# MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES EXAMINING HOW A HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR RESERVE OFFICER TRAINING CORPS (JROTC) PROGRAM AFFECTS STUDENT DEVELOPMENT:

# A CASE STUDY

by

Kurt Barry

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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APPROVED BY:

Jerry Woodbridge, PhD, Committee Chair

Shanna Baker, EdD, Committee Member

## Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my wife Ruth for her enduring patience, love, and support. I could not have done this without you. I also dedicate this to my deceased grandmother, Laura (Lala). I would not be the person I am today without her initial guidance and inspiration to always be better, climb higher, and keep pushing forward. She helped raise me to always be patient, kind, courageous, caring, and to always seek the truth. Lastly, I dedicate this to the Lord our God for granting me his mercy, strength and the will to persevere throughout this process despite all the challenges hurled at me.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to examine how a high school's Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program affects student development of their 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. The theories guiding this study are Abraham Maslow's theory of motivation and Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, which relate to secondary student development for cadets in the JROTC program. The central research question focused on the benefits of a school's JROTC program to the cadets enrolled. The research setting engaged 12 participants from three school districts throughout Georgia. Three of the four traditional military service branches (Air Force, Army, and Navy) were represented in these school district's JROTC programs. A qualitative explanatory case study was selected since it would give more flexibility and greater depth of research than a pure phenomenological study. The data collected includes online surveys, open-ended and structured interviews, and focus groups. The data analysis used coding and theme delineation. Commonalities among the responses provided codes and four emergent themes emerged, including the development of discipline, a sense of belonging, motivation, and confidence. This study highlighted the positive outcomes of the JROTC program, which provided the development of discipline, supported by a sense of belonging, motivation, and increased confidence through self-esteem and self-efficacy behaviors of those enrolled in the JROTC program.


*Keywords*: motivation, self-efficacy, accomplishment, belonging, student development, discipline, JROTC

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## Overview

One of the oldest programs specifically designed to help high school students succeed in school and life is the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program. JROTC was originally founded in 1916 with the passage of Public Law 64-85, the 1916 National Defense Act (64th U.S. Congress, 1916). Much later, JROTC's mission was formally established "to instill in students in United States secondary educational institutions the value of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment" (84th U.S. Congress, 1956, p. 1011). However, when evaluating JROTC programs, the criteria by which the programs are evaluated is solely based on the rules and directives set forth by each of the military branches for their JROTC programs (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2008; Naval Service Training Command, 2018). These criteria often evaluate program success or failure primarily on enrollment numbers rather than the more difficult metrics of citizenship and personal responsibility (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2008; Naval Service Training Command, 2018). Additionally, if the JROTC cadets at the inspected unit look exceptionally sharp in their uniforms and conduct themselves professionally, the assumption is that those demonstrated behaviors are positive indicators of the qualities of citizenship and personal responsibility (Taylor, 1999). JROTC appointed inspectors conduct interviews with school administrators, and sometimes school guidance counselors, as a roundabout way for inferring the JROTC unit's performance (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; Crawford et al., 2004). Yet, official guidance for this practice remains almost non-existent (Department of Defense, 2006; HQ AFJROTC, 2023; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2008; Naval Service Training Command, 2018). Furthermore, a review of the relevant literature about JROTC revealed a scarcity of peer-

reviewed studies. Most literature about JROTC demonstrates how well the program contributes to the school's graduation rate and lowers truancy rates. (Ameen, 2009; Malone, 2022; Minkin, 2014; Stanton, 2019; Taylor, 1999).

Many of the available peer reviewed JROTC studies have been harshly critical of the program (Castro, 2015; Harding & Kershner, 2018; Johnson, 2018; Kershner, 2017; McGauley, 2015; Perez, 2015a). The few peer reviewed studies that discussed JROTC favorably were narrowly focused in their outlook and limited and biased in their research (Barrow, 2019; Goldman et al., 2017; Taylor, 1999; Western & Chin, 2017). Despite this criticism, JROTC programs continue to expand in high schools across the country (Johnson, 2018; Kotakis, 2016; Price, 2014). No recent peer-reviewed study can explain this incrongruence, nor does any current research present an honest and fair assessment of how a high school's JROTC unit is meeting the stated program goals.

A better understanding is needed for examining JROTC and how it relates to the overall stated goals of the program. A qualitative study, specifically an explanatory case study, is best suited for this task as purely analyzing published quantitative data will not present a complete picture (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018; Zainal, 2007). Three key perspectives from different areas in a public high school were examined to determine how the high school's JROTC program is affected student development. These three perspectives were informally used to measure how the evaluated school's JROTC program performed. Results of this case study could assist key school district decision makers in assessing if their JROTC programs are meeting their stated purpose.

The first chapter serves as an introduction to this case study. The purpose of this study was to describe or understand the experiences and perspectives of the school administrators,

school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors regarding how their school's JROTC programs affects the development of personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment in high school youth. Because this study was not strictly confined to studying the phenomena of one group (i.e., school administrators) and instead examined the perspectives of three groups within the high school (school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors), the case study format was appropriate. This chapter includes background material about JROTC that summarizes the topic and the issues, as well as presenting a gap in the literature. This chapter will also include general theories used in the research. The problem and purpose statements are identified, the study's significance is specified, the research questions are numerated, and key definitions pertinent to the study are included.

## Background

Many studies about JROTC exist; however, most of them are not peer-reviewed. Proper peer-reviewed studies about JROTC are scarce, which is a major problem affecting any JROTC research. The most recent peer-reviewed studies about JROTC fall into two distinct camps of bias - those that view JROTC favorably and those that do not. Barrow's (2019) study was generally receptive to each of the major JROTC branches, incorporating Science, Technology, Education, and Mathematics (STEM) as part of their Career and Technical Education (CTE) academic curriculum. Conversely, Johnson (2018) research focused on JROTC's regimented drill and ceremony as evidence of the militarization of public-school education. Geronimus and Caldwell's (2019) ethnography study had a favorable focus on the high school activities of African American female teenagers involved in JROTC in an urban city. Surprisingly, Pema and Mehay's (2009) research was referred to by both JROTC advocates and those who were not, but their research conclusions about the program were mixed, with improvement in some areas and

no significance in others. Yet, more school districts continue to clamor for JROTC programs within their schools (Baker, 2023; Wall, 2023; Woods, 2015). The Air Force, Army, and Navy JROTC websites have step-by-step instructions on the formal processes school districts must complete before a JROTC program can be established (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC, 2022). In order to understand the research dichotomy, one must explore the historical, social, and theoretical backgrounds.

**Historical Context**

JROTC and ROTC were established in 1916 with the National Defense Act and had two goals: to fill the ranks of officers and soldiers quickly in times of war, and to provide a well-educated citizenry for the military during peacetime (64th U.S. Congress, 1916; Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). ROTC fell strictly into the higher education niche to provide for quality military officers outside of what the military academies produced, whereas JROTC was established in secondary schools, starting with Leavenworth High School in Leavenworth, Kansas (Army JROTC, 2020; Coumbe, 2000). Prior to its entry in World War I, the U.S. government desired a method for the quick mobilization of troops. The Army was initially the only service branch allowed to oversee the JROTC program, which was limited to 100 high schools throughout the country at the time. JROTC was initially focused on promoting the values of citizenship, instilling patriotism, and service to the country into its cadets (64th U.S. Congress, 1916; Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Corbett, 2001). The reasoning was that if the citizenry was taught the history and greatness of America, they would be more inclined to defend it (Coumbe, 2000; Taylor, 1999).

In the 1950s, as the Department of Defense (DoD) reorganized its military roles and missions based on World War II experiences. JROTC programs saw only a modest increase in

their numbers throughout the country, yet they remained under the purview of the Army (84th U.S. Congress, 1956; Coumbe, 2000). However, Congress changed the administration of the JROTC program from active duty officers to retired officials, and formalized the process school districts would take with JROTC personnel payment and school district support requirements (84th U.S. Congress, 1956). College ROTC remained under active duty supervision, as it was a direct commissioning source for officers, and continued supplementing the military academies (84th U.S. Congress, 1956; Coumbe, 2000). Also, during the 1950s, JROTC began to shift its curriculum focus from citizenship and patriotism training to also include student development and achievement (84th U.S. Congress, 1956; Coumbe, 2000). The JROTC curriculum shift occurred concurrently with the rise of Abraham Maslow's (1943, 1958) and other humanistic psychologists' prevalent theories of the 1950s.

### *Changes in JROTC*

JROTC signficantly changed in the 1960s with the passage of the ROTC Vitalization Act of 1964, which expanded JROTC to include all the traditional four services, but limited each military branch to two hundred initial programs each (88th U.S. Congress, 1964; Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2018; Coumbe et al., 2010; Navy JROTC, 2022). Additionally, with the turbulent social unrest in the 1960s, military service leaders decided that expanding JROTC programs into disadvantaged schools throughout the country was an effective form of community outreach. The JROTC expansion helped further instill values of citizenship, patriotism, and service to the nation, including those in disaffected communities (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). During the 1960s, with JROTC expanding across the four traditional military services, the incoporation of Maslow's motivational theories began appearing throughout military publications, in JROTC mission statements, and taking firm root in military instructional

methodology (Maslow, 1958; Segal & Segal, 1983). For example, Army JROTC now has as their long-standing mission statement, “To motivate young people to be better citizens” (Army JROTC, 2018, p.1).

In the 1990s and early 2000s, JROTC continued to expand. However, the reasons for this expansion have been easily overlooked in most research. Following the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, JROTC programs expanded up to 3,000 units through Congressional and Presidential authorization (102nd U.S. Congress, 1993; Coumbe, 2000). This JROTC expansion had the support of several prominent figures, including President George H.W. Bush, Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, furthering the idea of more community outreach to disadvantaged areas (102nd U.S. Congress, 1993; Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Coumbe, 2000; Coumbe et al., 2010).

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002, further funding materialized to each school district with programs in Title 1 schools (107th U.S. Congress, 2002). While NCLB (and its successor, the Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA] of 2015) established the baseline funds allocated to Title 1 schools based on their enrollment, Title 1 schools also recieved additional funds for the number of students enrolled as cadets in their JROTC program (114th U.S. Congress, 2015). Pema and Mehay (2009) proposed that this phenomena was why most disadvantaged or struggling schools and school districts have disproportionately more JROTC programs than their counterparts.

One of the reasons disadvantaged school districts view JROTC programs favorably is the low cost associated with the program and the additional funding the school district recieves for JROTC cadet enrollment (88th Congress, 1964; Taylor, 1999). Per the ROTC Vitalization Act of 1964, all JROTC units from all services must have a unit compliment of an officer and an

enlisted member (88th Congress, 1964). For JROTC, the military instructors must be in retired status. Though retired, the officer is still the de facto service representative and chief liaison between the service and the school (88th Congress, 1964). Also established through that Congressional act, each of the military services contributes to half the monthly salary of the JROTC instructors, and the school district picks up the other half (88th Congress, 1964). The 1964 ROTC Vitalization Act stipulated that the JROTC instructors be brought up to their pay level from the last year of their active duty by combining the pay from the school district and their respective military service branch (88th Congress, 1964). Because of the combination of the military branch paying half and the school district paying the other half of the instructor's salary, the school district essentially recieves two JROTC instructors for the price of one (88th Congress, 1964; Baker, 2023). The ensuing DoD directives for implementing the 1964 ROTC Vitalization Act instructed school districts to maintain enrollment of at least 10% of the school population in their JROTC program in order to receive federal funding (Department of Defense, 2006). These requirements, combined with the fact that school districts now receive additional funding for JROTC cadet enrollment through NCLB (2002) and the successor program, ESSA (2015), partially explain why JROTC continues to expand. However, the monetization of JROTC expansion does not take into account how the JROTC program continues with its successes of "instilling personal responsibility" into high-school aged youth (Navy JROTC, 2022, p. 1; Malone; 2022; Marine Corps JROTC 2020, p. 1). While historical trends address some of the reasons for JROTC's expansion, they inadequately explain whether or not JROTC programs perform their charter mission of developing high school youth across the country.

**Social Context**

To understand JROTC from a social context, one must look at the social events that

occurred in the country each time government and military leaders proposed JROTC expansion. Beginning in the 1960s with the unrest during the Civil Rights and Anti-War movements, government and military leaders purposefully expanded JROTC programs as a way of community outreach to inculcate citizenship and patriotism values to those participating (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). However, not all government leaders approved of this approach. In the early 1960s, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara initially proposed closing down the JROTC program, but faced significant public backlash (Coumbe et al., 2010). The initial expansion of 200 units for each of the four military branches, accounting for 800 units apiece throughout the country, was deemed sufficient until the 1992 Los Angeles riots following the acquittal of the four officers involved in the beating of motorist Rodney King (Coumbe et al., 2010).

Following the turmoil in Los Angeles after the acquittal verdict, President George H. W. Bush appointed a task force to study the root causes of the urban unrest, which was determined to be disaffected youth (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, was a member of that task force and strongly recommended JROTC for disaffected urban youth needing some kind engagement or involvement, and citing his own positive youth experiences with the program while growing up in New York City (Corbett & Coumbe 2001; Coumbe, 2000; Powell, 1995). President George H. W. Bush then concluded that JROTC was a great program which boosted high school completion rates, reduced drug use, and raised self-esteem (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). Before he left office in 1993, President George H. W. Bush signed the National Defense Act of 1993, which authorized the expansion of JROTC programs up to 3,000 units (102nd U.S. Congress, 1993). Successive Congressional sessions have increased that authorization to where JROTC programs now number over 3,500 across the country (Collin, 2008; Taylor, 1999).

