCOs (75%), and Senior Officers (67%) described their meetings as "Somewhat Formal," Junior Officers' descriptions of their meetings were evenly divided across the three categories, with 32% of their meetings described as "Very Formal," 29% described as "Somewhat Formal," and 38% described as "Informal."

The number of people who attended the meetings ranged from less than five (4%) to over 300 (1%), but most of the meetings had 30 or fewer attendees (80%), with 4% describing meetings having less than 5 attendees, 33% describing meetings with 5-10 attendees, and 43% having 11-30 attendees. The majority of the meetings were described as having 10 or fewer participants who spoke during the meeting (68%). Junior NCOs and Junior Officers were more likely to indicate that their peers attended the meeting, and Senior Officers were more likely to indicate that Soldiers that they senior rate attended the meeting (see Table 11).

The length of the meetings ranged from 15 minutes to 4 days, with the most commonly occurring length reported as 60 minutes (34%), and the second most-commonly occurring length reported as 90 minutes (19%). No discernable patterns were seen across rank groups for meeting length. When asked how much of the meeting included discourse, responses ranged from 1 = "Only a little bit" to 6 = "All of the meeting", and the responses were well distributed across the

6-point response scale for all rank groups. The distributions were somewhat negatively skewed, with Soldiers more likely to indicate that much or all of the meeting included discourse.

Table 11

Description of Meeting Attendees Reported in Survey

	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer	
Meeting Attendees	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
My peers attended	59	13	62	21	43	12	36	4
Soldiers I rate attended	18	4	41	14	39	11	46	5
Soldiers I senior rate attended	9	2	12	4	21	6	55	6
My rater attended	59	13	74	25	61	17	18	11

Regarding the clarity and accomplishment of the meeting goals, nearly all respondents indicated that the goals of the meeting were either clear or partially clear (99%), with the majority indicating the goals were clear (75%; see Table 12). Respondents provided the goal(s) of the meeting, and each of these goals was unique, varying widely from "Identify manning requirements," to "Get a piece of equipment functional," to "Figure out the weekly agenda." Nearly all respondents also indicated that the goal of the meeting was either accomplished or partially accomplished (92-100%).

Table 12

Description of Meeting Goals/Objectives Reported in Survey

	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer	
Category	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Goals were clear	71	15	81	25	74	20	67	8
Goals were partially clear	29	6	19	6	26	7	25	3
Primary Goal accomplished	84	19	81	25	81	21	69	9
Primary Goal partially accomplished	16	3	19	6	15	4	23	3

Predictors of Productive Discourse

When asked about the climate of their meetings on the survey form, respondents described the interactions during meetings as primarily positive, with the majority of Soldiers from each rank category indicating that more than 50% of the meeting interactions were positive, and only 0 – 7% indicating that over 50% of the interactions were negative (see Table 13). Although they are more positive than negative, there was still a sizable portion of meetings across all rank groups that had a relatively low percentage of positive interactions, with 36% (n = 8) of Junior NCOs, 21% (n = 7) of Junior Officers, 36% (n = 10) of Senior NCOs, and 17% (n = 2) of Senior Officers indicating that 50% or less of the meeting interactions were positive.

Table 13

Description of Meeting Interactions from the Survey

	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer	
Category	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Percent of positive interactions is > 50%	64	14	79	27	64	18	84	11
Percent of negative interactions is > 50%		0		0	7	2		0
Percent neutral interactions is > 50%		0	3	1	4	1	8	1

All or nearly all respondents indicated that "Some," "Many," or "A lot" of questions were asked and answered during the meeting, with the majority of respondents indicating that "Some" or "Many" questions were asked and "Some" or "Many" questions were answered (see Table 14). Only two respondents indicated that "Very Few" or "No" questions were asked and only two indicated that "Very Few" or "No" questions were answered. Results were similar for the number of tasks that were clarified, the number of problems identified, and the number of problems resolved.

For the most part the perceptions of the different rank groups on these issues were very similar. Most respondents selected "Some" or "Many" as a response for the topics shown in Table 14, and those rank groups with lower percentages of "Some" or "Many" had a larger percentage of respondents who indicated "A lot or All" as a response. The only exception was the question 'How many problems were identified,' for which 19% (5) of Senior NCOs responded "Very few/None."

Table 14

Soldiers Responses Regarding Questions, Tasks, and Problems Identified During Meetings

	Percent Who Responded "Some" or "Many"							
	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer	
Category	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Questions Asked	82	18	85	29	82	23	83	10
Questions Answered	86	19	74	25	86	24	92	11
Tasks Clarified	86	19	59	20	68	19	92	11
Problems Identified	91	20	82	28	70	19	73	8
Problems Resolved	82	18	74	25	72	20	92	11

Across all rank groups, Soldiers reported that the meetings they attended were respectful and inclusive. Nearly all indicated that they "Somewhat Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" that the meeting they attended was respectful, useful for sharing information, and allowed people who wanted to speak the chance to do so (see Table 15).

Table 15

Percent that Agreed with Positive Meeting Characteristics on the Survey

	Percent Who "Somewhat Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed"							
	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer	
Category	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Information that needed to be shared was shared.	86	18	94	43	93	26	92	11
People in the meeting seemed to feel comfortable giving their opinions.	90	19	77	26	71	20	92	11
The climate of the meeting was respectful.	90	19	91	29[a]	89	25	100	12
People who wanted to speak in the meeting had a chance to speak.	86	18	94	32	93	26	100	12
People learned new information during this meeting.	95	20	91	31	82	23	100	12
People in the meeting provided useful information.	95	19[a]	85	29	96	27	100	12
People in the meeting were helpful in keeping the meeting on track.	86	18	80	27	72	20	83	10

[a] One or more individuals in this group were missing data for this question.

The majority of respondents believed that the people running the meeting wanted to get input from participants, and that those running the meeting listened to solutions that might work (see Table 16). While there was general agreement across the rank groups for most of the topics, Junior NCOs were somewhat more likely to believe that solutions that might work were ignored in the meeting, with 29% of Junior NCOs indicating that they "Somewhat" or "Strongly Agreed" that solutions that might work were ignored, while only 15% of Junior Officers, 18% of Senior NCOs, and 0% of Senior Officers "Somewhat" or "Strongly Agreed" with this. Junior NCOs were also more likely to indicate that they "Somewhat" or "Strongly Agreed" that people in the meeting seemed to complain a lot, with 33% of Junior NCOs indicating they "Somewhat" or "Strongly Agreed" with this, but only 25% of Junior Officers, 21% of Senior NCOs, and 0% of Senior Officers. Table 16 shows the related responses of the percentage of Soldiers who "Somewhat" or "Strongly Disagreed" with these statements.

