Multiple Perspectives Examining How a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) Program Affects Student Development: A Case Study

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The Agenda

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Researcher Positionality

The researcher (me) is a former U.S. Air Force officer having served 22 years and is also a current AFJROTC Sr. instructor with 11 years of experience. The researcher has no connections or authority over the research participants as the research was conducted at other high schools than the researcher's own.



Barry, K. (2022). Photo of Cpl Anderson & Lt Col Barry. [jpeg]. Private photo collection of author



Background of the Problem

- One of the oldest programs designed to help high school students succeed in school and life is the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program.
- Founded in 1916 under the National Defense Act (64th U.S. Congress, 1916)
- JROTC MISSION STATEMENT "To instill in students in United States secondary educational institutions the value of <u>citizenship</u>, service to the United States, *personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment*" (64th U.S. Congress, 1916; 84th U.S. Congress, 1956, 88th U.S. Congress, 1964).
 - JROTC cadets are under NO obligation to enter the military after high school (64th U.S. Congress, 1916).

However...

• If members complete 3-4 years of JROTC, they can enlist in the military at a higher pay grade (84th U.S. Congress, 1956).

In other words, JROTC is a CITIZENSHIP program.

The Specific Problem

- How does one evaluate "personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment?"
- The U.S. Congress let the Department of Defense (DoD) manage how the JROTC program would be evaluated.
 - Each of traditional DoD branch (Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force) conduct inspections with the focus on:

<u>assigned personnel</u> + performance + <u>accountability</u> = unit viability.

HOWEVER

- All traditional military branches <u>also</u> interview the school administrators and/or guidance counselors during inspections (HQ AFJROTC, 2022; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; US Marine Corps, 2008; Naval Service Training Command, 2022).
- Nowhere in the Congressional guidance or parent military branch directives specify the school administrator or guidance counselor interviews, yet it is found in local evaluation criteria (HQ AFJROTC, 2022; U.S. Navy, 2020).
- Evaluating personal responsibility and accomplishment very ephemeral. Easier to assess assigned personnel and equipment.

By law, for viability JROTC enrollment must be 10% of the HS population

Problem Statement

• There is no national standard and consistent assessments for high school JROTC programs related to the stated mission of instilling personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment.

WHAT YOU CURRENTLY HAVE IS

- Four different ways to assess a high school JROTC program.
- Local inspection guidance and school faculty interviews seemingly puts more focus on accountability and assigned personnel numbers.



Barry, K. (2023). AFJROTC Color Guard at MLK Jr. Parade. [jpeg]. Private photo collection of author



Barry, K. (2023). AFJROTC Cadets practicing marksmanship. [jpeg]. Private photo collection of author



Purpose Statement

The purpose of this explanatory case study is to better examine <u>how</u> a high school's JROTC program affects student development of **personal responsibility** and a **sense of accomplishment** by fusing the perspectives of the school administrators, JROTC instructors, and school guidance counselors for a more holistic view.



Barry, K. (2023). SpaceX Starlink Night Launch. [jpeg]. Private photo collection of author



Barry, K. (2023). AFJROTC Cadets at NASA Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral, Florida. [jpeg]. Private photo collection of author



In other words...

The purpose of this study is to find out



Allen, J. (2014). TSgt Stuart unsparingly reprimands a trainee at Air Force Basic Training, JB Lackland-San Antonio, TX. USAF PAO [jpeg]. https://af.mil/news/igphoto/

what Principals think of JROTC,



Barry, K. (2012). Cockpit Selfie Over Persian Gulf [jpeg]. Private photo collection of author

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what Guidance Counselors think of JROTC,



Barry, K. (2018. Maj David Fricke teaching AFJROTC Cadets. [jpeg]. Private photo collection of author

& what JROTC instructors think of JROTC.

Affecting Factors (Literature Review)

- Lack of Peer-Reviewed Literature
- Over 3,200 JROTC programs throughout the United States, including ٠ Alaska, Hawaii, Guam & overseas U.S. military bases with DoD high schools.
 - Army 1700 units ٠
 - Air Force 810 units
 - Navy 560 units
 - Marine Corps 250 units ٠
- Quantitative vs Qualitative approaches? ٠
 - Past Quantitative studies Barely enough samples collected for statistical significance. ٠
 - Past Qualitative studies Not enough diverse samples or sample not truly representative. ٠
- **Research Bias**

*** Space Force & Coast Guard JROTCs excluded (too new & not enough data)***

Barry, K. (2023). AFJROTC Cadets at MLK Jr Parade. [jpeg]. Private photo collection of author





Significance of this Study

PRACTICAL – Need for a better understanding and assessment measures of JROTC programs from their respective parent military headquarters and the school district.

EMPIRICAL – Demonstrate the interrelationship between Abraham Maslow's motivational theory (1943) and the self-efficacy theory of Albert Bandura (1997) when analyzing JROTC programs.