In addition to General Powell, another notable JROTC alum is Dr. Ben Carson, a leading neurosurgeon and former presidential candidate as well as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development from 2017-2021. Dr. Carson rose to the highest cadet rank of cadet colonel in his high school in Detroit, Michigan (Carson & Murphey, 2011). Powell and Carson were both from underpriviledged areas in large urban centers and credited the structure and discipline JROTC provided as well as the opportunities it afforded them to their success. Additionally, Dr. Carson stated that with JROTC he felt like he belonged and connected with the other cadets in the program (Carson & Murphey, 2011).

The social aspect of JROTC, the sense of belonging Dr. Carson (2011) referenced, is one of the reasons JROTC programs succeed after their inception. Many students find they do not fit in most high school programs or activities, but discover they fit in with JROTC (Ameen, 2009; Perusse, 1997). However, while the social aspect explains what attracts students to JROTC throughout high school, it does not fully explain how this sense of belonging works. Qualitative research is needed to explain the camaraderie that forms in JROTC.

**Theoretical Context**

Maslow's (1943, 1958) theories of motivation and a qualitive study on JROTC programs shaping student development seem like a natural fit. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of motivational needs, with the middle section of needs being a sense of belonging and accomplishment, tie directly in with some of the JROTC mission statements. For example, Navy JROTC has in their mission statement, "to instill in students in United States secondary educational institutions the values of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment" (U.S. Navy, 2018, p. 11). In fact, a majority of JROTC research, whether peer reviewed or not, lists Maslow's theory as the primary theoretical base (Blake, 2016; Funk, 2002;

Schmidt, 2001).

Yet Maslow's (1943) motivational theory does not adequately explain how JROTC programs built the sense of accomplishment touted by many participants. Beginning in the 1970s, Stanford University professor Albert Bandura began researching social cognition, or how people learn from others (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1997) came upon a subset of this social cognition theory and defined it as "self-efficacy," which is "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). In other words, as a person performs a task and performs that task so repetively that the task is mastered, a sense of confidence and self-esteem is generated (Bandura, 1997). This is the essence of the military drill and ceremonies portion of the JROTC program. When JROTC cadets are given a short drill sequence or tasked to move a formation from Point A to Point B, they do this task repetively until they know it reflexively and are confident and capable of performing it perfectly. Self-efficacy is also a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation (Bandura, 1997, 2012). Some recent non-peer-reviewed studies have incorporated Bandura's ideas as part of their theoretical context (Minkin, 2014; Prestwich, 2004). Unsurprisingly, the research literature that unfavorably views JROTC makes no mention of Maslow's (1943) and Bandura's (1997) work.

## Problem Statement

The problem is there is no national standard or consistent assessment for high school JROTC programs related to its stated mission of instilling personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment. Solving the problem requires addressing three research challenges concerning JROTC. First, scarcely any current peer-reviewed literature exists which evaluates how JROTC programs measure up to their stated mission of instilling in secondary education students'

personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment. In fact, one of the more recent peer reviewed JROTC studies is Kershner's (2017) study on how JROTC is militarizing secondary education students in Baltimore, Maryland. Second, peer reviewed studies which truly measure some form of JROTC unit performance are few. Most recent available literature concerning JROTC programs are simple case studies or ethnographic studies (Castro, 2015; Harding & Kershner, 2018; Johnson, 2018; Kershner, 2017; McGauley, 2015; Perez, 2015a). Unfortunately, those studies do not accurately portray all the facts about JROTC, and consequently misrepresent the program. Those same recent studies followed the lives of some minority students enrolled in their high school's JROTC program in a large urban environment, and the students' dissatisfaction with the program was described as fact (Castro, 2015; Harding & Kershner, 2018; McGauley, 2015; Perez, 2015). Finally, these recent case and ethnographic studies neither address any performance metrics nor evaluate program effects (Castro, 2015; Harding & Kershner, 2018; Johnson, 2018; Kershner, 2017; McGauley, 2015; Perez, 2015a). Ignoring performance metrics to make a case study fall within the parameters of unjustified conclusions is not within accepted scientific research guidelines.

Unravelling these three main points of the problem requires solving two existing conundrums. The first is the sheer number of JROTC units spread across the country and the researchers' ability to collect meaningful sample data for any study. According to each of the military service JROTC unit totals posted on their websites, there are over 3,200 JROTC units spread throughout the country and worldwide in DoD schools (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Malone; 2022; Marine Corps JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC, 2022). To counter this vast amount of data, most JROTC research has either fixated on a single district or school, focusing on just the school administrators and/or JROTC instructors' perspectives, or utilized

pre-existing and easily accessible mass data (Barrow, 2019; Blake, 2016; Bulach, 2002; Funk, 2002; Goldman et al., 2017; Pema & Mehay, 2009). Most JROTC studies avoid interviewing JROTC cadets due to ethical considerations in dealing with minors. Consequently, in the aforementioned studies, the sample demographic centered on a single portion of the country (i.e., urban, suburban, rural) whose data results are not truly indicative of other parts of the country, or the mass data did not yield a significant result.

The other challenge is that most JROTC research falls into two distinct camps, viewing JROTC either favorably or unfavorably. The studies that viewed JROTC positively, fixated on a single school or district and focused their attention on the school administrators or JROTC instructors (Bulach, 2002; Funk, 2002). However, researchers have shown that school administrators (principals) are naturally biased towards their own schools' performance, often percieving their school's performance in a positive light (Fiarman, 2016; Orr et al., 2018). Other studies that viewed JROTC unfavorably misconstrued the facts about JROTC or did not have solid evidence supporting their argument (Lutz & Bartlett, 1995; McGauley, 2015; Perez, 2015; Perez 2015a). A genuine study about JROTC is needed that addresses the challenges of collecting a representative sample and finding a way to frankly assess how a school's JROTC program affects those in the program.

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this explanatory case study was to examine how a high school's JROTC program affects student development of their 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. This will provide clarity regarding how closely a high school's JROTC program measures up to the JROTC mission statement of

instilling citizenship in high school aged youth by teaching personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment. The central phenomenon being studied was the JROTC program from the perspective of those closest to the phenomena—school administrators, JROTC instructors, and school guidance counselors. The research setting were school districts throughout Georgia that addressed the main research challenge of a truly representative sample—urban, suburban, and rural. The core mission statements of JROTC, including developing high school youth, promoting citizenship, instilling patriotism, and promoting service to the country as defined in the founding documents established by Congress were examined through multiple perspectives of school officials closest to the phenomena (64th U.S. Congress, 1916). The central theories guiding this study were Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation as it relates to the hierarchy of needs with the sense of belonging and motivation, along with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy subset of social cognition theory as it relates to building better self-esteem and confidence. Maslow's sense of belonging and Bandura's self-efficacy theories are key for understanding how JROTC accomplishes its task in developing high school youth.

## Significance of the Study

JROTC continues to be an increasingly popular program in school districts for financial and student engagement purposes (Taylor, 1999). A waiting list exists for school districts that want to start their own JROTC program (Air Force JROTC, 2022). This study was the first of its kind to utilize firsthand knowledge about the subject, critically examining the multiple perspectives towards the program to present a clear and accurate view as to what really makes the program succeed.

### Theoretical Significance

The two theories guiding this study were Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation and Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory. In Maslow's theory, people need a "sense of belonging" or "accomplishment" as they develop themselves towards self-fulfillment. These are the middle needs in the motivational hierarchy which must be fulfilled before moving on to self-fulfillment and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943, 1958). As part of their mission objectives, each of the four traditional military branches specifically mentions "a sense of accomplishment" in their official JROTC mission statements when describing how they will instill citizenship, patriotism, and a sense of community in high school-aged youth (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Marine Corps JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC, 2022). Additionally, when determining how exactly they will accomplish those goals, Maslow's (1943) theory falls short in explanation.

However, when Bandura's (1997) theory of self efficacy and the technique of drill is considered, the gained sense of accomplishment becomes clear. As JROTC cadets are given a task through drill, they practice the movement over and over again until mastery is achieved. When mastery is achieved, the JROTC cadet gains self-confidence and a high degree of self-efficacy in taking what they have learned and completing the task evaluation. Thus, students enrolled in JROTC have a sense of accomplishment as they gain confidence in decisions and actions through small tasks, before moving on to larger tasks.

**Practical Significance**

This study will also specifically enlighten those decision-makers in school and district administration with observable data from key factors that can contribute an honest assessment of how the JROTC program affects student development. Since JROTC programs themselves number over 3,000 across the country, a truly in-depth JROTC study was not practical (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Marine Corps JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC, 2022).

However, a small in-depth study can function as a template for swift conduct and replication in any part of the country. The results from this study may be specific to the region in which the study was conducted, and if this study is replicated elsewhere, those results should also be reflective of that particular region or demographic. This type of targeted study was more feasible to conduct. The results of this study can provide significant data to decision makers when problems within schools with JROTC programs arise, as well as specific areas to address.

**Empirical Significance**

This study greatly contributed to the knowledge base by critically examining the key JROTC mission statement from the perspectives of those in the school closest to the phenomena: the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors. Does JROTC develop high-school-aged youth by instilling in them the values of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment? This study also filled a gap in the literature by honestly addressing if JROTC programs truly affect student achievement and development.

No other previous research on JROTC has attempted a study of this type, the fusion of the three unique perspectives (school administrator, guidance counselor, and JROTC instructor) to present a holistic view of how JROTC accomplishes its mission. Most of the previous peer-reviewed JROTC studies with a positive angle have only considered the perspective of the school administrator or JROTC instructor (Barrow; 2019; Bulach, 2002; Funk, 2002; Minkin, 2014; Pema & Mehay, 2009). Previous peer-reviewed research on JROTC with a negative slant has not considered any perspectives inside the school under any type of analysis or examination (Johnson, 2018; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995; Malone, 2022; McGauley, 2015; Perez, 2015). If such research has been conducted, the examination has been fleeting (McGauley, 2015; Perez, 2015).

## Research Questions

To understand the phenomena, the following research questions were developed, and asked to each stakeholder.

**Central Research Question (CRQ)**

What are the effects of a high school's JROTC program to the cadets enrolled?

**Sub-Question 1 (SQ1)**

How do the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program provides a sense of belonging to those cadets enrolled in the JROTC program?

**Sub-Question 2 (SQ2)**

How do the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program increases self-esteem in those cadets enrolled in the program?

**Sub-Question 3 (SQ3)**

How do the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program increases self-efficacy behaviors to those cadets enrolled in the program?

## Definitions

1. *Cadet* – A cadet is any student enrolled in their high school's JROTC program.
2. *Drill* – Drill consists of certain movements by which the group moves in an orderly manner from one formation to another or from one place to another. The task of each person is to learn these movements and execute each part exactly as described.

Individuals also must learn to adapt their own movements to those of the group (U.S. Air Force Manual 34-1203, 2022).

3. *Self-Efficacy* – Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation or task (Bandura, 1997).
4. *Sense of Belonging* – As defined by Maslow's (1943) hierarchical theory of motivation, this is the third or middle tier, characterized by acceptance or belonging needs to a group or social structure.
5. *Sense of Accomplishment* – As defined by Maslow's (1943) hierarchical theory of motivation, this is the fourth or top tier necessary to complete happiness and fulfillment.

## Summary

JROTC is one of the oldest programs in the country for the development of high-school-aged youth. The overall purpose of JROTC has evolved throughout the years, from strictly instilling citizenship and patriotism in cadets through drill and ceremonies, to inclusion of skills development and a stronger academic curriculum with the inclusion of STEM material (Barrow, 2019; Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). The JROTC program has expanded throughout the years, primarily as a way for engaging disadvantaged schools and communities (88th U.S. Congress, 1964; 102nd U.S. Congress, 1993; Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). Nationwide, JROTC initially had 100 programs with just Army oversight and grew to over 3,400 programs comprised of all military branches, including the Coast Guard and newly created Space Force (88th Congress, 1964 (rev 2021); Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Marine Corps JROTC, 2020; Naegele, 2021; Navy JROTC, 2022).

Most research about JROTC is non-peer-reviewed and thus beyond the boundaries of most scholarly consideration. However, some non-peer-reviewed research deserves mention as it

presents critical insight into research conducted to circumvent the ongoing JROTC research conundrum (Minkin, 2014; Perusse, 1997). The challenge presented to most JROTC researchers is how to accurately represent the sheer number of units (over 3,400) (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Marine Corps JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC, 2022). Some studies have attempted to gather all the known quantitative data regarding JROTC, but those results are very narrowly focused or do not present the complete picture (Blake, 2016; Crawford et al., 2004; Goldman et al., 2017; Taylor, 1999). Other studies have either focused on one region or one perspective (Marks, 2004; Minkin, 2014). These limited perspectives present an incorrect picture regarding JROTC. This study attempted to fairly assess how a high school JROTC program affects student achievement from the perspectives of those in the school that can best assess the program's merits: the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors. No other study of this kind is currently in existence and will therefore be helpful in addressing the gap in the literature. This study will be done under the rubric of a case study, which will lend to further latitude for more in-depth and thorough investigation of the subject, characteristics a purely phenomenological study could not achieve. This case study, while narrow in scope, can serve as a template for school district leaders and decision makers to accurately assess their own JROTC program's impact, which presents a practical need for this study.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## Overview

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to explore how a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program affects academic and student development for high school students enrolled in the program, specifically from the professional educator perspectives of school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors. This chapter will present a review of the current literature on JROTC. The first section covers the theoretical frameworks for this study, Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation and Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy. Next are discussions of a brief history of the origins of JROTC, the role of JROTC in education today, and the requirements for hosting a JROTC program within the public high school setting and school district. What follows is a discussion on how self-efficacy and a sense of belonging remain integral to high school student achievement. The related literature section synthesized recurring themes found in the literature, including both positive and negative views towards JROTC, peer and non-peer-reviewed literature, and how JROTC affects student achievement. Tying this all together, a gap in the literature will be identified, presenting a viable need for the current study on JROTC.