Table 16

Percent that Disagreed with Negative Meeting Characteristics on the Survey

	Percent Who Somewhat Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed							
	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer	
Category	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Concerns that were brought up were not addressed.	62	15	76	25[a]	61	17	58	7
The people running the meeting didn't seem to really want input.	81	17	91	26[a]	74	20[a]	100	12
Solutions that might have worked were ignored.	71	15	82	28	82	23	100	12
People in the meeting seemed to complain a lot.	67	14	75	24[a]	79	22	100	12
It was common for people in the meeting to criticize others.	76	16	79	27	82	23	100	12

[a] One or more individuals in this group were missing data for this specific question.

Productive Discourse During Planning

When asked about planning meetings during or in preparation for JRTC, participants in the focus groups reported having a number of discourse meetings at JRTC, including pre-planning meetings prior to arriving at JRTC as well as planning, coordinating, update assessments, targeting, and AAR meetings during the JRTC exercise (see Appendix C, Table C-7). One group mentioned having discourse meetings with personnel who were playing the role of simulated foreign units during the training. Several groups indicated that there was not a great degree of discourse in any of the meetings during JRTC/NTC, as units were focused on action once they were "in the box." Responses were similar across rank groups, apart from Junior NCOs, who reported not having many discourse meetings when they attended JRTC.

For the 12 groups who reported having some meetings with discourse at JRTC/NTC, responses were mixed regarding whether the meetings were useful or not. Seven of the groups reported the discourse meetings as useful, while three indicated that the discourse meetings were either not productive or that only some were productive. These groups identified a variety of problems, including AARs that did not include the right people, having so many meetings that it was impossible to create any mission products and, in another group, the experience of needing more company- and platoon-level meetings to improve unit coordination. Two of the 12 groups said there were some meetings with discourse when they were at JRTC/NTC; however, they did not specifically answer whether the meetings were productive or not.

Results from the observation of eight planning groups during LTP suggested that there was discourse occurring during the planning meetings, but that participation in the discourse was often limited. Results from the observation can be seen in Table 17. The first column of Table 17

reflects the Group and Session numbers and the second column reflects the type of meeting that was observed. The third column indicates the number of participants during the session. Note that the number of participants may change in a group from one session to the next. This is because one or more meeting participants left the meeting during that period; if a participant who left returned subsequently, the participant was added back in. This change in number of participants in a group was a challenge for coding as well as a challenge for the group itself, as members worked toward a goal while having to navigate through the group processes with changing group membership. The Participation column reflects the percentage of individuals present who participated in the discourse, and the Positive/Negative and Question/Answer (Q/A) difference scores are reflected in the subsequent two columns. Higher Positive/Negative values and lower Question/Answer values reflect productive discourse.

Table 17

Results Summary from LTP Observation

			Observer Assessment		
Group-Session	Type	# People	Participation %	Positive/ Negative Value[1]	Question/ Answer Value[2]
1-1	Brigade COA DEV	12	58	3	-10
1-2		12	33	5	-11
1-3		12	36	5	-6
1-4		12	50	5	-18
1-5		12	33	0	0
1-6		12	33	0	-12
2-1	Brigade Wargame	9	67	0	0
2-2		9	44	0	-7
2-3		9	56	3	-4
2-4		9	44	2	-9
2-5		9	22	-3	-4
2-6		8	38	0	-5
2-7		9	88	1	-7
2-8		9	43	3	-5
3-1	Target Synchronization	7	71	6	-6

Table 17

Results Summary from LTP Observation (continued)

Group-Session	Type	# People	Observer Assessment		
			Participation %	Positive/ Negative Value[1]	Question/ Answer Value[2]
4-1	Brigade COA DEV	12	92	20	-10
4-2		11	91	22	-11
4-3		11	100	31	-10
4-4		11	91	33	-6
4-5		7	29	6	-2
4-6		10	80	25	-12
5-1	BN Fires Wargames	13	54	20	-14
5-2		12	85	22	-12
5-3		13	69	18	-11
5-4		11	63	16	-6
6-1	BN Fires COA DEV	7	100	24	-13
6-2		7	100	25	-7
6-3		7	100	25	-6
6-4		7	100	25	-7
6-5		7	100	24	-10
7-1	BN Fires COA Dev	10	80	5	-10
7-2		10	70	4	-8
7-3		8	88	2	-6
7-4		9	33	1	-7
7-5		5	80	1	-4
7-6		9	77	2	-14
7-7		6	67	2	-4
8-1	NA	4	100	0	-6

Note. [1]Higher values reflect more productive discourse. [2]Lower values reflect more productive discourse.

Participation in meetings varied, with Groups 6 and 8 having 100% participation during their meetings and the other six groups ranging in participation from 22% during one session of Group 2 up to 100% participation during one session of Group 4. Participation in Groups 1 and 2 was generally lower across the sessions than Groups 4 and 7. Overall the groups tended to have more positive than negative contributions to the discourse, but the value of the Positive/Negative

comments ranged from a low of -3 in Group 2, Session 5, to a high of 33 for Group 4. The negative values in the Question/Answer column indicate that in almost all cases there were more answers in each session than questions. The only exceptions were Session 5 of Group 1 and Session 1 of Group 2 which received a score of 0. Scores for Question/Answer ranged from 0 to -18, which was a more narrow range than the Positive/Negative scores (-3 to 33). Productive discourse will exhibit more answers than questions because a single question should elicit answers or ideas from multiple others in the group if discourse is productive.

Table 18 reflects means for all 11 items from the self-rating form. Results indicate that group participants generally rated their group processes above the midpoint of the scale (3.0), with the exception of Group 3 which had averages of 2.8 for member participation and members contributing to the output, and Group 4 which had an average of 2.9 for the group producing a quality outcome. Group 6, which had the highest participation and received high scores for Positive/Negative, also received the highest averages for 9 of the 11 self-evaluation items. In several of the groups, although observers' ratings indicated very low participation by members, group members nevertheless rated the member participation as above the midpoint of 3.0. This level of rating suggests either lack of awareness of the group processes or a different expectation for participation of group members.