Theoretical Frameworks of the Study

• Abraham Maslow – The Theory of Motivation (1943)



Abraham Maslow in 1968. [jpeg]. By Psychology Today, 2013, (https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/o ne-among-many/201309/maslow-creativity)



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

• Albert Bandura – The Theory of Self-Efficacy (1997)



Albert Bandura. [jpeg]. By U3190490, 2021, Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ba ndura_image_for_social_learning_theory.jpg)



"Personal responsibility" Parts of the JROTC Mission Statement "Sense of Accomplishment"

Research Questions

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION – What are the benefits a high school's JROTC program provides to the cadets enrolled?

SUB QUESTION 1 - How do the school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program *provides a sense of belonging* to those enrolled in the JROTC program? (Maslow)

SUB QUESTION 2 - How do the school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program *increases self-esteem* in those cadets enrolled in the program? (Maslow & Bandura)

SUB QUESTION 3 – How do the school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program <u>increases self-efficacy behaviors</u> in those cadets enrolled in the program? (Bandura)



- **EXPLANATORY CASE STUDY** A case study that "**explains**" or typically answers the "**how**" and "**why**" of a particular phenomenon. (i.e. How did something come out this way?)
- In this case, the "<u>HOW</u>" a school's JROTC program "<u>AFFECTS</u>" student development of personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment.
- A phenomenological approach should be used when a researcher wants to understand the essence of the experience and by interviewing several individuals who have similar shared experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

However...

- Three types of persons have a similar experience of working in the same school, but each have different backgrounds (School Administrators, School Guidance counselors, JROTC Instructors).
- Therefore, an explanatory case study best suits this study (Yin, 2018). These three entities have the most interaction with the JROTC cadets throughout their high school years and thus make them ideal research candidates.

Design & Data Collection

DESIGN - Explanatory Case Study (Yin 2018)

DATA COLLECTION - 1) Individual Online Survey (Survey Monkey) 2) Individual Online Interview (Zoom) 3) Online Focus Groups (Zoom)



Barry, K. (2023). AFJROTC Cadets at Homecoming Parade. [jpeg] Private photo collection of author

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 DATA SAMPLES - 2 rural schools, 2 suburban, and 1 urban school throughout Georgia
 - All 4 traditional military branches represented (Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force)

DATA ANALYSIS – Atlas.ti + Manual Coding and Interpretation



Barry, K. (2023). AFJROTC Cadets unfurling big field flag. [jpeg]. Private photo collection of author

Participants

Participant	Years of Exp.	Highest Degree Earned	Content Area
Benton	10-14	Master's	School Administrator
Race	20+	Bachelor's	Air Force JROTC
Judy	5-9	Master's	School Guidance Counselor
George	15-19	Education Specialist	Navy JROTC
Jane	5-9	Education Specialist	School Guidance Counselor
Elroy *	10-14	Bachelor's	Navy JROTC
Cosmo	15-19	Education Specialist	School Administrator
Fred	5-9	Bachelor's	Army JROTC
Barney	15-19	Doctorate	School Administrator
Betty	15-19	Education Specialist	School Guidance Counselor
Tom	10-14	Master's	School Guidance Counselor
Jerry	15-19	Master's	Army JROTC

Thematic or Key Findings

The JROTC phenomena is best understood in this order, although the data has it in this order

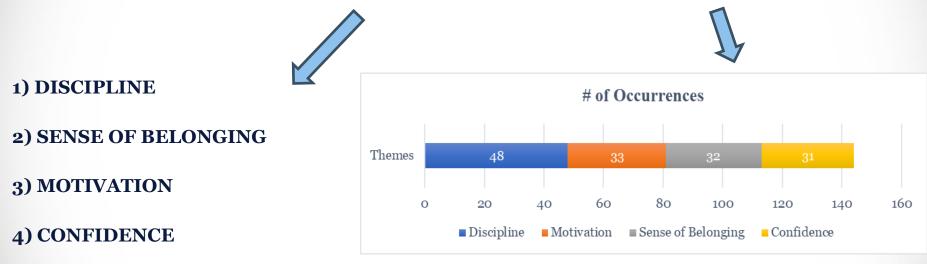


Figure 1

Number of Occurrences in Key Findings

Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Sub-Themes	Related Research Question
1) Discipline		CRQ
	"Discipline is what sets JROTC apart" – Asst. Principal	CRQ
	"Not all High School Students can handle discipline" – JROTC	Instr. CRQ
	"Discipline brings about personal responsibility"- Guidance Co	ounselor CRQ
	Discipline of ings about personal responsibility - Guidance Co	Junselon CRQ
2) Sense of Belongi	ng	CRQ, SQ1
3) Motivation		CRQ, SQ2
4) Confidence (Self-Efficacy)		CRQ, SQ3
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Theme 1 Interpretation - Discipline

Discipline is the cornerstone of JROTC

Discipline was the most significant theme that emerged from these research findings.

Discipline, and other similar descriptive words, were used to describe a characteristic of the JROTC cadets to define what the JROTC program has that attracts high school students to become a part of it.