## Theoretical Frameworks

Two well-established psychological theories reinforce the theoretical framework for this study. The first is Abraham Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation and the second is Albert Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory with a specific focus on self-efficacy. JROTC's official purpose stated by Congress is to "instill in students in the United States' secondary educational institutions the value of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment" (84th U.S. Congress, 1956, p. 1). The forthcoming discussion of the theoretical framework will demonstrate how keywords from JROTC's official mission statement,

instill and sense of accomplishment, are greatly related to Maslow's theory of human motivation and Bandura's theory of self-efficacy.

**Theory of Human Motivation**

Maslow originally founded his theory of human motivation in 1943 for an article published in the *Psychological Review* scientific journal. Maslow (1943) wanted to explain human behavior originating from a positive, holistic, and more humanistic approach instead of studies based only on the mentally ill or animal subjects. Those studies cited were the work of Maslow's psychological contemporaries Sigmund Freud (1923), and B. F. Skinner (1974) (Maslow, 1943). Maslow did not completely disagree with these other theorists but questioned whether all human behavior could be explained so simplistically. While not explicitly mentioning Freud, Maslow indicated that human behavior consisted of more than the pure satisfaction of simplistic physical drives (Maslow, 1943). Similarly, while not mentioning Skinner, Maslow contrasted his ideas to the over-simplified "rat-picture" for human beings and generalized conclusions (Maslow, 1958). Additionally, Maslow (1958) believed there are underlying conditions that motivate human behavior, and clear patterns for these motivations. Maslow (1958) emphasized the wholeness of the (human) organism, or that a holistic approach must be one of the foundations of the theory. Finally, he stated that his work fused several ideas, ranging from the works of the philosopher William James (1907) to the contemporary works of Freud (Maslow, 1943).

Based on his observations and research, Maslow believed that most human beings have innate drives or needs grouped in what he labeled as "hierarchies of prepotency" (Maslow, 1943, p. 27). These hierarchies are then arranged in a logical, sequential order, like a pyramid or ladder, based on the dominance of the needs level, which must be satisfied before moving on to

the next. See Figure 1-1. The needs begin with basic, dominant physiological and physical needs, including hunger and thirst (Maslow, 1943).

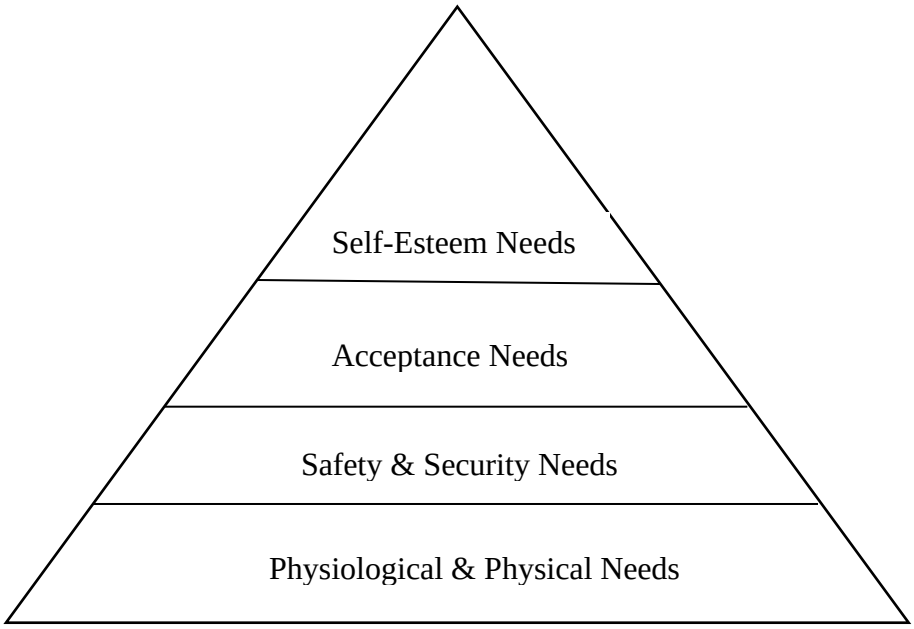
Once the physiological needs are gratified, safety and security needs. These include the necessity for protection and reassurance (Maslow, 1943). Maslow (1943) emphasized that this second level is most evident in children, who look for constant daily norms or routines, while any inconsistencies or perceived unfairness by the parents will make a child feel more anxious. Maslow also believed that the central role of adults in parenting and establishing norms was unquestionable. More importantly, after this level, motivational needs shift from dominant physiological-reflexive needs to subtle but strong higher emotional-intellectual needs (Maslow, 1943).

Once the basic physiological and security needs are satisfied, these are followed by the third level of affection and belonging needs. Maslow (1943) was keen to point out these emotional needs and differentiate them from sexual needs; sex could be studied as a purely physiological need. However, Maslow clearly articulated humans have needs not only for intimacy with others, but also for acceptance as members of a group. It is at this level of the hierarchy that Maslow explained that the social aspect of human behavior, the wanting for affection and belonging from other humans, is what differentiates humans from animals.

The fourth level of the pyramid contains self-esteem needs. Maslow (1943) classified self-esteem into two categories: achievement and adequacy, and respect or esteem from other people. Maslow expressed that satisfaction of self-esteem needs will lead to feelings of confidence, worth, strength, and adequacy. However, thwarting those needs produces feelings of inferiority, weakness, and helplessness (Maslow, 1943).

**Figure 1.**

*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*




The crux of Maslow's (1943, 1958) motivational theory is the overall levels of the needs hierarchy. The only way to achieve one's full potential is to first take care of the lower physiological and safety needs before satisfying the higher-order emotional, self-esteem, and self-actualizing needs (Maslow, 1943). As the lower needs are met, a person moves up to the next level. When the person reaches the top-level (self-actualization), they are finally capable of what their talents allow (Maslow, 1943). Maslow (1958) described this concept for self-actualization with the allegory of musicians making music, artists painting pictures, poets writing poetry, etc. While Maslow was honest and referred to fellow psychologist Kurt Goldstein (1939) for coining the self-actualization term, he specifically stated his strict use of the terminology in

describing the desire for self-fulfillment and maximizing a person's potential (Maslow, 1943). Lower-level needs do not have to be completely satisfied before moving to higher-order needs, but only need to be sufficiently attended to (Maslow, 1958). However, problems arise when needs along the hierarchy are not met.

**Theory of Self-Efficacy**

The theory of self-efficacy is a subset of social cognitive theory put forth by several psychologists, most notably Bandura of Stanford University, California (Bandura, 1986, 1993, 1997, 2012; Bandura et al., 1996). This theory proposes that learning occurs throughout social settings where people observe demonstrated behavior. The demonstrated behavior can be considered positive or negative (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Much of Bandura's research on social learning comes from young children imitating the actions modeled to them by adults or other authority figures (Bandura, 1993).

When Bandura (1986) began his work with social cognition theory, he began by studying the largest social setting where most people learn in educational settings—elementary and secondary schools. Beginning in the early 1990s, Bandura noticed that as students mastered their educational tasks, their self-esteem or confidence rose. He was the first to effectively label this phenomenon as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Bandura then went further and expanded self-efficacy to include having confidence in one's own ability to perform tasks, solve problems, and accomplish what one sets out to do. The key point Bandura (1997) made about self-efficacy is that it is mainly formed during the teenage years or the high school period. Bandura (1997) also contended that a student's high or low self-efficacy or self-confidence is directly correlated with academic performance and other school accomplishments. Thus, those students who think that they can achieve, are the students who do achieve. Those students were then found to be

healthier, more effective, and generally more successful than those unsure of themselves (Bandura, 1997). From his early research in the 1970s and continuing well into the 2000s, Bandura advocated for positive learning environments, where students can develop strong self-efficacy or self-confidence, and perform more productive achievements (Bandura, 1986, 1993, 1997, 2012; Bandura et al., 1996).

## Related Literature

This section will present and synthesize all the related literature and issues concerning JROTC. The literature will provide a brief overview of the history of JROTC and delve into why school districts are clamoring for JROTC programs. The literature review will then describe the conundrum facing most JROTC researchers, from the lack of peer-reviewed research to the dilemma of so many nationwide JROTC programs. The literature review will specifically address the disparity between the official JROTC evaluation criteria and the actual practices most official evaluators use. A gap in the literature will be identified and this study will present a feasible alternative for accurately assessing student development in JROTC.

### JROTC Description

The Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) is a federal program for youth in secondary schools (high schools) in the United States that accomplishes its objectives through academics, physical education (PE), drill and ceremonies, extracurricular activities, and community service (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020). This federal program has a prescribed uniform set of standards so that if students are enrolled in one part of the country and transfer to another part of the country, they will encounter the same standards, albeit some minor different local procedures. The same standards and structure are also in place if they transfer

from one high school offering one military branch of JROTC (i.e. Army) to another high school that offers another military branch of JROTC (i.e. Air Force).

### *Origins of JROTC*

JROTC was first established in high schools throughout the country in 1916 (64th U.S. Congress, 1916; Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). The very first JROTC program started at Leavenworth High School, Kansas (which continues as the longest operating JROTC program in existence). The program's original purpose was to promote citizenship, instilling patriotism and service to the country so that the country would have an educated citizenry. This educated citizenry could then be called upon to defend the country if needed (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). At that time, the United States was neutral but considering entering World War I. The Army was initially the only military branch directly tasked with managing the JROTC program, and the program was limited to 100 high schools throughout the country (64th U.S. Congress, 1916). JROTC was not intended as a direct military recruitment program (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). Despite two world wars and well into the 1950s, JROTC saw only modest increases in total program numbers throughout the country (Coumbe, 2000).

### *The First JROTC Expansion*

JROTC changed in the 1960s with the passage of the ROTC Vitalization Act of 1964 (88th U.S. Congress, 1964; Army JROTC, 2020; Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). JROTC was expanded to all four traditional services but limited to 200 initial programs each (88th U.S. Congress, 1964; Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Navy JROTC, 2022). In the tumultuous 1960s, with anti-war and civil rights demonstrations, Congressional and military service leaders decided to expand JROTC (88$^{th}$ Congress, 1964). By expanding JROTC, the U.S. military focused on disadvantaged schools throughout the country as

a way of community outreach for instilling citizenship, patriotism, and service to the nation and community, as well as lessening the amount of civil unrest in large urban areas (Collin, 2008).

### *The Second JROTC Expansion*

The most recent and profound expansion of JROTC occurred following the Los Angeles Riots of 1992 (102nd U.S. Congress, 1993; Collin, 2008; Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Pema & Mehay, 2009). During this expansion, JROTC had significant proponents pushing for expansion as an antidote to the civil unrest, including then-President George H. W. Bush, Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell (Collin, 2008; Corbett & Coumbe, 2001, Taylor, 1999). President Bush remarked that JROTC was a great program that boosted high school students towards completion, reduced drug use, and increased self-esteem (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001). General Powell also concurred that young men and women were taught self-discipline, citizenship, patriotism, and leadership, but that school administrators, parents, and community leaders also got a better people as a result (Corbett & Coumbe, 2001; Coumbe, 2000; Taylor, 1999).

Before leaving office, President Bush signed the 1993 National Defense Authorization Act (102nd U.S. Congress, 1993). This act authorized an increase of all JROTC units throughout the country from 1500 to 3500, offered financial incentives to school districts for opening JROTC programs, and furthered expansion to include the Coast Guard. JROTC's curriculum was modified to include more life-skills training (conflict resolution, communication, money management, career exploration) (Army JROTC, 2020). Furthermore, JROTC's curriculum expanded into science and technology (academics, model rocketry, robotics, and recently cyber-security & aviation) as a way of keeping up with recent technological developments and maintaining educational relevance (Baker, 2023; Barrow, 2019).

### *JROTC's Role in Education Today*

Today's JROTC program is typically administered by each state's department of education, as a high school elective (California Department of Education, 2021; Georgia Department of Education, 2021a; Wall, 2023). Each state establishes the standards for JROTC to all the public school districts under its purview, while leaving the most important decisions (hiring, termination, etc) to the school district (California Department of Education, 2021; Georgia Department of Education, 2021a). As JROTC is an elective, participation is strictly voluntary. JROTC is typically located in each state's Department of Education under Career Technical Education (CTE) or Career Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE), usually categorized under the government or public administration learning cluster (California Department of Education, 2021; Georgia Department of Education, 2021a; Wall, 2023). Most CTE or CTAE learning clusters require a few years of participation to receive the academic credit required for high school graduation. However, JROTC is unique in that it is not only counted for an academic pathway under CTE or CTAE learning clusters, but those who participate in it also receive their physical education (PE) credits in nearly all states (Baker, 2023; California Department of Education, 2021; Georgia Department of Education, 2021a; Wall, 2023). The sudden industry demand for more adept science and technology skills leaves JROTC as one of the few secondary education curriculums that can adequately prepare students for employment in high school and beyond, as JROTC now embraces more Science Technology Education & Mathematics (STEM) academics into its overall curriculum (Baker, 2023). Additionally, while JROTC has expanded its curriculum to include more life skills with science and technology training, at its core, JROTC fundamentally teaches citizenship and service

through academics and service to the community (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Coumbe et al., 2010; Marine Corps JROTC, 2022; Navy JROTC, 2022).