Table 18

Self-Evaluation Means by Group

Group Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Number of Raters	12	11	4	10	10	7	7
Average Rating for Each Topic							
Objective Defined	3.60	3.80	3.80	4.10	4.60	4.70	4.60
Met Objective	3.60	3.30	3.80	3.80	4.20	4.40	3.70
Produced Quality Outcome	4.10	3.30	3.00	2.90	4.10	4.30	3.70
Members Participated	3.70	3.80	2.80	3.60	4.60	4.40	4.00
Members Contributed to Output	3.60	3.80	2.80	3.80	4.60	4.70	4.10
Meeting Worth the Effort	3.80	3.80	3.30	3.40	4.00	4.90	4.10
Warranted Group Effort	3.80	3.50	3.30	3.80	4.30	4.60	4.40
Worth the Time	3.80	3.00	3.50	3.90	4.00	4.70	3.90
Conducted in a Useful Way	3.70	3.20	3.50	3.70	4.40	4.40	4.10
Processes Were Useful	3.90	3.00	3.30	3.70	4.50	4.70	4.10
Members Used Effective Procedures	3.50	3.20	3.30	3.10	4.20	4.30	4.10

A scatterplot was used to examine the relationship between the Positive/Negative scores and the Question/Answer scores (see Figure 1). The Positive/Negative score is represented on the horizontal axis and Question/Answer score on the vertical axis. Groups will typically show a strong negative correlation between these two scores; that is, the groups with high Positive/Negative scores will have low Question/Answer scores (showing productive discourse),

and the groups with low Positive/Negative scores will have high Question/Answer scores (showing discourse that was not productive). The correlation between these scores for the sessions of these eight groups was -.35. An examination of the scatterplot indicates that there were two distinctive clusters of scores. The cluster circled on the left of the figure reflects sessions in which there were slightly more answers than questions associated with relatively low Positive/Negative scores, and with the low level of positive talk (low Positive/Negative scores), these groups would typically also have more questions than answers (high Question/Answer scores). The cluster circled on the right of the figure reflects groups that had higher levels of answers (lower Question/Answer scores) associated with positive talk (high Positive/Negative scores). This cluster of results is more typical and is indicative of productive discourse.

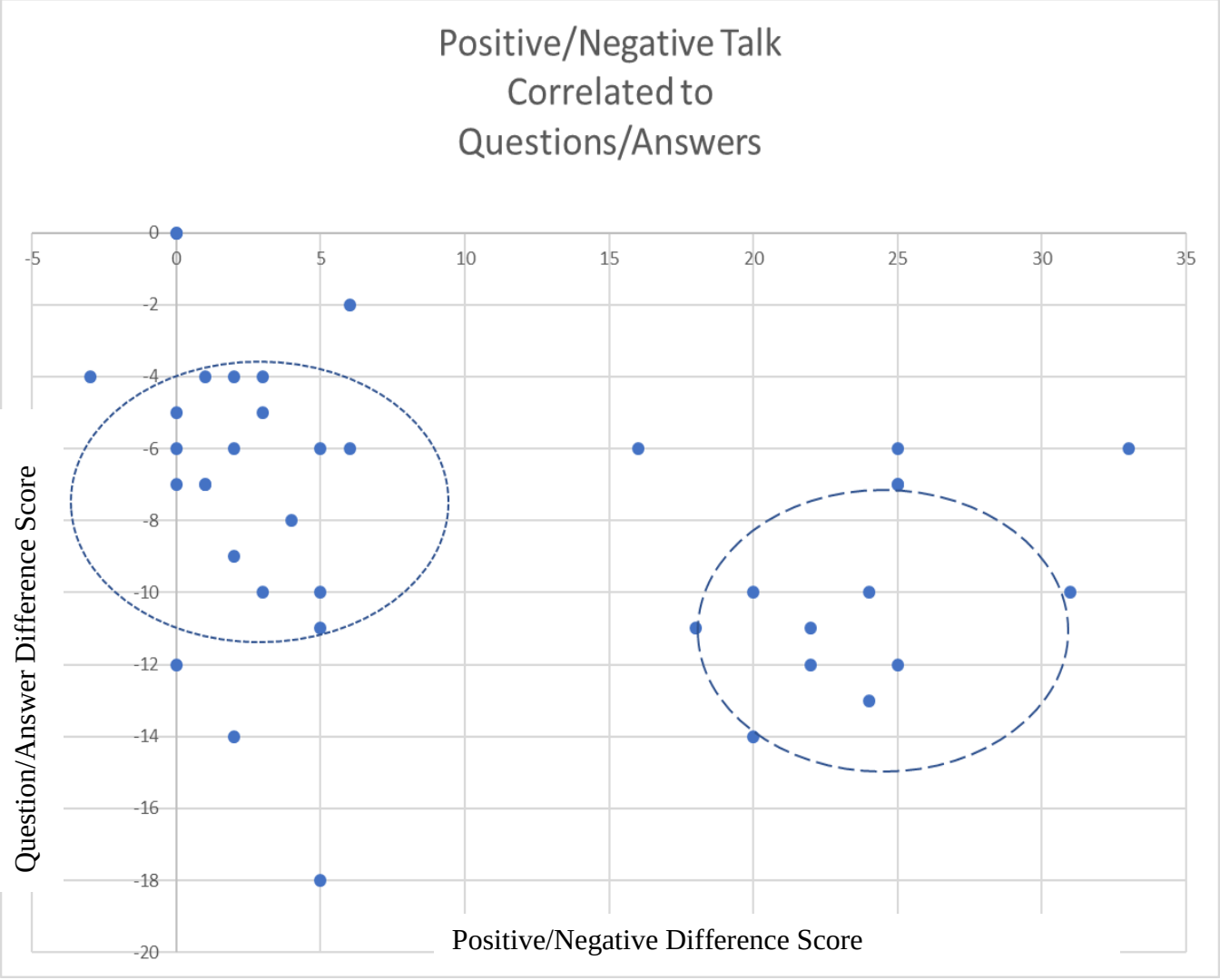

Figure 1. Plot of positive/negative difference scores with question/answer difference scores

In addition, group participants reported feeling at least moderately positive about their group processes and performance. That said, with many of the self-ratings falling at the mid-point of the scale, there is clearly room for improvement, particularly for Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4, for which nearly all ratings fell below 4 on the scale of 1 to 5. In addition, the very low levels of

participation that were observed in many of the group sessions suggest room for improvement in participation to ensure the knowledge, capabilities, and ideas of participants are leveraged toward the group products and processes.

Training and Development of Discourse

When focus group participants were asked how they learned to hold discourse meetings, the most common response was through on-the-job training, and watching how other leaders conducted meetings (see Appendix C, Table C-8). Eleven of the 15 groups that discussed this issue mentioned on-the-job training or mentoring specifically, or described using observation and feedback to learn. Junior NCO groups were more likely than other rank groups to indicate that they had not learned how to hold discourse meetings at all. Responses across the other three rank groups were similar, although each rank group provided some unique responses regarding places where they learned about discourse. For example, the Junior NCO group indicated that they had been given topics in the Basic Leader Course and then were asked to practice discussing the topics. Several Senior NCOs and officer groups mentioned their experiences in college with having topics that related to discourse—either in courses or in their Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) training. Senior NCOs also mentioned the First Sergeant and Small Group Instruction courses as having some material that was related to holding discourse. Junior Officer groups mentioned learning about discourse meetings from AARs, the Captains Career Course, an Army training manual on how to run a training meeting (reference not known), and videos available on the Army Knowledge Online (AKO) website. Senior Officers mentioned learning about discourse meetings from the Basic Leader Course, Captains Career Course, professional reading, and asking meeting attendees for feedback.