The focus on discipline is what Benton said, "Discipline is what sets the JROTC program apart from other (high school) programs," and Tom remarked, "Discipline in JROTC provides a good learning environment."

Theme 2 Interpretation - Sense of Belonging

A Connection With JROTC.

Most students who are placed in JROTC find a "connection" or "sense of belonging."

Jerry, Race, Barney, and most other research participants mentioned that when high school students become JROTC cadets, they find they are around like-minded peers with similar interests.

This like-mindedness connects or entices them to remain in JROTC and do the activities JROTC offers since they are doing these activities with other like-minded people or "friends."

This sense of belonging further reinforces Maslow's (1943) motivational hierarchy theory where people are social in nature and crave social interactions.

Theme 3 Interpretation - Motivation

Once motivated, never shy.

Once JROTC cadets feel comfortable in their environment, this is the motivation they need to focus on learning the tasks at hand, like drill and ceremonies.

These tasks can be academic, physical, or both. Race mentioned that "doing these (JROTC) things in the company of their peers, leads to greater self-esteem and confidence." Two JROTC instructors remarked this is the point when shyness is dropped, and cadets start becoming more outgoing.

JROTC cadets liked to compete against their peers. This is also motivation for them to do well.

This motivation further reinforces Maslow's (1943) motivational hierarchy theory where once the lower needs are satisfied, the person has the motivation to participate more and moves on to higher hierarchical needs.



Theme 4 Interpretation - Confidence

Confidence speaks for itself.

The mastering of small tasks, gaining confidence, and moving on to bigger tasks is concisely Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy.

A key part of understanding Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory is the transference_to other tasks and events.

Another key part that enables transference from one task to the next is discipline (Cheema & Kitsantas, 2014).

In a structured learning (disciplined) environment, JROTC cadets can learn the tasks before them without interference, gain self-esteem and confidence from that, and apply that confidence to other tasks and situations.

Practical Significance

• School Administrators, School Guidance Counselors, and JROTC Instructors are valid observers of the JROTC phenomena.

• School Administrators, School Guidance Counselors, and JROTC Instructors should be key parts in any assessment rubrics for JROTC by the parent military branch or school district.



Empirical Significance

- Discipline is mentioned throughout previous JROTC studies...

BUT...

- No previous study explained connection with discipline and the motivational and/or self-efficacy theories
- This study makes the connection and explains "how" JROTC provides a "structured" learning environment.



Barry, K. (2023). AFJROTC Cadets at local TV station learning about meteorology. [jpeg] Private photo collection of author

- -- "Discipline is key for JROTC." Assist. Principal
- Discipline is what enables a proper learning environment in JROTC which then brings about the confidence and self-esteem found in JROTC cadets.
- This study furthers the work of Maslow's (1943) motivational and Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theories.



Implications for Policy and Practice

- Each JROTC parent military headquarters should ensure their assessment or evaluation criteria closely match the language and intent of the Congressional and DoD mission statements.
- The informal practice of interviewing the school administrators and guidance counselors should become formalized.
- Classic inspection items should also be utilized during evaluations (equipment inventory, drill performances, etc.)
- School district leaders and/or community stakeholders can also use same inspection rubrics to locally gauge their JROTC program(s).

Limitations and Delimitations

- Study conducted in Fall 2023.
- School personnel were busy!!

-- Most high school fall activities are in full swing (homecoming, sports activities, testing, etc).

- -- A challenge in coordinating differing schedules for interviews & focus groups.
- School administrators were the most difficult population sample for recruiting.
 - -- They are the "face" of the school in the hallways and often are present at some/all the activities going on.
- Participant requirements were set by the researcher.
- Participants limited to the JROTC instructors, the school administrators, and the school guidance counselors.
- A special effort (which was successful) was made to recruit JROTC instructors from all the traditional military branches (Army, Marines, Navy, and Air Force).
- Selected school types were urban, suburban, and rural which can be found across the country.

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Recommendations for Future Research

- Continue with this study's explanatory case study methodology.
- Be cognizant of the selected high school's events calendar.
- Get a high school principal as an actual research participant.
- Expand geographically if possible.
 - -- Select rural samples from the Midwestern regions (i.e., OK, KS, MO, AR).
 - -- Select urban samples from a major metropolitan city (i.e., Dallas, TX).
 - -- Select suburban samples from any known suburban area (i.e., Los Angeles, CA suburbs, Atlanta, GA suburbs, etc.).

- If unable to expand geographically, then replicate this study in another state using the same methodology - rural, suburban, urban samples & all four classic military branches.



Conclusion

School Administrators, Guidance Counselors, and JROTC Instructors say the main benefit of JROTC is <u>DISCIPLINE</u>.

HOW?

JROTC provides a **SENSE OF BELONGING** which eases stress in cadets.

Once at ease, JROTC MOTIVATES cadets to do better and excel in their learning.

When JROTC cadets do better, they increase their **SELF-ESTEEM**.

As JROTC cadets complete tasks (in/outside of JROTC) their <u>CONFIDENCE (Self-efficacy behaviors)</u> increase.

Question and Answers



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