### *Why School Districts Want JROTC*

School districts want the JROTC program for many reasons (Bulach, 2002; Marks, 2004; Wall, 2023). First, JROTC imparts the values of personal discipline, a sense of pride, and a sense of accomplishment in something bigger than oneself. Those individuals associated with JROTC cadets often notice that the program seems to transform JROTC cadets into more productive and engaged students (Bulach, 2002; Collin, 2008; Marks, 2004; Schmidt, 2001). According to Bulach (2002), JROTC teaches values and develops character, which is an integral part of the program. While teaching self-discipline and imparting self-esteem, JROTC simultaneously serves as a supplemental school discipline program (Wall, 2023). Lutz and Bartlett (1995) asserted that JROTC changes the behavior of unruly teenagers so they can be more productive. JROTC programs do this by placing a premium on cadet discipline and conformity to larger tasks at hand, and as such, fewer disciplinary problems typically come from JROTC cadets (Marks, 2004). Cadets behave not only in their JROTC classes, but in their other classes as well. This is the “Cadet here, Cadet Everywhere” concept, where behaviors learned in one class apply to other classes also (HQ AFJROTC, 2023). In a roundabout way, school administrators view cadets enrolled in the JROTC program as one less disciplinary episode they have to worry about (Minkin, 2014; Horval, 2020; Quezada, 2020).

JROTC teaches their values and develops character by what is called the “military training model (MTM)” (Crawford et al., 2004; Marks, 2004; Wall, 2023). The MTM relies heavily on the learning and accomplishment of small tasks through repetitive practice, and when those tasks are mastered, subsequent larger and more complex tasks follow. Additionally, higher

ranking JROTC cadets may correctly model behaviors junior cadets that they are expected to perform. This character development is typically accomplished in marching drill performance but trickles to other tasks as well. When junior cadets correctly perform modeled drill movements and routines, they are rewarded with recognition and awards. As junior cadets gain more self-confidence in leading others, they are then rewarded with rank promotions and more responsibilities within JROTC (Marks, 2004; Pema & Mehay, 2009; Price, 2014) These actions are consistent with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory.

Self-efficacy and motivational theory work in tandem to affect the behavior of JROTC cadets. When JROTC cadets are taught drill movements and are then expected to replicate those learned drill movements, the self-efficacy theory is demonstrated. Self-efficacy is really reinforced when the confidence gained in one task area is transferred or applied in another area (Bandura, 2012; Siebert et al., 2022) As cadet self-confidence increases, cadets are then recognized and earn promotional rewards. With more recognition, cadets become invested in the JROTC program, particularly finding a sense of belonging in the JROTC organization which supports motivational theory.

Another reason school districts want JROTC programs in their schools is the cost-effectiveness of the program (Wall, 2023). First written into public law in the 1964 ROTC Revitalization Act and also in the subsequent addendum 1993 JROTC Expansion Act, public schools only pay a small fraction of the program's cost service (88th U.S. Congress, 1964; 102nd U.S. Congress, 1993). As stipulated by law, each JROTC unit is to be minimally staffed by one commissioned officer and one non-commissioned officer. All JROTC instructors must be retired from active service (88th U.S. Congress, 1964; 102nd U.S. Congress, 1993). The participating school is mandated to maintain a minimum enrollment in the JROTC program that is either

equivalent to 10% of the school population or 100 cadets total (Department of Defense, 2006). If the cadet enrollment in the JROTC program exceeds 10% of the school population (generally over 150 cadets), the school can request an additional JROTC instructor from the respective military branch responsible for that school's program (88th U.S. Congress, 1964; 102nd U.S. Congress, 1993; Air Force JROTC, 2022). The school district is financially obligated to pay "minimum instructor pay" (MIP), which is half of the JROTC instructor's monthly salary. The respective military branch the JROTC instructor is affiliated with pays the other half of the monthly salary (Department of Defense, 2006). Thus, for the normal cost of two JROTC instructors, the school district only pays the total amount of one instructor's pay (88th U.S. Congress, 1964; 102nd U.S. Congress, 1993; Department of Defense, 2006; Wall, 2023).

Regarding costs, the school district must provide classroom space, a dedicated drill area, and a climate-controlled storage closet for uniforms. The respective military branch provides the uniforms, textbooks, and any other unique instructional materials (102nd U.S. Congress, 1993; Department of Defense, 2006). However, schools also receive additional federal funds for students enrolled in the JROTC program (102nd U.S. Congress, 1993). In a cost-benefit analysis, the school districts come out ahead as the year-in, year-out expenses are costlier over a several-year period for full uniforms and accouterments instead of the one-time costs for constructing a dedicated JROTC area or allocation of classrooms for JROTC use (Bogden, 1984; Wall, 2023). Unfortunately, not all school districts use the additional funds received for the JROTC programs towards JROTC, but reallocate the funds elsewhere as they see fit (Wall, 2023).

Another reason school districts want JROTC programs included in their schools is for the variety of additional curriculum the program offers (Baker, 2023; Barrow, 2019). When JROTC expanded in 1993, the program not only physically expanded from 1500 units to the

authorization for 3500 units nationwide, but it also broadened its curriculum material to include life skills programs, money management, career planning, model rocketry, robotics, aviation, and now cyber-security (Barrow, 2019). This curriculum expansion benefits students as it gives them more opportunities to learn something novel and delve into it further, as well as apply concepts taught in other classes (Baker, 2023; Barrow, 2019; Bogden, 1984). For instance, a student learning robotics in Army JROTC or flight navigation in Air Force JROTC could apply coordinate systems taught in their high school algebra class and see the practical application of that knowledge in their JROTC class (Baker, 2023; Wall, 2023). This would not only boost a student's confidence in learning a new skill in one class (i.e. coordinate algebra), but it also enables the student to see its practical application in their JROTC class (Barrow, 2019). This curriculum expansion has the effect of allowing the JROTC instructors to take a buffet approach to tailoring their local curriculum from the wide assortment of curriculum materials from which to choose. The JROTC instructors simply choose which additional materials they want to bolster their curriculum. For example, in addition to the required leadership courses, the JROTC instructor could pick robotics and money management courses for their curriculum to serve the needs and interests of their local population, while also keeping their cadets engaged (Baker, 2023; Wall, 2023).

### *JROTC and the Theory of Motivation*

Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation and U.S. military training seemed headed for an eventual union. Maslow's theory began in the 1940s and reached maturity by the 1950s (Maslow, 1958). The U.S. Army first incorporated Maslow's motivational theory into its leadership training manuals starting in the late 1950s (Horval, 2020). Maslow's motivational theory is now well entrenched into Army doctrine and training curriculum and also appears in

professional military journals (Horval, 2020). Simultaneously in the 1950s, the U.S. Congress formalized the guidelines for both college ROTC and high school JROTC through Title 10 of the U.S. Code (84th U.S. Congress, 1956). Specifically, Congress formalized JROTC's purpose to teach students in secondary educational institutions about the value of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment (84th U.S. Congress, 1956). When examining the official purpose of JROTC, the keywords citizenship and service are emphasized (84th U.S. Congress, 1956). Citizenship asks more from a country's residents than just simply being inhabitants; citizenship implies full participation in the country's activities as well (Healy, 2020). Congress sought to strengthen a student's ties to the community, and thus the nation, through the JROTC program in secondary schools (Healy, 2020). One of the most accepted functions of elementary and secondary schools is fostering positive social interactions, with other students, the school, and the community at large (Healy, 2020). With positive social interactions, students are more likely to feel they belong to their schools and communities.

JROTC furthers positive social interactions and sense of belonging by its emphasis on discipline and proper respect for authority (Bulach, 2002; Marks, 2004). This sense of belonging is accomplished through the wearing of the military uniform one day a week (Bulach, 2002; Marks, 2004). The uniform bolsters the JROTC cadets sense of belonging as it closely resembles the uniforms of the parent military branch, making JROTC cadets feel that they too belong to the bigger organization as a whole. With the uniform wear, JROTC cadets feel that sense of belonging by taking part in something bigger than themselves (Marks, 2004; Army JROTC, 2020). Additionally, by wearing the uniform, rank and structure are clearly displayed as cadets of lower ranks must respect the authority of those with higher rank. Those in lower ranks can advance to higher ranks with the positive social structure set forth by each JROTC program,

which includes community service, drill, proper wear of the uniform, and overall JROTC cadet performance (Marks, 2004; Wall, 2003).

Community service strengthens the ties the JROTC cadet has to the unit and community as a whole. By strengthening the social ties one has to the local community, and thus the nation as a whole, the student could then be theoretically counted upon to defend that community (Healy, 2020). Thus, JROTC's official stated purpose aligns with Maslow's (1943) third middle tier of motivation theory, acceptance or a sense of belonging, where the need to be an accepted part of a group is fulfilled through the JROTC cadet's participation and performance in the various activities of that JROTC unit.

In the 1950s, as motivation theory gained traction with Army training doctrine, the Army also aligned JROTC's purpose with the tenets of Maslow's (1943) theory. Army leaders reinforced that JROTC's purpose was to motivate young people to be better citizens (Army JROTC, 2020). When Congress expanded JROTC in 1964 to include the other service branches, the other military branches did not specifically use the word "motivate" in their mission statements, but instead used the term "instill" (Navy JROTC, 2022, p. 1). For example, both Navy and Marine Corps JROTC mission statements reflect the exact verbiage of the Congressional law using the word instilling (Marine Corps JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC, 2022). Both of these services use the term to demonstrate how they will impart in students the value of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment (Marine Corps JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC, 2022). Similarly, the Air Force JROTC stated that its overall mission is to develop citizens of character to be of service to their nation (Air Force JROTC, 2022). When examining exactly how this development would occur, the Air Force JROTC website also clarified with the exact wording from the Congressional law, using the key

phrases of "instilling values of citizenship" and "performing service to the United States" (Air Force JROTC, 2022). The words motivate, develop, and instill are related. Examples abound in the military instructions and regulations for teaching JROTC cadets, and each of the military branches includes one or more of the following keywords: motivate, instill, and develop (U.S. Air Force, 2018; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2008; U.S. Navy, 2018). Thus, the official mission statement of each JROTC military branch aligns with any understanding of JROTC within Maslow's (1943) theory.

### *Theory of Motivation as Related to Student Development*

Since motivational theory appeared in 1943, it has been used in much educational research (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Goodenow, 1992; Pendergast et al., 2018; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Educational research has focused on the third tier, the sense of belonging level of motivational theory, as a key component for student achievement (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). Studies have shown that when high school students feel that they belong or are connected to the high school or a social group within the high school, students are more inclined to perform better (Cassel et al., 2000; Schnitzler et al., 2021). Darling-Hammond (2010), Goodenow (1992) and Schunk & DiBenedetto (2021) each stressed that understanding Maslow's motivational theory should be part of every elementary or secondary teachers instructional technique. They emphasized that teachers should strive to create a positive learning enviroment where students can learn and feel that they belong, which will lead to better student achievement overall (Cassel et al., 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021).

Similarly, each JROTC instructor, whether from the Army or another military branch, is directed to maintain a positive learning environment from their service directives, where JROTC cadets can make decisions, see the results of their implemented decisions, and be held

accountable for their actions (Army JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC; 2022.) In this positive learning enviroment, the cadets will feel a connection or sense of belonging to something larger than themselves and be more inclined to participate in further JROTC activities (Navy JROTC, 2022). This is the positive learning environment that Bulach (2002) and Schmitt (2001, 2003) cited as the key factor why their research reflected better student development for JROTC cadets than their peers. This positive learning environment within the JROTC program leads to better student development overall.

Measuring this sense of belonging in JROTC has been ellusive. Evaluating officials have stated that if the schools' JROTC program met or exceeded the personnel manning requirements as stipulated by law, that was a sign the program was healthy and the students wanted to be enrolled in that program (114th U.S. Congress, 2015; Bogden, 1984; Crawford et al., 2004; Taylor, 1999; Wall, 2023). However, none of the research could fully account for if school administrators and guidance counselors were just placing students into the JROTC program by taking into account the actual student esprit-de-corps or not (Bogden, 1984; Crawford et al., 2004).

### *JROTC and the Theory of Self-Efficacy*

Student development in JROTC directly relates to Bandura's self-efficacy theory through the concept of sense of accomplishment (Bandura, 1997). Air Force and Navy JROTC both have in their mission statements "to instill in students the value of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment" (Air Force JROTC, 2022, p. 9; Navy JROTC, 2022, p. 12). However, the way JROTC programs provide a sense of accomplishment is ultimately through their many curricular and extracurricular activities.

Adolescent participation in school programs and activities has been shown to improve student self-esteem and achievement (Burns et al., 2021; Cassel et al., 2000; Holland & Andre, 1987; Jordan, 1999; Siebert et al., 2022). Studies comparing small schools versus large schools revealed that both groups of students who participated in extracurricular activities had higher self-efficacy and demonstrated acheivement (Cassel et al., 2000; Holland & Andre, 1987). This experience is not solely confined to larger school districts (Cassel et al., 2000; Jordan, 1999). As students engage in extracurricular activities and programs, they have certain tasks to master. When they master those tasks, their self-confidence improves, which positively translates to other areas of adolescent development (Bandura, 2012; Narmada et al., 2021; Price, 2014 ).

All JROTC programs carry a variety of programs and activities for cadets to accomplish (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Marine Corps JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC, 2022). While each program's offered activities varies depending on the particular military branch's culture, all branches share one unique activity that JROTC cadets must learn and master. That unique activity is the performance of military drill and ceremonies. For example, Air Force JROTC has a 30-step drill sequence that must be mastered by all second-year cadets for their inspections (HQ AFJROTC, 2023). Army JROTC utilizes a standard 23-step drill routine in their regulations that must be accomplished by the Army JROTC cadets for their inspections (HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017). Navy and Marine Corps JROTC utilize the pass-and-review parade to be accomplished by their cadets for their inspections (U.S. Marine Corps, 2008; U.S. Navy, 2020). All services host drill competitions, where participating JROTC units must accomplish a prescribed drill routine according to the hosting JROTC unit's military branch. JROTC units that prove themselves in local competitions can progress to compete in the National JROTC Drill Competition in Daytona Beach, Florida each year (Goldman et al., 2017).