Participants were also asked to consider whether receiving additional training on discourse would be useful. Eight of the 18 groups did not provide a specific response to that question (see Appendix C, Table C-8). These eight included three of the four Junior NCO groups and three of the four Senior Officer groups. For groups that did respond to the question, their responses were mixed, with some participants indicating that formal training would not be useful and others indicating that it would be useful for leaders to receive training on how to interact during meetings and run the meetings.

Discussion

Collaboration and discourse are critical elements of success for tasks such as planning, problem solving, and decision making. Given the importance of these tasks for operational Army units, this research sought to better understand the role of discourse in operational settings and the requirements for discourse and predictors of productive discourse across various rank levels. Results indicated that the engagement of Soldiers in discourse was pervasive across all ranks and types of units. While Soldiers indicated engaging in discourse, there were a number of areas where improvements could be made.

Productive Discourse in the Operational Army

Although the nature of the problems or decisions being discussed may differ across rank levels, results indicate that discourse is required at many different levels and places in the Army.

Most Soldiers participate in at least a few meetings each week that involve discourse. Senior NCOs and Senior Officers are likely to attend more meetings, and Soldiers in lower rank groups are more likely to attend a lower percentage of meetings that has discourse. Factors that were reported to have the greatest impact on the number of discourse meetings a Soldier attended each week were the specific job or position the Soldier had; the style or preferences of the Soldier's immediate supervisor and higher level leaders, including the post commander; and whether the Soldier's unit had events or a deployment coming up, which increased the number of meetings per week. These factors were similar across all rank groups.

The meetings with discourse that Soldiers attended had a variety of objectives with planning and coordination the most commonly mentioned objectives across all rank groups. For the most part, the problems being addressed were described as logistical and coordination problems that required relatively brief discourse, rather than the lengthy and complex discourse that would be required to address more ambiguous problems such as those encountered during the ADM process. Soldiers reported that their meeting objectives were generally clear, and that they generally found the discourse in meetings to be effective. Senior NCOs and Senior Officers were more likely than Junior NCOs and Junior Officers to report attending meetings with nonproductive discourse. Reasons for nonproductive meetings included not having the right people at the meeting, not having an effective facilitator, and not having achievable goals.

When asked about the climate of the meetings, Soldiers described the interactions during meetings as primarily positive, respectful, and inclusive, with questions being asked and answered appropriately. When describing their example meetings using the survey form, nearly all respondents indicated that the meeting they attended was useful, allowed people who wanted to speak the chance to do so, and that the people running the meeting listened to solutions that might work. These results regarding meeting climate were generally supported in the observation of meetings at LTP which found that overall the groups tended to have more positive than negative contributions during discourse and that there tended to be more answers in each session than questions.

While the majority of Soldiers felt that concerns that were brought up in meetings were addressed, it is important to note that there was still a sizable percentage across all rank groups (24-42%) who indicated that concerns identified were not adequately addressed. Junior NCOs were somewhat more likely than other rank groups to indicate that in the meetings they attended there were solutions that might work that were ignored.

Although Soldiers across all rank groups engage in meetings with discourse and report positive, respectful, and inclusive climates in the meetings, Soldiers indicated that there were strong expectations regarding how meetings (including meetings with discourse) were conducted. These expectations are based on rank and position, and are widely understood and followed. This means that not everyone participates in discourse at every level of meeting; for example, only personnel with a certain rank or position would speak during a brigade level meeting. Despite this, everyone has a level of meetings at which they would be expected to participate and engage in discourse. This structure makes sense from an efficiency standpoint, and encourages problems to be solved at the lowest level possible, before having the appropriate person bring information or a possible solution to the next level of leadership. It is important to recognize, however, that these norms and expectations will limit discourse.

In part, these norms and expectations may be why low participation rates were observed during the LTP meetings. While two of the eight groups observed had 100% participation during their meetings, the other six groups had participation that was much lower—as low as 22% for one of the sessions observed. The low participation is still surprising, however, given that these meetings involved only select personnel from the Brigade leadership teams, which would suggest that these meetings only included the needed personnel and therefore should have high levels of participation. Notably, the group that had the highest participation rate and received the highest scores from observers for positive contributions also achieved the highest self-rated scores for the effectiveness of the processes and outcomes of its meeting.

Areas for Improvement in Discourse

These results suggest that ensuring that leaders understand how to encourage participation and discourse in these types of planning meetings could produce more effective processes and outcomes. As emphasized in ADRP 6-0 *Mission Command,* dialogue is one of the keys to success throughout operations and can help commanders and staffs to learn, exchange ideas, and create and sustain a shared understanding. While productive discourse during meetings has a positive effect on group outcomes, research suggests that productive discourse does not happen easily, because it requires skill, motivation, and practice (Forsyth, 2018). One of the problems identified by Soldiers in this research was leaders who did more talking than listening during meetings, thereby preventing productive discourse. When focus group participants were asked how they had learned to hold discourse meetings, the most common response was through on-the-job training and watching how other leaders conducted meetings. Although this approach may generally be sufficient, it leaves success to chance rather than taking an active role in training leaders to facilitate discourse. When asked directly whether specific training regarding facilitating discourse would be useful, responses from participants were mixed. However, more active development of discourse facilitation skills for leaders, perhaps by providing some easily accessible self-learning tools, could be useful. An initial tool was developed using the findings of this research that would enable leaders or other observers to assess the discourse in a meeting (see Appendix D).

Further, research has indicated that productive discourse in the classroom can facilitate the exploration of diverse perspectives, aid in recognizing and investigating assumptions, and provide practice across a variety of interpersonal and problem-solving skills (e.g., Wisecarver, Adis, Babin, Smyers, Hope, & Pritchett, 2017; Stothart, Babin, Wisecarver, & Adis, 2019). If Soldier professional development courses are already leveraging discourse to build perspective taking and critical thinking, it may be relatively easy to integrate elements or objectives that demonstrate how those discourse skills should be leveraged in subsequent leadership situations and positions.

One interesting observation from this research is that there are very strong norms and expectations for how meetings are executed and who participates in various meetings. It is likely that these norms, however, apply only in the Army and not to other organizations, perhaps not even to other military organizations. This observation suggests that problems with discourse would be likely to arise for Soldiers when the Soldiers are faced with situations in which they are working with other groups or individuals who do not subscribe to these meeting norms. These types of situations would be a problem when Soldiers are working with other government agencies, non-governmental

organizations, or host nation forces or governments. Experiences of some units in Afghanistan support the idea that skilled discourse may be an important area in which to develop leaders who will be working with other organizations or units on deployments (Karrasch & Gunther, 2014).