JROTC programs from all military branches have solid awards and recognition programs rewarding outstanding cadet performance and accomplishments in JROTC throughout the year (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Navy, 2018; (Navy JROTC, 2022)U.S. Marine Corps, 2008).

These awards are usually visible ribbons to be worn on the uniform that are presented for cadet accomplishments in JROTC, ranging from community service hours to outstanding drill performance. While awards recognition is a visible sign of the sense of accomplishment, this has not translated into the overall JROTC program evaluation criteria. Official JROTC evaluation criteria makes no mention of assessing how many cadets have a certain number of award ribbons (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; U.S. Marine Corps, 2008; Navy JROTC, 2022). Thus, JROTC's official stated purpose aligns with Bandura's (1997) self efficacy theory by providing various activities and recognition for those activities as visible signs for a sense of accomplishment.

### *Self-Efficacy's Importance Among High School Youth*

Many studies have demonstrated just how important confidence and self-efficacy are for high school students (Bandura et al., 1996; Marzano et al., 2011; Schnitzler et al., 2021; Youngs, 1993). Marzano et al. (2011) went one step further and emphasized the importance of student engagement in learning, which occurs when students are highly engaged and leads to greater self-efficacy or self-esteem. When students are disengaged from learning, this leads to boredom, improper behaviors, and low self-esteem (Marzano et al., 2011; Schnitzler et al., 2021).

The high school years are a precocious age, where most students are very self-conscious and unsure of themselves. Many educational researchers have argued for raising self-esteem and self-efficacy as one possible antidote for this uncertainty and to keep students engaged in learning (Marzano et al., 2011; Youngs, 1993). Developing this self-efficacy, Marzano et al.

(2011) argued for a highly structured and disciplined approach in the classroom that would allow student learning to flourish and more self-confidence to be developed. Price (2014) also argued for a very structured and disciplined classroom to calm social-emotional behaviors that disrupt classroom learning. The structured and disciplined approach is the norm for JROTC classrooms. Research has shown that JROTC students typically outpace their counterparts in self-efficacy and personal development because of highly-organized instructional techniques and discipline measures learned in JROTC (Schmidt, 2001, 2003).

## Recurring Themes

Throughout the literature review, several distinct themes became apparent. These themes cover the many facets of the problem of evaluating a JROTC program. The main overarching theme is the dilemma researchers faced posed by the existence of so many JROTC units. Following that dilemma,, the research is unclear which is a viable approach for studying JROTC, quantitative or qualitative. On one end of the spectrum are the positive benefits offered by JROTC in comparison to the drawbacks. The most glaring omission is the lack of peer-reviewed research about JROTC. Plenty of research exists about JROTC; however, much of the research is not peer-reviewed and most of the peer-reviewed literature contains a negative bias. Lastly, there is a disconnect between JROTC's stated purpose (teaching high school youth citizenship and character) versus how the JROTC program is actually held accountable for personnel enrollment. All of these themes will be discussed.

### *The JROTC Research Conundrum*

The most prominent problem for researching JROTC programs is the sheer number of JROTC programs in existence worldwide. According to data posted on the four traditional military service JROTC websites, as of 2022 there were 1,645 Army JROTC units, 260 Marine

Corps JROTC units, 619 Navy JROTC units, and 840 Air Force JROTC units, totaling 3,364 JROTC units currently exist (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Marine Corps JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC, 2022). These numbers fluctuate as units are opened or closed down. As mandated by law, each JROTC unit is to maintain 10% of the host school's population. JROTC units having over 150 cadets are authorized additional instructors (84th U.S. Congress, 1956; Air Force JROTC, 2022). Most JROTC programs typically have 120 to 140 cadets (Crawford et al., 2004; Goldman et al., 2017). With the number of JROTC programs currently in existence and the personnel numbers assigned to the program worldwide a quantitative approach becomes very challenging. In addition, the numbers of school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors required to obtain a meaningful representative sample makes the prospect of a quantitative study unlikely.

For this literature review and proposed study, only the four traditional service branches will be examined. These branches are the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy. During the 2021-2022 school year, the Air Force detached 10 of its Air Force JROTC units over to the newly formed military branch, the United States Space Force (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Naegele, 2021). The United States Coast Guard operates only two JROTC units but also expanded to four in the 2021-2022 school year (U.S. Coast Guard, 2021). Not enough data exists to include the Coast Guard and the Space Force in this study.

### *Quantitative Approaches*

Some studies have attempted to solve the problem of too numerous JROTC programs by utilizing known published data (Blake, 2016; Crawford et al., 2004; Taylor, 1999). Collecting data from already established material, these studies were able to produce a quantative study that reached statistical significance and established credibility. Another advantage to this approach

was readily accessible data. Pema and Mehay's (2009, 2012) research used data from High School and Beyond (HSB) and the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) of over 14,000 known high school sophomore students enrolled in JROTC. The advantage of using these quantitative studies is readily accessible large data files. By not focusing on a single region and utilizing all the known applicable data, Pema and Mehay (2009) bypassed the transferability issue and also addressed the issue of proper assessment of so many JROTC programs. While the design of Pema and Mehay's research (2009) attempted to counter the problem of large numbers of JROTC cadets enrolled worldwide with the published data, the results yielded were very modest and almost discouraging. Pema and Mehay (2009) noticed JROTC enrollment had a slight to marginal effect on academic performance. However, the researchers and the parent military organizations themselves stressed that JROTC is more than just academics, but a full spectrum career-oriented program filled with extra-curricular activities, with benefits that are not always quantifiable (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Marine Corps JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC, 2022; Pema & Mehay, 2009).

### *Qualitative Approaches*

Countering the research problem of so many programs, some researchers instead approached JROTC research with narrowly focused quantitative studies or small qualitative case studies. These were done to quickly gather enough data for statistical significance and to thereby sharpen the study's focus. These small case studies are peer-reviewed and frequently appear throughout the JROTC literature, like Bulach's (2002) study which occurred at a single high school in the southeastern U.S., and Schmidt's (2003) study which also occurred in the southeastern U.S. but in over 30 high schools. Both studied character traits of JROTC vs. non-JROTC students. In Bulach's (2002) and Schmidt's (2003) studies, the JROTC cadets

demonstrated superior character traits compared to their non-JROTC counterparts. The researchers in both studies also purposely interviewed only JROTC instructors or school administrators. Of the other qualitative studies critical of JROTC, none did any kind of character traits comparison to refute Bulach or Schmidt to offer contrarian evidence (Castro, 2015; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995; Perez, 2015a). However, both Bulach's and Schmidt's research studies were single regional cases that may or may not have Guba's (1981) transferability application if the same inquiry procedures were performed in different regions of the country with different demographics.

### *The Dearth of Peer-Reviewed JROTC Literature*

Perhaps a significant issue facing any JROTC researcher is the dearth of peer-reviewed sources. A simple internet search for peer-reviewed literature about JROTC will yield Pema and Mehay's (2009, 2012), Bulach's (2002), and Crawford et al.'s (2004) work. Some of the recent ethnographic case studies about JROTC also turn up (McGauley, 2015; Perez, 2015; Kershner, 2017). However, when the search is expanded to include non-peer-reviewed research, a plethora of JROTC studies appear (Ameen, 2009; Marks, 2004; Minkin, 2014; Perusse, 1997). When cross-referencing some of the peer-reviewed JROTC research, like Pema and Mehay's (2009) work, Crawford et al.'s (2004) work and Taylor's (1999) research appears. When cross-referencing some of the non-peer-reviewed literature, Ameen (2009), Marks (2004), Minkin (2014), and Perusse (1997) appear. For this literature review, only some of the significant non-peer-reviewed sources will be included as they relate to this topic concerning multiple perspectives.

### *JROTC Accountability*

Another glaring theme throughout the available literature is that the military services that established their JROTC programs should already include appropriate accountability requirements to measure the established standards for teaching citizenship and instilling patriotism and a sense of accomplishment However, few accountability criteria actually exist that measure those standards. The present accountability criteria currently in existence are solely for the purpose of ensuring program viability with sufficient enrollment (HQ AFJROTC, 2023). The guiding documents from the U.S. Congress and Department of Defense delegate accountability for JROTC to each of the respective military services (88th U.S. Congress, 1964 [rev 2021]; Department of Defense, 2006). Each of the military services has published a complete set of regulations and guidelines for their respective JROTC units. The guidelines and evaluation criteria specifically detail the percentage of enrollment in the JROTC program per the ratio of the assigned high school population as a defining factor for all military service JROTC evaluations (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2008; U.S. Navy, 2020). Each service specifies instructor conduct around high school-aged youth and penalizes any violations of that standard of conduct (U.S. Air Force, 2018; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2008; U.S. Navy, 2018). An examination of each of the military service JROTC regulations reveals no concrete evaluation rubric or criteria existent for measuring how each military service JROTC program evaluates building citizens of character (HQ AFJROTC 2023; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2008; U.S. Navy, 2018). Instead, the regulations elaborately discuss how to enroll/disenroll students, the various activities to offer students, and the logistical administration of the program (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2008; U.S. Navy, 2018). Sometimes the argument is made that a JROTC program complying with all the HQ regulations

and having high enrollment signifies compliance with the regulations, which is equated to producing citizens of character (U.S. Navy, 2018; Wall, 2023). However, not enough evidence exists to support this claim.

In practice, JROTC units are at times evaluated on items outside of the established criteria. When verifying that the assigned high school is complying with the federal standards for the number of students enrolled in the JROTC program, some inspection guides go outside the established DoD criteria and interview the guidance counselors and school administrators (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017). While interviewing the school administrators and guidance counselors makes sense since they are crucial to ensuring the proper placement of students into the JROTC program, the official DoD and Congressional directives make no mention of utilizing school administrators or guidance counselors in these evaluations (88th U.S. Congress, 1964 [rev 2021]); Department of Defense, 2006). Curiously enough, the practice of some of the military service branch JROTC programs includes input from school administration and guidance in their inspection checklists (HQ AFJROTC, 2023). Items not in the official DoD guidance have in recent years become a standard practice for evaluating JROTC programs (HQ AFJROTC, 2023).

### *Official Evaluation Criteria*

Each military branch has its official evaluation criteria for its JROTC programs. It is customary for each military branch to initially write the overarching guidance, and as the directives filter down to the various units, the successive directives may get more stringent (as situations require) but cannot deviate from the initial higher directives (Bogden, 1984; Taylor, 1999). All military services took their JROTC evaluation criteria wording directly from the higher-level Congressional and DoD source documents regarding JROTC's citizenship building

purpose and incorporated that information into their guiding instructions and regulations (U.S. Air Force, 2018; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2017; U.S. Navy, 2018). Each of the programs verifies its adherence to the standards through biennial or triennial inspections of their JROTC units (U.S. Air Force, 2018; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2017; U.S. Navy, 2018).

A close examination of each of the military service regulations reveals the usual statements for treating all cadets fairly regardless of race, gender, and religion (HQ AFJROTC 2023; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2017; U.S. Navy, 2018). However, each military service fully details procedures for handling any JROTC unit when that unit has low enrollment numbers (U.S. Air Force, 2022; U.S. Army, 2022; U.S. Marine Corps, 2022; U.S. Navy, 2022). Each of the service regulations details the due process that is given to the cadet before dismissal from the JROTC program (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2008; U.S. Navy, 2018). The current written standards indicate concern towards adherence to military dress and appearance standards, whether or not JROTC instructors adhered to teaching to the prescribed curriculum, and if the program enrollment was commensurate to the school population (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; U.S. Navy, 2020). The military's and school district's focus on program enrollment is necessary because of the federal funding attached to program enrollment (107th U.S. Congress, 2002; 114th U.S. Congress, 2015).

### *Missing Evaluation Criteria*

While each of the military branch JROTC regulations contains precise instructions for program evaluation, some key criteria remain missing from each of them. Specifically missing from the military regulations is any formal written guidance on how to assess the JROTC units'

interaction or relationship with other departments in the school, other than that they are to present a positive image of their former military service at their school (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; Marine Corps JROTC, 2022; U.S. Navy Training Command, 2018). Also, each military branch's regulations are devoid of clear standards for just how to evaluate or measure whether a JROTC program instills in students the value of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility, and sense of accomplishment. Additionally, no criteria exist for evaluating the building of character or measuring the levels of self-confidence imparted to the high-school-aged youth (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Marine Corps JROTC, 2022; Navy JROTC, 2022). The rationale HQ JROTC inspectors use is that if the inspected JROTC unit has high program enrollment, then that is evidence of the JROTC unit teaching citizenship, imparting a sense of responsibility, and providing a sense of accomplishment (Wall, 2023). Some HQ JROTC evaluations, as a matter of practice, informally utilize interviewing the host school's administration and/or guidance counselors to assess some of the local JROTC program's compliance with regulations (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; U.S. Navy, 2020). However, no such guidelines officially exist from the parent regulations (Department of Defense, 2006).

In Air Force JROTC, the guiding documents for inspections, the Unit Assessment Checklist and Attachments under Section II-6 in Chapter 7 of the AFJROTC Operational Supplement (HQ AFJROTC, 2023), state that the unit inspector should verify that all the AFJROTC cadets are voluntarily enrolled. This regulation checklist does not say how this voluntary enrollment is to be measured. It only specifies if this condition is "met" or "not met" (HQ AFJROTC, 2023). Yet when Air Force inspectors inspect their JROTC programs for this compliance standard, they routinely interview guidance counselors, school administrators, and

JROTC instructors, directly verifying if that specific JROTC program is meeting the standards (HQ AFJROTC, 2023). Yet official Air Force instructions do not specify that voluntary enrollment can be fulfilled through interviewing school administration or guidance counselors (Air Force JROTC, 2023).