Conclusion

For the purposes of this research we defined discourse as the verbal interchange of ideas among three or more people that occurs to achieve an objective and productive discourse as the *effective* verbal interchange of ideas among three or more people that occurs to achieve an objective. We found that the application of discourse in the operational Army was pervasive across all rank levels and different types of units, though discourse seemed to increase at higher rank levels. We also found that the requirements for discourse varied based on specific jobs, specific leaders, and the timing of events such as training and deployments.

Productive discourse occurs when group members are engaged in participating and sharing information, members are respectful and inclusive in their actions, and when group members are focused on listening and understanding. While in many respects productive discourse in the Army mirrors productive discourse portrayed in the literature, the Army is somewhat unique in that there are expectations for engaging in discourse that are linked with an individual's rank and position. Because of these norms, not all personnel attending a given meeting would expect to participate in discourse during the meeting. However, there would be a meeting held at a different level at which all personnel would expect to participate in discourse.

Discourse in team and group settings can become normalized or routinized. As Soldiers are promoted, change duty stations, and learn new skills or tasks, the Soldiers may be introduced to new meeting and discourse norms. This situation may be particularly true when Soldiers begin working in joint and combined settings. Thus, learning about productive discourse, and seeing it practiced and encouraged (e.g., Suchan, 2006), will help Soldiers engage in positive behaviors that will maximize time and effort in team meetings.

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Appendix A. Observation Data Collection Form

(Source: Bales & Cohen, 1979)

Date:	**Time:**
Meeting Code:	**Number of Participants:**
Participant Ranks:	**Purpose of Meeting:**

Rating scale: 0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = always/often

Descriptor	**Person A**	**Person B**	**Person C**	**Person D**	**Person E**	**Person F**
1. Shows solidarity, raises other's status, gives help, reward	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
2. Shows tension release, jokes, laughs, shows satisfaction	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
3. Agrees, shows passive acceptance, understands, concurs, complies	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
4. Gives suggestion, direction, implying autonomy for other	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
5. Gives opinion, evaluation, analysis, expresses feeling, wish	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
6. Gives orientation, information, repeats, clarifies, confirms	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
7. Asks for orientation, information repetition, confirmation	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
8. Asks for opinion, evaluation, analysis, expression of feeling	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
9. Asks for suggestion, direction, possible action	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
10. Disagrees, shows passive rejection, formality, withholds help	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
11. Shows tension, asks for help, withdraws out of field	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
12. Shows antagonism. Deflates other's status, defends/asserts self	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
13. Attempts to understand, not persuade	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
14. Demonstrates active reflection in discussion by synthesizing and building ideas	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
15. Uses cross-examination tones	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
16. Allows ideas the time/space needed in discussion	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
17. Respects solutions by those closest to the problem	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
18. Expands own thinking to appreciate others' views	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
19. Uses questions as an invitation to think more deeply, rather than promoting defensiveness	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
20. Detracts from discussion, undermines productivity	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2
21. Distinguishes understanding from consensus	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2

Appendix B. Participant Assessment Form

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the meeting that just took place on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).					
	Strongly Disagree				***Strongly Agree***
1. The objective(s) of this meeting were clearly defined.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2. This group was able to meet the objective(s) of the meeting.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3. This meeting produced a high-quality outcome.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4. Meeting participants actively participated in this meeting.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5. Meeting participants contributed to the group's outputs.	①	②	③	④	⑤
6. This meeting was worth the effort the group put into it.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7. The things that were accomplished in today's meeting warranted the group's effort.	①	②	③	④	⑤
8. The results of this meeting were worth the time the group invested.	①	②	③	④	⑤
9. This meeting was conducted in a useful way.	①	②	③	④	⑤
10. The processes in today's meeting were useful.	①	②	③	④	⑤
11. Meeting participants used effective procedures in today's meeting.	①	②	③	④	⑤

Appendix C. Focus Group and Survey Results

Table C-1

Company Level Discourse Meetings across Rank Groups

	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer		Total	
Company Level Meetings	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Never	8	1	27	4	14	1	14	1	22	11
Rarely	8	1	13	2	29	2	29	2	20	10
Sometimes	31	4	7	1	29	2	29	2	20	10
Often	15	2	53	8	14	1	14	1	28	14
Very Often	39	5		0	14	1	14	1	16	8
Total	100	13	100	15[a]	100	7	100	7	100	50

[a] Two Junior officers were missing a response

Table C-2

Brigade Level Discourse Meetings across Rank Groups

	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer		Total	
Brigade Level Meetings	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Never	54	7	35	6	7	1		0	27	14
Rarely	15	2	12	2	7	1		0	10	5
Sometimes	15	2	12	2	7	1	43	3	15	8
Often		0	24	4	27	4	14	1	17	9
Very Often	15	2	18	3	53	8	43	3	31	16
Total	100	13	100	17	100	15	100	7	100	52

Table C-3

Battalion-Level Discourse Meetings across Rank Groups

	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer		Total	
Battalion Level Meetings	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Never	46	6	7	1	27	4	17	1	27	13
Rarely	15	2	13	2	27	4	17	1	18	9
Sometimes	15	2	20	3	27	4	17	1	20	10
Often	15	2	33	5	7	1	33	2	20	10
Very Often	8	1	27	4	13	2		0	14	7
Total	100	13	100	15[a]	100	15	100	6[b]	100	49

[a] Two Junior officers were missing a response; [b] One Senior officer was missing a response.

Table C-4

Three Most Common Meetings Listed by Rank Group

	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer		Total	
Type of Meeting	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Administrative	3	1	2	1		0		0	1	2
Award		0	2	1		0		0	1	1
Back Briefs		0		0		0	5	1	1	1
Brigade	3	3		0	2	1		0	1	2
Command/Leadership	16	5	4	2	22	9	10	2	13	18
Company		0	2	1	2	1		0	1	2
CUA		0		0		0	5	1	1	1
Decision		0		0		0	10	2	1	2
General Briefing		0		0	2	1	0		1	1
High Risk Soldier Briefing		0	2	1		0	5	1	1	2
Information		0		0		0	5	1	1	1
Internal	3	1	2	1	7	3		0	4	5
IPRs		0	4	2	2	1		0	2	3
Land/Ammo (Weekly)		0	2	1		0		0	1	1
Legal		0		0		0	5	1	1	1
LPD		0	4	2		0		0	4	5
Maintenance	6	2	2	1	5	2		0	1	1

Table C-4

Three Most Common Meetings Listed by Rank Group (continued)