In Navy JROTC, the guiding documents for inspections are the Naval Service Training Command (NSTC) document 5762-110, and the checklist for Annual Military Inspections (AMI). This document was modified in 2020 to include virtual inspections due to conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic (U.S. Navy, 2020). Even though the document calls for the naval inspector to verify with school officials if the host school is supporting their JROTC program, the guiding document, NSTC 5762-110, does not specifically name the school administrators or anyone else in the school with whom for the inspector is supposed to verify compliance. However, the regulations provide the inspector with an option if needed (U.S. Navy, 2020).

The official HQ JROTC evaluators interview other members of the school in addition to the instructors, to assess the health of the JROTC program, which official guidance does not call for (HQ AFJROTC, 2023; HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2008; U.S. Navy, 2020) Similar wording exists for the Marine Corps and Army JROTC program evaluations (HQ Army Cadet Command, 2017; U.S. Marine Corps, 2008). However, the incorporation of the three different perspectives of the school administrators, JROTC instructors, and guidance counselors, could offer better insight into the health of the JROTC program as evidenced by the standard practices of the JROTC evaluators.

### *Administrator Perspectives*

In most of the previous significant studies on JROTC, researchers have focused on or included the viewpoints of school administrators (Ameen, 2009; Bulach, 2002; Crawford et al., 2004; Geronimus & Caldwell, 2019; Goldman et al., 2017; Marks, 2004; McGauley, 2015; Minkin, 2014; Pema & Mehay, 2009). This makes sense, as most school administrators (principals) are ultimately responsible for the performance of their schools, and supervise the JROTC instructors. A school principal must also be aware of the climate inside their school. School administrators interact with students throughout their four-year high school careers and typically observe student development (Bulach, 2002; Marks, 2004; Schmidt, 2003). Most high school teachers only interact with students for one or two years of a student's high school career as they are assigned to their particular course for that year, i.e. Algebra I (Schmidt, 2003). However, some studies have shown school administrators are inclined to view their own school's performance in a positive light as a job security measure despite evidence to the contrary (Fiarman, 2016; Orr et al., 2018). This presents the issue of possible bias on the part of these studies.

Typically, the insight given by school administrators to researchers has been positive regarding JROTC (Ameen, 2009; Bulach, 2002; Funk, 2002; Minkin, 2014; Taylor, 1999). Some of the peer-reviewed research, like Bulach's (2002) and Funk's (2002) work, discussed how JROTC programs teach and instill leadership and character qualities, which translate to better behavior that school administrators appreciate. However, one non-peer-reviewed study by Minkin (2014) presented the unique perspective that administrators value JROTC programs strictly for the enforcement of discipline and attendance. Minkin (2014) also pointed out that students attending their classes were less likely to get in trouble and thus remain less of a problem for school administrators. The research is unclear whether it is the character traits being

emphasized in the JROTC classrooms or the strict discipline measures for attendance that keep students out of trouble. Some of Pema and Mehay's (2009) research suggested a small correlation between higher attendance and higher performance in school (grades) in JROTC cadets.

### *JROTC Instructor Perspectives*

A majority of JROTC studies, both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed, focused on the JROTC instructor for their research (Ameen, 2009; Bulach, 2002; Crawford et al., 2004; Marks, 2004; Perez, 2015a). This is logical as the JROTC instructors may have the most insight about student development in their programs. Additionally, JROTC instructors are those held accountable for their program's successes or failures, even though some aspects are beyond their control, as evidenced by some of the JROTC evaluation criteria (HQ AFJROTC, 2023). Interestingly, none of the available JROTC studies the researcher found took any instructor biases into account (Bulach, 2002; Crawford et al., 2004; Marks, 2004; Walls, 2003). Instead, some JROTC studies seemed to have favorable biases toward the JROTC instructors, as in Bulach's (2002) and Crawford et al.'s (2004) work. Other studies contained unfavorable bias toward JROTC instructors, such as Perez's (2015) and Lutz and Bartlett's (1995) research.

Some of the peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed research, like Funk's (2002) and Marks (2004) work, demonstrated that the character education and modeling of good behaviors by the instructors were critical in the development of JROTC cadets. Other studies presented how JROTC instructors helped mold and reinforce the positive engagement of their JROTC cadets, which resulted in high school JROTC cadets with better decision-making skills than normal college freshmen (Ameen, 2009; Cassel & Standifer, 2000). The research is unclear as to

which is the predominant view, and if the research accounted for any JROTC instructor biases or if any outside influences affected the outcome.

Other peer-reviewed studies, like Pema and Mehay's (2009, 2012) work and Schmidt's (2003) study, took a more sobering view of the role of the JROTC instructor. Their view suggested the JROTC instructor does have a positive effect on the JROTC cadets, but not one that is so significant (Pema & Mehay, 2009, 2012; Schmidt, 2003). Citing the HSB and NELS data, Pema and Mehay (2009) demonstrated a very marginal effect of JROTC on high school students. However, their research did not address if one region or school fared better than another but just presented the overall average data scores compiled from the national HSB and NELS data (Pema & Mehay, 2009).

### *School Guidance Counselor Perspectives*

Many studies abound regarding the importance of high school guidance counselors (Marzano et al., 2011; Perusse et al., 2015). However, only a limited number of non-peer-reviewed studies exist concerning school guidance counselors and their perceptions of JROTC programs. Perusse's (1997) seminal study, clearly established that high school guidance counselors were excellent assessors of the development and growth of high school youth as cadets in the JROTC program. Indeed, other significant non-peer-reviewed and peer-reviewed JROTC studies refer to Perusse's work (Minkin, 2014; Pema & Mehay, 2009). The school guidance counselor is an excellent observer for noting the development of the JROTC cadets throughout their high school careers since it is their job to note the progression (or non-progression) of students towards their high school goals and requirements. School guidance counselors must also ensure that students are properly placed in the necessary courses for high school graduation (Perusse, 1997). Why no other JROTC research utilized the guidance

counselor perspective towards JROTC is unclear. Lastly, most of the significant non-peer-reviewed JROTC studies refer to Perusse's (1997) research (Ameen, 2009; Marks, 2004; Minkin, 2014).

### *JROTC and Student Engagement*

Almost all of the available studies about JROTC, peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed alike, noted the effect the JROTC program has on student engagement (Ameen, 2009; Bulach, 2002; Crawford et al., 2004; Funk, 2002; Minkin, 2014; Pema & Mehay, 2009, 2012). This effect can be significant, as found in Minkin's (2014) study, or just barely significant, as found in Pema and Mehay's (2009) research. JROTC has different meanings or interpretations for student engagement. Bulach's (2002) study interpreted that student engagement as JROTC cadets devoting more time engaged in positive conduct around other students. Minkin's observations interpreted that student engagement can be reflected by low disciplinary records. School administrators like having a JROTC program because they do not have to worry about attendance or discipline problems from JROTC cadets (Minkin, 2014). The activities JROTC offers (drill, color guard, marksmanship, etc.) keep cadets positively engaged. Positive engagement in school activities, whether curricular or extracurricular, has been shown to lessen delinquency rates (Cassel et al., 2000; Gillen-O'Neel, 2021; Price, 2014; Schnitzler et al., 2021; Walls, 2003). Student engagement will be examined by those perspectives that have the most insight into the JROTC cadets, namely school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors.

### *Benefits of JROTC*

Many studies, peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed, discuss the benefits of JROTC programs. Bulach's (2002) study is perhaps one of the earliest studies that attempted to find the

positive benefits of JROTC as they related to its mission of building character. Bulach's (2002) study is peer-reviewed and referenced by many other researchers, both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed (Ameen, 2009; Crawford et al., 2004; Marks, 2004; Minkin, 2014; Pema & Mehay, 2009). Other studies demonstrated that students in JROTC programs had clear differences in character traits than non-JROTC students (Cassel & Standifer, 2000; Marks, 2004; Reiger & Demoulin, 2000; Schmidt, 2001). Some studies, like Bulach's (2002) and Marks (2004), attributed these character differences to the positive behavior modeling exhibited by JROTC instructors. Other studies demonstrated how cadets in the JROTC program devoted more time to ethics and sound decision-making than their counterparts (Funk, 2002; Schmidt, 2001; Walls, 2003). This added time is beneficial as it allows JROTC cadets to hone those decision-making skills.

Perhaps the biggest studies about JROTC's benefits were the U.S. government-funded studies of Taylor (1999) and Crawford et al. (2004). Taylor's research was a Congressionally mandated study, whereas Crawford et al.'s study originated from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). Both of these studies were mammoth in undertaking and relied on some of the existing published quantitative data for high school graduation rates. Unlike Taylor's (1999) research that targeted select urban areas (Chicago, IL; Washington, DC; El Paso, TX) for interviewing JROTC instructors, Crawford et al. attempted to cast a broader net by conducting interviews and surveys. Crawford et al.'s study initially acquired data from each JROTC branch headquarters. When acquiring survey responses from the field, barely enough survey responses were returned for a meaningful statistical significance. The researchers attributed the small response from JROTC instructors and school administrators not to lackadaisical reasons, but to the ever-changing nature of the educational world (i.e. JROTC instructors retiring or resigning

their positions, school administrators moving on to other positions in the school district, outdated contact information, or other extraneous reasons) (Crawford et al., 2004). Both studies found that the positive examples modeled by the JROTC instructors to the cadets produced many future productive members of society (Crawford et al., 2004; Taylor, 1999). Both studies also noted that while JROTC was not a direct recruiting program, it did, however, indirectly contribute to military recruiting and thus contribute to the overall national defense (Crawford et al., 2004; Taylor, 1999). Each of these studies solely focused on the school administrators and JROTC instructors (Crawford et al., 2004; Taylor, 1999). Both Taylor and Crawford et al. did not offset any potential administrator or JROTC instructor biases nor gather a completely different perspective.

***Drawbacks of JROTC***

Some JROTC studies have strictly focused on JROTC's shortcomings. Lutz and Bartlett's (1995) study appeared when JROTC was just expanding in the 1990s. They claimed that JROTC was not beneficial to public education as JROTC was a direct and involuntary pipeline into the military since it was a subtle recruiting platform located in public school classrooms (Lutz & Bartlett, 1995). More recently, Harding and Kershner (2018) also took up this recruiting refrain, claiming that JROTC was making children into soldiers because of its presence on a high school campus. These studies claimed that JROTC was a drawback for educating high school youth in that JROTC was more focused on recruitment for the military than actual teaching (Harding & Kershner, 2018; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995). However, upon reviewing their sources, Lutz and Bartlett nor Harding and Kershner listed any current or contemporary scholarly JROTC research, referenced any of the official JROTC websites, or discussed the guiding congressional public laws for JROTC. These public laws clearly state that

JROTC enrollment does not mandate enlistment in the armed forces (88th U.S. Congress, 1964; Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Harding & Kershner, 2018; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995; Navy JROTC, 2022;). A glaring omission from Lutz and Bartlett's study and Harding and Kershner's research is that they both did not reference any official government documents or guidelines concerning JROTC, which clearly state compulsory military service is only for college-level ROTC, because it is a direct commissioning method for officers into the armed forces following the completion of a four-year college degree (88th U.S. Congress, 1964; Harding & Kershner, 2018; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995).

McGauley (2015) wrote a critical essay for *Educational Digest* that critiqued the Army JROTC program at a high school in Portland, Oregon for having marksmanship activities as part of the program. McGauley's background information about JROTC origins and the curriculum structure were well researched and correct. However, McGauley compared the JROTC marksmanship activities and competitions to promoting a violent gun culture and modeling authoritarian militaristic solutions to problems which contradicts the school's opposition to violence (McGauley, 2015). McGauley based this criticism of the marksmanship program entirely on the works of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. McGauley said that militarism was one of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "giant triplets" of societal destruction (along with racism and extreme materialism) (2015, p. 41). McGauley's research falls short in analyzing the strict JROTC guidelines and regulations for extra-curricular activities from all the JROTC service branch websites, which offer: marksmanship, drill, academic contests, model rocketry, and other activities that engage cadets in positive ways but also vehemently stress safety (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC, 2022; Marine Corps JROTC, 2020). JROTC

extra-curricular activities align with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, where those activities' accomplishments are rewarded, further building the self-efficacy and esteem in youth.

A recent ethnography study about JROTC by Perez (2015), focused on a single high school with a large Latin American population in the small town of Lorain, Ohio. Perez conducted some solid research about JROTC and utilized both Pema and Mehay's (2009, 2012) research and Lutz and Bartlett's (1995) work. Perez interviewed the Army officer at that JROTC program. However, Perez did not reference any official government documents or official JROTC regulations. Instead, Perez posed a very impactful question regarding citizenship: How did the Army JROTC program stress the meaning of patriotism and citizenship to Latino students whose parents were not necessarily U.S. citizens, or whose citizenship was also in question? The answer Perez postulated was that the military needed more recruits for the war in Afghanistan and that enlisting in the military following high school JROTC would speed the path to U.S. citizenship (Perez, 2015). The answer to this question is not as clear, but is available in official source documents such as the ROTC Vitalization Act of 1964, which states enrollment in JROTC was stipulated only by the JROTC program being hosted at the school, and if the student was enrolled at the school, the student could be enrolled in JROTC (88th U.S. Congress, 1964). What has caused much recent confusion, is when school districts dropped U.S. citizenship requirements for school enrollment, thus allowing any non-citizen to enroll in JROTC if enrolled in that school (Perez, 2015).

## Summary

The purpose of this explanatory case study is to examine the multiple perspectives that school administrators, JROTC instructors, and school guidance counselors have in perceiving how the JROTC program affects the cadets in the program regarding student development. These

three entities inside the school interact more often with JROTC cadets throughout their four-year high school career than most other adults in the school. In this way, an accurate and truthful assessment can be described from their insights.