	Jr NCO		Jr Officer		Sr NCO		Sr Officer		Total	
Type of Meeting	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
Manpower	3	1		0		0		0	1	1
Medical		0		0		0	5	1	13	18
Monday/Friday	6	2		0		0		0	1	1
Planning/Readiness	16	5	4	2	17	7	21	4	1	2
Platoon	3	1	2	1		0		0	1	1
Profile Review	0		0	0	2	1		0	1	2
Pre-deployment	3	1		0		0		0	1	1
S-6		0		0	2	1		0	1	1
Safety		0	2	1		0		0	1	1
Section	3	1	0	0		0		0	1	1
Staff	3	1	2	1	5	2		0	3	4
Synchronization	6	2	28	13	10	4	14	3	16	22
Tasking		0	2	1		0		0	1	1
Technical Integration Working Groups		0		0		0	5	1	1	1
Training	23	7	28	13	20	8	10	10	22	30
Working Groups		0	2	1		0	5	1	1	2
Total	100	31	100	46	100	41	100	21	100	139

Table C-5

Qualitative Results for Meeting Descriptions

Rank Group	Number of Meetings (Descriptive)	Planned/Unplanned (Descriptive)	Differences Across Subgroups/ Situations (Descriptive)
Junior NCO			
3 SGTs, 1 SSG	0-2 a week, agreement	Both planned and unplanned	Varies by rank and position (e.g. training room NCOIC)
2 SGTs	7-10 a week, variety	Mostly planned; every morning and some or all evenings	Differs by MOS and post
2 SGTs	3 a week	Mostly planned	Differs when deployment is coming (more), differs by rank (higher more meetings) and job (HR and logistics have more)
1 SSG	10 a week, N/A	Mostly planned meetings	Differs when an operation/event is coming up
Senior NCO			
3 SFC, 2 MSG	4 a week, agreement	Most meetings unplanned	Meetings same across rank, MOS
1 SGT, 4 SFC	5-10 a week, variety	Variety of planned and unplanned	Differs by MOS, level of job (BN vs BDE), leadership
2 CSMs	10 per week– agreement	Both planned and unplanned ("huddles")	Differs when events coming up; More meetings at BN level
3 SFCs, 1 MSG, 1 1SG	1 a week- high discourse 10-16 a week low discourse, agreement	Variety of formal and informal	Differs by unit, job, post
2 MSG	5-8 meetings a week, variety	Variety of planned and unplanned	Differs when preparing for deployment, by time of month (Unit Status Report), by structure of organization

Table C-5

Qualitative Results for Meeting Descriptions (continued)

Rank Group	Number of Meetings (Descriptive)	Planned/Unplanned (Descriptive)	Differences Across Subgroups/ Situations (Descriptive)
Junior Officer			
8 1LTs	3-25 a week–variety	Both planned, unplanned	Differences based on job/position, type of unit, particular leaders, deployment prep S-3 have more Sustainment brigade have more
1 CPT	1 per week – N/A	Planned	Differences when event is coming up or happens Varies across jobs
3 1LTs	2-6 a week, variety	Variety of planned and unplanned	Differs when preparing for events or deployments (more), by rank (more for higher rank), by leader preference
3 CPTs	3-5 a week, variety	Variety of planned and unplanned	Differs by leader (especially BN Commander), post
1 CPT	5-10 a week, n/a	Planned	Differs by rank (more as CPT than 1LT), type of unit (less discourse at Infantry unit), leader style/ preferences

Table C-5

Qualitative Results for Meeting Descriptions (continued)

Rank Group	Number of Meetings (Descriptive)	Planned/Unplanned (Descriptive)	Differences Across Subgroups/ Situations (Descriptive)
Senior Officer			
1 LTC	12-14 a week	Variety of planned and unplanned	Differs based on exercise or deployment coming; by post, by job
4 MAJs	8 a week–agreement	Both planned and unplanned	Differ by level at which you work Higher level more planned and efficient
1 COL	18-20 a week	Most planned, some unplanned	Differences when event is coming (more)
1 LTC	8-12 a week with discourse, N/A	5-7 planned and 3-5 unplanned	Differs by rank (more meetings and more discourse meetings for higher rank), personality of leader, personnel turnover (high turnover, more meetings)

Table C-6

Qualitative Results Describing Meeting Objectives

Rank Group	Objective Types (Descriptive)	Objective Clear (Evaluative)	Meetings Effective (Evaluative)
Junior NCO			
3 SGTs, 1 SSG	Review accomplishments Problem Solving	+ Objectives clear	- Some meetings not effective; could just use email instead
2 SGTs	Logistical issues	+ Clear	- At times not accomplishing what they need to
2 SGTs	Coordination Deconflicting schedules Promotion meetings	+ Clear	+ Objectives typically achieved
1 SSG	Planning operations Daily logistics Personnel management	N/A	N/A

Table C-6

Qualitative Results Describing Meeting Objectives (continued)

Rank Group	Objective Types (Descriptive)	Objective Clear (Evaluative)	Meetings Effective (Evaluative)
Senior NCO			
3 SFC, 2 MSG	Communication Logistics Planning	+ Some clear - Some not clear - Problems when reactive not proactive	- Some not effective - Facilitator not good, doesn't have enough information
1 SGT, 4 SFC	Planning Tracking maintenance Coordination	+ Clear objectives - Questions come up we can't address	+ Achieve 25 M targets - Get tunnel vision for main mission - Priorities not always correct - People asking for unreasonable things - Not a good plan for the meeting - Leader needs to issue do-outs
2 CSMs	Profile review/Personnel readiness Training meeting Command and staff Prep meetings for meetings Calendar Review Commander's Update Brief Readiness review	+ Meeting objectives in current job clear - Past jobs objectives not always clear	+ Meetings effective; keep meetings to LT 1 hour + Some not effective as facilitator may be too talkative
3 SFCs, 1 MSG, 1 1SG	Company and platoon level meetings to solve issues, prepare for briefings	N/A	+ Company/platoon level are effective - Formal meetings not as useful
2 MSG	Coordination Working group for particular objective	N/A	N/A

Table C-6

Qualitative Results Describing Meeting Objectives (continued)

Rank Group	Objective Types (Descriptive)	Objective Clear (Evaluative)	Meetings Effective (Evaluative)
Junior Officer			
8 1LTs	Preparation Planning Coordination Reviewing awards/data Readiness	+ Planned meetings–objectives clear - If meetings are unplanned, objectives may not be as clear + As leader, ask for key objectives - People go off on tangents during the meeting	+ Higher ranking people there will keep meeting focused, effective + 95% of time meetings are effective
1 CPT	Organize events, logistics Coordination Progress check	+ Objectives clear	+ Meetings effective; asks for feedback and discourse from others in meetings
3 1LTs	Logistical coordination Training Updates on legal/high risk issues Battalion requirements, coordination	N/A	N/A
3 CPTs	Coordination Planning for events Tasking/personnel placement	N/A	N/A
1 CPT	Training coordination Administrative tasks Planning–missions, training Operational planning team (problem-solving meeting) AARs for processes	N/A	N/A

Table C-6

Qualitative Results Describing Meeting Objectives (continued)