Currently, there is a disconnect within the literature. A majority of the literature on JROTC is not peer-reviewed. What little peer-reviewed research that does exist disparages the role of JROTC in high schools. Yet, a constant demand exists for increasing JROTC programs in more schools throughout the country (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Harding & Kershner, 2018). Additionally, no study of this kind has been previously undertaken. Previous studies either include strictly published and accessible data or a single group for a case study, which may or may not be applicable in one part of the country, versus another (Perez, 2015a; Goldman et al., 2017). Most previous JROTC research, which are case studies, suffer from inherent bias from either one specific sample population's perspective or researcher bias (Bulach, 2002; Harding & Kershner, 2018; Perez, 2015a). A dearth of qualitative, peer-reviewed literature exists about JROTC. The appeal of this researcher's study is transferability and applicability, as all U.S. public high schools with JROTC programs have school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors. Any researcher wanting to qualitatively know how a particular school's JROTC program was performing could apply this research at that specific school (or schools). The results would be more reflective of their particular locale and could provide useful information for key decision-makers in the school district when assessing their district's JROTC program's performance.

The theoretical frameworks for this study are Maslow's (1943, 1958) theory of motivation and Bandura's (1986, 1993, 1997, 2012) self-efficacy subset of social cognition theory. As per Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation, the research will delve into the middle tier

of the motivational hierarchy, the sense of belonging, to determine if the three school entities perceive changes in the JROTC student while the student is in the program. Per Bandura's (1997) theory on self-efficacy, the research will delve into the perceived levels of self-efficacy or self-esteem as students progress through the JROTC program. Using both theories, an attempt will be made to understand how belonging to something and gaining self-confidence are the key phenomena for understanding how JROTC impacts student achievement and offers other benefits to cadets (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Maslow, 1943, 1958).

The problem is that no study of this kind exists that accurately examines the JROTC program. Most previous research utilizes known published data about JROTC, which does not assess how JROTC affects academic achievement or offers any other benefits. In short, previous research does not take into account human perspectives on the JROTC phenomena. Similarly, previous research that did account for the human perspectives did so under heavily-biased conditions that made it difficult to ascertain the truth of the matter. Surprisingly, many non-peer-reviewed studies exist about JROTC, but most are beyond the scope of this study.

A gap in the literature clearly exists regarding the study of JROTC. No consistency exists within the official program evaluations (apart from the emphasis on maintaining high program enrollment) that would allow for adequate explanations of the JROTC program's effectiveness. A need exists for a study that genuinely assesses the impact the JROTC program is making upon high-school-aged youth through the eyes of the people in the school who are closest to the phenomena: the school administrators, JROTC instructors, and guidance counselors. The results of this study should be published and peer-reviewed to improve the overall body of knowledge about the JROTC program.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

## Overview

The research design appropriate for studying the effects of JROTC on high school student development through multiple perspectives generally lies within hermeneutic phenomenological methods. However, as this JROTC study deals with three distinct perspectives fused for a more holistic view, the explanatory case study methodology is more appropriate. As the research problem attempts to examine how JROTC affects high school students, the correct methodology lies with the explanatory case study, since this method seeks to determine how JROTC affects student development while using some phenomenology to explain what the three perspectives have experienced.

As previously discussed, most prior research on JROTC has focused on a single perspective (the school administrators or the JROTC instructors) when examining the program (Bulach, 2002; Marks, 2004; Minkin, 2014). While these viewpoints are valid, they can be subject to bias. Another often overlooked critical viewpoint within the school is the school guidance counselor. The school guidance counselor is crucial to placing students into the JROTC program (Perusse, 1997). The three school entities, school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors, work in concert for proper functioning of the JROTC program. The JROTC instructors manage the program daily, guidance counselors place the correct students into the program, and school administrators often give necessary permissions or directives for the JROTC program in relation to the school (Funk, 2002; Minkin, 2014; Perusse, 1997).

This chapter delineates the need for an explanatory case study as a research method for this investigation. A detailed description of the setting depicts the school district in which the study occurred, complete with demographics. Any researcher biases were explained prior to collecting data along with proper justifications. Next, a detailed account of how the data was

collected and analyzed while adhering to standards for credibility follows. A small summary reiterates the main points of the research methods.

## Design

Case studies are generally a qualitative inquiry design where the researcher attempts an in-depth analysis of a program, event, process, or one or more individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, the researcher is attempting an in-depth examination of how the JROTC program affects high school students through multiple perspectives. Those multiple perspectives include the perspectives of school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors.

Most studies that identify perspective or viewpoints for the focal point for study usually fall under strict phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). However, this research attempted something new by fusing the three distinct perspectives of school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors to better explain what mere numerical data cannot. Phenomenological research, as classically defined, would examine the lived, shared experiences of several individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2016). However, to keep the phenomological methods consistent, most of the research population are of one distinct type. Most previous research on JROTC focused solely on one population, such as only school administrators or the JROTC instructors (Funk, 2002; Marks, 2004; McGauley, 2015; Minkin, 2014).

As previously discussed, examining the sole perspective of the school administrator creates a potential for bias, as school administrators tend to view the operations of their high school positively and overlook their shortcomings (Fiarman, 2016; Orr et al., 2018). While the school administrator's perspective is essential, so is that of the JROTC instructor, since they are

the prime managers of the course. Most studies about JROTC take into account the views of the JROTC instructors (Bulach, 2002; Crawford et al., 2004). However, the school guidance counselor could greatly provide further insight on the subject as they are the ones in the high school designated to enroll students into their proper classes, including JROTC (Beesley, 2004; Perusse et al., 2015). By incorporating all three perspectives, this case study delved deeper than a phenomenological study. This particular case study was a single instrumental case study, as it will seek to investigate a single group or department (JROTC) and provide insight on how it affected student development (Patton, 2015; van Manen, 2016; Yin, 2018; Zainal, 2007).

The benefit of a case study is the further exploration of a subject while not being bound to it (Yin, 2018). In this instance, the case study would adhere to some philosophical roots. The study of perspectives or viewpoints is phenomenology. The roots of phenomenology come from the philosophical writings of German philosopher Edmund Husserl (van Manen, 2016). However, the case study originated from French sociologist Frederic Le Play who sought to gain insight into family structures, further than what phenomenological research allowed (Mogey, 1955; van Manen, 2016). The scope of case studies has broadened to include a variety of topics, including small groups such as families, citizen participation, communities, decisions, programs, organizational learning, schools, and events such as social movements that can be studied in-depth (Yin, 2018).

While this research attempted to describe the meaning of a phenomena of a group of different individuals, it drew heavily from the works of Creswell and Poth (2018) and van Manen (2016). However, this case study goes further than phenomenological research. Flyvbjerg (2006) described some of the knowledge gleaned from case study research as critical in that it originates directly in the context of its meaning. In this instance of studying a group of individuals (the

school administrator, guidance counselor, and JROTC instructor), the knowledge gained can be described as “in context” as it originates from daily school activities (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 222). In this case, the case study will examine different perspectives and thus gain deeper knowledge than what Husserl originally intended (van Manen, 2016).

The particular appeal of this researcher’s method, of making sense of three different educational perspectives (the school administrator, guidance counselor, and JROTC instructor) and exploring them further, classically follows van Manen’s (2016) guidelines for hermeneutic research with “particular appeal as it tries to understand the phenomena of education by maintaining a view of pedagogy as an expression of the whole, and a view of the experiential situation” (p. 26). Piecing together the experiences of the school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors, this study attempted to construct the meaning of those perspectives or experiences. This study occurred in a typical secondary educational forum, the high school. The school had the natural setting for the constructivist viewpoint—the combining of the three distinct perspectives and making sense of them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Crotty, 1998; Guba, 1981). In summary, this study utilized the guidelines for a phenomological study but was not fully bound to it and explored the subject further.

Qualitative researchers do not necessarily have to have a theoretical framework for their research, but doing so lends further credibility to the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This inquiry examined multiple perspectives of how JROTC affected student development to determine if those views held more similiarities or differences, or if the commonalities are just differently phrased, as well as how this subsequently affected student development. This central focal point of the experience, the JROTC program, combined with the research participants’ perceptions towards the JROTC program was the core phenomena being experienced by all

participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2016).

This research study proposed two central theories as the philosophical underpinnings for combining the meaning of participant responses: motivational theory (Maslow, 1943, 1958) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). These two theories are the best possible frameworks to understand how the JROTC program affects student achievement. Maslow's (1943) and Bandura's (1997) theories will provide a better understanding of just how the JROTC program engages the cadets enrolled in the program by bestowing more and more confidence in each successive activity, and by doing so, providing a sense of belonging. This supposition was verified. Additionally, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) postulated, the triangulation of data may not yield precise information but should provide a more comprehensive and better developed narrative.

The case study was the best design for studying the JROTC phenomena as it solves the dilemma of dealing with the many JROTC units in existence. Currently, over 3,200 JROTC programs exist from each of the major military branches (not counting the U.S. Coast Guard or newly formed Space Force) (Army JROTC, 2020; Air Force JROTC, 2022; Marine Corps JROTC, 2020; Navy JROTC, 2020). Studies that tried getting a sufficient representative sample barely received enough responses (Blake, 2016; Crawford, et al, 2004; Pema & Mehay, 2009). Studies that attempted using known published data, such as high school graduation data records, were very limited in scope (Goldman et al., 2017; Pema & Mehay, 2012). Studies that surveyed one population type (school administrators and/or JROTC instructors) were bound to one region and not representative of other parts of the country (Ameen, 2009; Marks, 2004; Minkin, 2014; Taylor, 1999), while those that strictly surveyed the students were bound by regional demographic data and also not applicable to other parts of the country with different demographics (Bulach, 2002; Funk, 2002; Malone, 2022).

The case study can encompass research types that do not neatly fit into other research methodologies. As described by Yin (2018), “Case studies also are relevant the more that your questions require an extensive and in-depth description of some social phenomena” (Yin, 2018, p. 4). The social phenomena being explored was the social interaction within the JROTC program and how the program affected cadet development, as well as how this development was percieved by principals, counselors, and JROTC instructors. As this JROTC study holistically examined the view of three different departments worked together inside a public high school, Yin (2018) also argued the explanatory case study was ideally suited for this current research project because case studies contribute greatly to the holistic or real-world perspective. Explanatory case studies seek to explain how one things affects another part—in other words, “the tracing of operational processes over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidences” (Yin, 2018, p. 10). Through its in-depth interviews, this JROTC case study attempted to illustrate how the JROTC program affects students and how that process was viewed from the perspectives of the three personas in the school with firsthand witness.

Finally, what sets this research apart from previous attempts were the critical perspectives of the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors in the high school that followed the students throughout their high school careers as well as in the JROTC program. This study can be conducted and fully explored at the school or district level, and the results would be indicative of that locale. This research could then be replicated elsewhere, and uniquely situated to another regions’ demographics, where the results would be more applicable.

## Research Questions

The following are the central research questions with three sub-related research questions for questions one and two, which served as the guiding principles for this current research.

Information obtained in the data collection was aligned with these questions for the veracity of data findings in later chapters.

**Central Research Question (CRQ)**

What are the effects of a high school's JROTC program to the cadets enrolled?

**Sub-Question 1 (SQ1)**

How do the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program provides a sense of belonging to those enrolled in the JROTC program?

**Sub-Question 2 (SQ2)**

How do the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program increases self-esteem to those cadets enrolled in the program?

**Sub-Question 3 (SQ3)**

How do the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program increases self-efficacy behaviors of those cadets enrolled in the program?

## Setting and Participants

The setting and participants for this qualitative research were three medium sized school districts throughout in the state of Georgia with 14 high schools, each with an associated JROTC program. These school districts encompassed their entire counties, and have represented all aspects: rural schools, suburban schools, urban schools, and affluent locations contrasted with less affluent schools receiving assistance. This breadth of demographics lent more credibility to the research.

## Setting

The setting for this study was three school districts in eastern and southern Georgia. Three of the four traditional military service branches, Army, Air Force, and Navy were represented in their school district's JROTC programs. Two of the high schools were Title 1 schools receiving federal assistance, and one was in a more affluent part of their district and did not receive federal aid. The total student population for the school districts was over 29,000 students. The demographics for these three school districts were very diverse, however the selected school districts characterized the region: 40% Caucasian, 52% African American, 12% Hispanic, 5% Asian, 1% other. In some schools located in this target school district, the school demographics deviated +/- five percentage points of the county demographics (Georgia Department of Education, 2021b). These three medium-sized school districts in Georgia contained enough research participants needed for what Creswell and Poth (2018) described to be the minimum for most qualitative studies, which was 10 research subjects.

## Participants

These school districts in eastern Georgia were chosen because they met the requirements for the intended qualitative study. Every public high school throughout the country is usually administered by a principal. Based on the school's population, size, and district guidelines, the principal may be assisted by one or more assistant principals. Next, each public high school has one or more guidance counselors based on school population. Per federal guidelines, each public high school with a JROTC program also has at least two instructors (88th U.S. Congress, 1964). In these school districts, each high school had a school principal, at least three assistant principals, at least three guidance counselors, and two JROTC instructors. This would make each high school have a potential pool of 10 candidates for this study. All high schools in the targeted

school districts provided a candidate pool that consisted of 85 potential research subjects available for interviews (Georgia Department of Education, 2021b). Two high schools in each school district were then targeted for research. As Creswell and Poth (2018) described, most qualitative studies should have a minimum of 10 research subjects. The sample size of 28 participants exceeded the stated minimum, accounting for any attrition within the candidate pool.