Rank Group	Objective Types (Descriptive)	Objective Clear (Evaluative)	Meetings Effective (Evaluative)
Senior Officer			
1 LTC	Communication/cross talk Coordination	+ I work to make objectives clear - Sometimes mixed messages from leadership	+ Always get an end state from the meeting - Sometimes no follow up - End states sometimes not achievable - Conflicting messages +/- Climate can affect this
4 MAJs	Planning Coordination Decision making	+ Objectives clear when use Quad charts	- Hard to achieve objectives when guidance changes - If there is poor coordination, you can't get the necessary people at the meeting
1 COL	Decision making Information sharing Collaboration Planning–responsibilities, how to proceed	+ Objectives clear	+ Objectives achieved; need to keep meetings around 45 minutes
1 LTC	Coordination Training Personnel issues Prepare for missions/deployments	N/A	N/A

Table C-7

Qualitative Results Describing Discourse Meetings at JRTC

Rank Group	Types of Meetings (Descriptive)	Effective/Ineffective (Evaluative)
Junior NCO		
3 SGTs, 1 SSG	Few discourse meetings on the ground	N/A
2 SGTs	Op Orders–on the ground (not really discourse meetings) Platoon has discourse / meetings for OPORD some formal some informal–on the ground	+ Platoon discourse useful
2 SGTs	N/A	N/A
1 SSG	AARs–on the ground	+ Effective in discussing what went right and wrong
Senior NCO		
3 SFC, 2 MSG	Planning–prior IPRs–prior Daily accomplishments AARs–on the ground	+ Appropriate, helpful + Feedback from OCs on performance
1 SGT, 4 SFC	Planning–prior Update meetings/ informational–on the ground Some OPORDs–on the ground AARs–on the ground	+ Very organized, well planned out + AARs useful–on the ground
2 CSMs	Preparation meetings prior Meetings on the ground are not really discourse, even in the AARs IPRs on the ground (NTC) AARs upon return	N/A
3 SFCs, 1 MSG, 1 1SG	Discuss and plan logistics–both prior and on the ground	+ Gives you the experience of being downrange
2 MSG	Planning/logistics–prior	N/A

Table C-7

Qualitative Results Describing Discourse Meetings at JRTC (continued)

Rank Group	Types of Meetings (Descriptive)	Effective/Ineffective (Evaluative)
Junior Officer		
8 1LTs	Planning–prior Very few discourse meetings on the ground AARs–on the ground	+ Planning/meetings prior are very helpful - AARs on the ground did not always include the right people–only command group attended, not lower levels - AARs varied depending on leadership - Supporting units don't get feedback
1 CPT	N/A	+ Effective when commander gets feedback from subordinates–on the ground
3 1LTs	Coordination–prior and on the ground AARs–on the ground	- Needed more platoon and company level meetings to improve coordination - Should have had coordination meetings before the training scenario was set up
3 CPTs	Logistics Synchronization – prior Shift change briefs–on the ground Lessons learned discourse–on the ground Decision briefs–on the ground Targeting briefs–on the ground Platoon planning meeting–on the ground	N/A
1 CPT	Op Order briefings–on the ground Rehearsal meetings–on the ground Confirmation briefs from platoon leaders to company CDR–on the ground AARs–on the ground	- Some Op Order briefings and rehearsal meetings did not seem useful

Table C-7

Qualitative Results Describing Discourse Meetings at JRTC (continued)

Rank Group	Types of Meetings (Descriptive)	Effective/Ineffective (Evaluative)
Senior Officer		
1 LTC	N/A	N/A
4 MAJs	Planning and battle rhythms on the ground Targeting meetings–on the ground External meetings with simulated foreign units–on the ground AARs on the ground	- Too many meetings to attend on the ground so couldn't create requested products - Cross-cultural/multi-service meetings not always effective; can't run them like usual Army meetings
1 COL	OPSYNC–on the ground Coordinating Brigade resources–on the ground Commanders Update Assessment–on the ground	N/A
1 LTC	Pre-planning–prior Planning–on the ground AARs–on the ground AARs–upon return	+ Open and honest discourse in AARs + AARs on the ground discuss problems, AARs upon return discuss solutions

Table C-8

Qualitative Results Describing Training for Discourse Meetings

Rank Group	How Have You Learned About It? (Descriptive)	Would Training be Useful? (Evaluative)
Junior NCO		
3 SGTs, 1 SSG	N/A	N/A
2 SGTs	Basic Leader Course–given topics and practiced discourse	N/A
2 SGTs	Basic Leader Course–given topics and practiced discourse and briefings Mentoring at unit	+ Mentoring briefing and meeting skills is standard practice
1 SSG	N/A	N/A
Senior NCO		
3 SFC, 2 MSG	N/A	+ Useful to practice in schools - Not useful to practice in schools + Useful to get pointers
1 SGT, 4 SFC	On the job	- Not useful to have AKO training course + Useful to have NCOA training–start early
2 CSMs	On the job, observing others Some college classes were related Pre-Command Course might have something Soldier feedback	+ Learn from your Soldiers–get feedback
3 SFCs, 1 MSG, 1 1SG	Formerly in 1SG course, now SSC Basic Instructor Course Small Group Instruction Intermediate Facilitation	- Only useful in TRADOC where you are in control of the setting
2 MSG	1SG course CO CDR guide to training meetings Observation Common sense	N/A

Table C-8

Qualitative Results Describing Training for Discourse Meetings (continued)

Rank Group	How Have You Learned About It? (Descriptive)	Would Training be Useful? (Evaluative)
Junior Officer		
8 1LTs	On the job, as you go; observe others At ROTC program because she was an ROTC leader Through a mentor	- Formal training would not be useful + Get exposure to higher level meetings on the job
1 CPT	AKO videos	N/A
3 1LTs	Master resiliency annual brief Military Signs Classes (how to brief)	- Army doesn't teach how to interact with audience - Not a lot of feedback from leaders
3 CPTs	AARs–during training ROTC sometimes has mentoring for meetings On the job training	- Disadvantage that leaders get no training on meetings - LTs have no idea what training meeting is
1 CPT	AARs–learn on the job Guest OC school has training on giving AARs Captain's Career Course (CCC) has one hour of training on CO training meetings Army training manual on how to run a training meeting	+ CCC on CO training meetings was useful

Table C-8

Qualitative Results Describing Training for Discourse Meetings (continued)

Rank Group	How Have You Learned About It? (Descriptive)	Would Training be Useful? (Evaluative)
Senior Officer		
1 LTC	Professional reading Get feedback from people	+ Training in schoolhouse; give officers feedback & learn from peers
4 MAJs	Publication and course on knowledge management; part of SIMOPS course Meeting training for Sustainment personnel MDMP has information about running training meetings On the job, from observation	N/A
1 COL	On the job, through observation	N/A
1 LTC	On the job training Basic Leader Course and Captain's Career Course discuss company training meetings and AARs ILE S3/XO elective–provide briefing on running a training meeting	N/A

Appendix D. Discourse Assessment Form

Part 1 Instructions: Circle the appropriate percent range. If you are unsure, ask someone else who was there. You will come back to this form at a later step to fill in the score.				
1. What percent of meeting attendees communicated during the meeting?	< 50%	50% - 99%	100%	**Score**
Participation Percent Score				

Part 2 Instructions: Mark "Yes" or "No" to indicate whether the action described in the statement happened or not during the meeting. If you are unsure, ask someone else who was there or mark "Maybe." You will come back to this form at a later step to fill in the score.				
During the meeting…	**Yes**	**Maybe**	**No**	**Score**
2. People were actively engaged in the meeting.				
3. People suggested solutions to problems.				
4. People gave differing opinions.				
5. People shared information with the group.				
Participation Total				
6. People listened to each other.				
7. People refrained from interrupting others.				
8. Interactions were respectful.				
Positive Actions Total				
9. People asked for ideas from others.				
10. People asked questions about information presented in the meeting.				
11. Questions asked in the meeting were answered.				
12. People made comments to support the ideas of others.				
Getting Input & Listening Total				
13. The leader made sure people had time to express their ideas and opinions.				
14. The leader listened to ideas that were different from his/hers.				
15. The leader used questions to increase participation in the meeting.				
Leader Actions Total				

Total Discourse Score	

Rating Instructions:

Step 1: Assign the following number of points for each response in the "Score" column on the far right of the rating form:

Part 1 (Question 1):

< 50%	**-2 points**
51% - 99%	**0 points**
100%	**2 points**

Part 2 (Questions 2-15):

Yes	**1 point**
Maybe	**0 points**
No	**-1 point**

Step 2: Add the total number of points for each subsection and mark this number in the "Total" row of the score column for that subsection.

Step 3: Add the subsection scores from all five sections and mark this number in the "Total Discourse Score" row.

Step 4: Assess your overall discourse health rating using the chart below, then proceed to the "Analyzing Results" section for some tips on how to maintain or improve the discourse in your meetings.

Green	7 to 16	Your scores indicate that most or all meeting attendees effectively participated in the meeting. This suggests a healthy amount of discourse in this meeting. If any of your section scores were 1 or lower, it may still be helpful for you to read the tips provided for that section on the "Analyzing Results" page.
Yellow	-6 to 6	Your scores indicate that there was some interaction among attendees in this meeting; some of the interaction was evaluated as healthy discourse, but there are some areas that could be improved. Read through the "Analyzing Results" page to look for tips that may help you increase the amount and quality of discourse in your meetings. Pay special attention to any subsection scores that were a 1 or lower.
Red	-16 to -7	There was little to no interaction among attendees at this meeting. Read through the "Analyzing Results" page to look for tips that may help you increase the amount and quality of discourse in your meetings. Pay special attention to any section scores that scored a 1 or lower. You may also benefit from asking a peer or supervisor to rate the meeting and discuss areas for improvement based on the "Analyzing Results" page.

Analyzing Results

Participation (Questions 1-5)

- Participation is the most important factor in discourse. Without participation, you cannot have discourse.
- It is a red flag if only one or a few members talk during the meeting. Encourage all participants to give their input and feedback.
- If there are people who consistently do not participate, try to determine why; then devise a strategy to increase their participation. One method may be to mention to them ahead that you would like them to provide some information to the group in a particular area. That will enable them to prepare in advance.
- Also keep in mind that if one or two people are allowed to dominate the conversation, others will be unable to participate in the discourse. The leader or facilitator of the group needs to limit people from over-participating.
- One way to make it more likely that people will share differing viewpoints is to ensure that the leader(s) refrains from giving their opinion at the beginning of the meeting.
- If a leader or leaders provide strong arguments for a particular approach or decision at the beginning of a meeting, others at the meeting may refuse to share differing points of view. This can lead to groupthink, where everyone just agrees with the highest ranking members of the group.
- Another strategy to encourage participation is to emphasize to the group that gaining multiple perspectives is a key purpose of the meeting.

Positive Actions (Questions 6-8)

- Showing support for others and verbally agreeing when possible makes the discourse more positive for everyone involved and encourages positive interactions.
- If the group climate seems negative or tense, encourage group members to discuss what they agree on and try to move forward with solving the problem from there.
- Respecting others' viewpoints and opinions is a key part of discourse. If there is a lack of respect for others in the meeting it is important to address this issue immediately.
- It is a red flag if group members are talking over one another. Participants must be willing to listen to each other respectfully and wait their turn to speak.

Getting Input (Questions 9-12)

- One key part of any discourse is asking questions. It is important for group members to ask questions to stimulate the discourse and develop/create the best solutions to the issue at hand using knowledge and insights from everyone in the group.
- If group members are defensive when questioned, remind them that they can use questions as an opportunity to think about and further explain their viewpoints.
- It is also important for group members to understand the discourse and receive answers to their questions. If group members' questions are being ignored, address it immediately.

- Encourage people to listen to and attempt to understand others' perspectives before trying to persuade others to change their minds.
- Group members must recognize the difference between understanding and agreeing. Understanding others' viewpoints is important, but understanding does not mean agreement. Encouraging people to voice different perspectives helps prevent groupthink.

Leader Actions (Questions 13-15)

- If people know the leader's opinions before the meeting starts, it can prevent effective discourse, particularly if people are concerned about disagreeing with the leader.
- The leader sets the tone for the meeting and must encourage and be willing to listen to alternative points of view.
- The person who is running the meeting should ensure that everyone has time to contribute their thoughts. Some participants may be more assertive than others, and leaders need to make sure even those who are less assertive have a chance to give input during a meeting.
- Leaders can encourage participation by asking questions both to the group and to specific individuals who may otherwise stay silent.

Appendix E. Meeting Objectives and Products at LTP

Course of Action Development

The purpose of this meeting is to develop possible courses of action for an operation using the Commander's intent, mission statement, intelligence preparation of the battlefield products, assumptions, and course of action evaluation criteria. The primary products of this meeting are possible courses of action that can be submitted to war gaming.

War Gaming

The purpose of war gaming is to identify potential problems and probable consequences with potential courses of action, and the primary products of war gaming are refined courses of action.

Target Synchronization

The purpose of this meeting is to synchronize the effects of the fires warfighting function with the effects of the other warfighting functions. The product of this meeting is a refined target synchronization matrix.

Leadership Planning

The purpose of this meeting is to find solutions to leadership-relevant problems. For example, in the meeting we observed, the leadership of a battalion was attempting to find a way forward in course of action development as a result of not receiving required information from the brigade staff.