Purposeful sampling will be conducted for this study. Creswell and Poth (2018) and Seidman (2013) advocated for purposeful sampling where research participants closest to the phenomena were chosen because they can best relate to the studied problem. Additionally, Patton (2015) suggested selecting individuals who have shared the same phenomenon for providing in-depth information about the subject. The purposeful sampling in this case study yielded all potential JROTC instructors with over eight years of experience, school guidance counselors having over eight years of experience, and school administrators averaging over 10 years of experience.

## Procedures

The procedures section contains a general summary of the essential steps to conduct this study to allow for replication of the research study (Patton, 2015). First, prior to conducting this study a request was submitted to Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) after proposal defense (see Appendix A). Next, separate permissions were also obtained from the targeted research school district for conducting research (see Appendix B). Permissions were also obtained from the school principals at each of the targeted research schools (see Appendix B). No research subjects were contacted until full permissions were granted from both organizations. Once permissions were granted, a recruitment e-mail explaining the research study's purpose and soliciting their participation was sent to all the potential research candidates

(school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors).

**Permissions**

Appendix A contains the IRB's permission to conduct the research study. With IRB approval, the researcher then shifted to site permissions, starting with the school district. The district Career Technical Agricultural Education (CTAE) Dept was contacted to secure permissions for the study. This is the department which oversees all JROTC programs in each school district. The CTAE Department provided all names of school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors, which formed the research pool.

Appendix B contains the school site permissions, beginning with each school's principal. Once both site permissions were received, the researcher solicited for research participation from the targeted research population (school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors). The next step in the process was to send recruitment letters to all potential research candidates. No additional IRB permissions were needed as no minors were being interviewed for this research study.

**Recruitment Plan**

Once site permissions were granted (IRB approval from Liberty University, permission from the participating school district, permission from the targeted school administrators), an electronic consent form and informational cover letter was e-mailed to all potential participants (see Appendix B). The researcher acquirde the potential candidates e-mail addresses from the school website and emailed each of them an electronic copy of the recruitment letter.

Copies of the recruitment letter soliciting their participation were found in Appendix C. Emails will be sent out once a week until the required number of participants was reached. The informational cover letter will explain the research's purpose, methodology, sources for data

collection, one-on-one interview structure, and focus group structure. Additionally, the informational cover letter delineated the participants' rights and responsibilities, as well as privacy and anonymity assurances. All potential participants were given a week to respond.

A straightforward plan for purposeful sampling was used so that only the intended participants were included in the recruitment process. Creswell and Poth (2018) advised that all research designs follow criterion sampling so enough participants can be collected for a sample. In qualitative case studies, that sample size should be from 10 to 15 participants. six schools were targeted for this study, two from each school district, as each of the two schools in each school district had JROTC programs from different military branches (Army, Air Force, and Navy). Each school in the targeted school district had a school principal assisted by three assistant principals. Each school also had two JROTC instructors and at least three guidance counselors. This brought the total number of the potential candidate pool per school up to 36. The intent was to utilize at least two schools for the study.

The researcher also ensured each of the participants met the requirements for the study by going over the study's criteria. Appendix D contains a copy of these criterion questions. The researcher had the participants electronically sign and return the informed consent to expedite the permission process. A copy of the informed consent form is located in Appendix E.

## Researcher's Positionality

This section presents my motivations, interpretive framework, and philosophical assumptions, for conducting my research. As a fellow JROTC instructor, I was clearly motivated and interested in how JROTC programs were successful or failed. I recognized that as a researcher, I was also an instrument in this study, and I would need to carefully collect and document any data acquired for this study to ensure transparency and minimize any potential for

researcher bias. My interpretive framework, philosophical assumptions, ontological assumptions, and axiological assumptions are described below.

**Interpretive Framework**

In the military, most lessons learned or hard truths, come from severe accidents or failures. The focus of this study was more on the results or outcome after carefully analyzing the events. Creswell and Poth (2018) and Yin (2018) defined this approach as pragmatism. In this approach, I focued more on the outcome of the research—specifically, what changes my research participants observed in JROTC cadets throughout their high school careers. Therefore, the interpretive framework for this research was pragmatism.

**Philosophical Assumptions**

As this study is qualitative, I served as the human instrument conducting the interviews. Sherif (2018) mentioned that qualitative research must yield data that is unobtrusive, reliable, valid, and cost effective. As my interpretive framework was pragmatic, I selected the explanatory case study as the best method to accurately conduct research to explain how JROTC affects student development. Additionally, according to Yin (2018), the overall case study format allows for a more in-depth study of the perspective phenomena with the multiple perspective types (i.e., school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors) instead of a pure phenomenological study with the perspectives from only one school or population type (i.e., school administrators).

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), all qualitative research studies must address three basic philosophical assumptions: ontological, epistemological, and axiological. Creswell and Poth (2018) also prescribed the suspension of any philosophical assumptions, to get the best possible data. As the overarching framework is pragmatism, with its focus on the outcome, the

explanatory case study was well suited for my research. As the researcher, I elaborated my assumptions in the following sections.

### *Ontological Assumption*

As the primary research instrument, I believe that the nature of reality is based on the correlation and/or fusion of different perspectives. In some ways, this study is like a phenomenological study. Yin (2018) offered a great example of how to report each participant viewing the experience differently by looking for common themes. Creswell and Poth (2018) and Yin (2018) also guide researchers on documenting these different experiences and perspectives through common themes via the case study. Due to the distinct backgrounds of the three participant types (school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors), this was a good procedure to follow. Additionally, the distinct backgrounds of each category of research participant made this study unlike a true phenomenological study and more like a case study. As such, I documented the differing or similar perspectives of the research participants regarding how the JROTC program impacted student development by recording as much of their detailed experiences as possible and focusing on emergent themes.

### *Epistemological Assumption*

Epistemological assumptions in qualitative studies address the subjective view of knowledge, more specifically the knowledge gained from the research subjects themselves (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2018) specify that the subjective knowledge gained from a qualitative study cannot be as completely unbiased as an objective quantitative study. But, the closer the study strives for lowering overall bias in the research process, the better.

I do conform to the belief that the knowledge from this research was subjectively garnered. However, both Creswell and Poth (2018) also stressed that the relationship with the research participants should only be professional with the participants so that they are comfortable with the overall research process. I have no connections to any of the targeted schools for this study. I am only vaguely familiar with some of the JROTC instructors in the targeted school district as they mostly are all from different military branches other than my own, the Air Force. All JROTC instructors in Georgia have attended professional learning at the Georgia State JROTC Conferences in past years and collaborate on a professional level as students transfer from one school to the other. I have only professional contact with the school administrators or guidance counselors in the targeted school districts. For the purposes of this study, I spent some time with the participants to gain their familiarity and trust. I tried to document as much as possible from their interviews to add detailed descriptions to the study.

### *Axiological Assumptions*

Creswell and Poth (2018) defined axiological assumptions as any beliefs or biases the researcher brings into qualitative research. Patton (2015) suggested a policy of transparency between the researcher and their participants—that they should make their values known so as to better position themselves within the study. This should include any potential biases, as well as personal experiences and information, such as age and gender. Not only is transparency and honesty a good policy to operate under, but it also secures research participant cooperation.

I am a retired Air Force officer currently serving as the Senior JROTC instructor at a Title 1 high school in the school district where I am currently employed. I have 11 years of experience as a JROTC instructor. I have no connection to the targeted schools where this research was conducted. Previously, I served 22 years in the Air Force, where I served as a flight

instructor and evaluator in two distinct combat air platforms. I am driven by a desire to succeed at whatever task or mission I have been given. I carefully used thematic coding and the bracketing process to be sure I captured the research participants' experiences correctly and without any of my biases inserted.

**Researcher's Role**

As the researcher is the human instrument, documenting as much information about the instrument as possible will provide more transparency in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the researcher, I have been a full-time JROTC instructor for the past 11 years in my school district. I work at a Title 1 school in the state of Georgia. I have no contact, professional or personal, with the school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors in the selected schools for this study. I am only vaguely familiar with some of the JROTC instructors in the targeted school districts as all JROTC instructors in Georgia have attended professional learning workshops at the Georgia State JROTC Conferences in past years. Nearly all JROTC instructors from the researched districts lead different JROTC programs (Army and Navy) other than my own, the Air Force. Only one school had an Air Force JROTC unit. They also have a different leadership chain of command with their respective military branch and school district.

My interest in this study was to see what truly makes a JROTC program successful, regardless of demographics, location, and population size. In my early days as a JROTC instructor, I received a good piece of advice early on from my first Air Force JROTC Area Director, which was to have a good working relationship with the rest of the school. I heeded this advice and managed to have my JROTC program succeed despite the constant tumult of being in a Title 1 inner city high school. While not as successful as other JROTC programs that I know about, which have abundant resources from their school/district and a majority of their senior

JROTC cadets graduate and go off to college, I do see modest success with my JROTC program. Aligned with the stated JROTC mission of developing high school youth, for the past 10 years my JROTC seniors had a 100% graduation rate, were in the top 20% of their graduating class, and 50% have gone on to college or enlisted in the military. This is quite an achievement from an inner-city Title 1 high school with a 65% graduation rate (Georgia Department of Education, 2021b).

## Data Collection Plan

Data was collected in three forms: initial survey data, interviews, and focus group data. These three forms assisted the researcher in collecting a thorough and in-depth response from each of the three perspectives. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative researchers should typically gather from multiple forms of data that are available, such as interviews, focus groups, observations, documents, and audiovisual information, rather than rely on a single data source. Patton (2015) also warned against using a single collection method, making the study more vulnerable to errors. By collecting data from the diverse population of the targeted school districts, a better understanding will emerge of the observed outcomes from each of the research participants. Additionally, using multiple sources for data collection adheres to data triangulation, a qualitative technique used to ensure data is robust, valid, and truly representative of the research participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lemon & Hayes, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018; Zainal, 2007). Before the researcher collected any data, IRB permission were requested. Once approval was granted, each participant reviewed and signed the informed consent form.

Following successful consent responses, individual surveys were sent to the research participants. With successful survey responses, the individual interview times were then

established. All interviews were conducted via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, as each has recording capability, that allowed for better transcribing. During the 2020 pandemic, all educators within the state of Georgia had to conduct virtual instruction, so the familiarity with video-teleconferencing exists. These interviews were then transcribed as part of the interviewer transparency and verifying the accuracy of the recorded information (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To gain additional information and clarify any confusing or contradictory responses, the researcher then conducted focus groups with some of the participants. The focus groups were arranged according to each high school and conducted electronically for ease of schedule. According to Yin (2018), focus groups are convened when the researcher needs a small group discussion to delve further into an aspect of research or moderate discussions about some aspect of the research. This method served as another way to capture any additional in-depth information and was a final opportunity for those research participants to offer anything additional or perspectives not previously discussed. Sometimes in group settings, information can be further shared or withheld depending on the situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Florczak, 2017). All data collected in this study was safeguarded, as required by Liberty University and the school district.

**Data Collection Approach #1, Individual Surveys**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that researchers do not solely rely on questionnaires or surveys developed by other researchers for data. However, using questionnaires or surveys can set the tone and get some of the administrative and/or background questions accomplished in a more efficient manner (Flick, 2004; Seidman, 2013). Additionally, the survey method is one subtle way for the researcher to ascertain if there are any personality conflicts between the target research parties within the school that may hamper the investigation. This way, the researcher

can get a sense of what the research participants initially know about a subject and how they relate to it before exploring further with interviews and other methods (Flick, 2004).

The survey was the ideal method for collecting data for this study as face-to-face (online or in-person) interviews or focus groups might not yield honest findings due to social pressures. For this case study, the researcher, utilized an online interview that the participants accessed through an online survey website. The online surveys were brief and perfunctory, just to get an initial glance at how much the intended research subjects knew. This way, the research subjects would be more willing and able to respond instead of ignoring the email as unsolicited spam (Florczak, 2017).

***Individual Survey Questions***

1. Please state how long you have been in education. CRQ
2. Please discuss what are the most popular or successful programs at your school. CRQ
3. From the responses given, why are these programs popular, successful, or well attended? SQ1 and SQ2
4. Please discuss how you view your school's JROTC program? CRQ
5. Please discuss how you view your school's JROTC program compared to the other popular / successful programs at your school. CRQ and SQ1
6. What do you see as the qualities of the cadets in the JROTC program have compared to those in the other popular programs at your high school? If JROTC cadets are involved in more than one program besides JROTC, please say so and elaborate on the characteristics. CRQ, SQ2 and SQ3
7. How do you interact with (other): school administrators / guidance counselors / JROTC instructors at your school? SQ1

8. How do you perceive the (other): school administrators / guidance counselors / JROTC instructors view the JROTC cadets? SQ1 and SQ2
9. What other benefits do you see students gaining from the JROTC program? CRQ and SQ3

Questions 1 and 2 are general knowledge questions designed to help establish each research participant's background and worldview (Yin, 2018). Questions 3 and 4 delve further into the participants and the school's background and lay the groundwork for questions 5 and 6, which ask the participants about their respective school's JROTC program. Questions 5 and 6 inquire about the participants' views towards the phenomena being examined in this case study, which is the JROTC program at their school (Patton, 2015; Yin, 201; Zainal, 2007). These questions also inquired about the phenomena in an unobtrusive way, by asking participants to compare the JROTC program with another successful/popular program at their school. Questions 7, 8, and 9 subtly ask the participants their views towards the JROTC cadets framed against both theoretical underpinnings. Since the case study aimed to examine the perceptions of the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors, these types of questions were asked in an attempt to be unobtrusive and not overlooked due to social situations. These responses were greatly scrutinized to determine if they fit both theoretical underpinnings (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018; Zainal, 2007).

***Individual Survey Questions Data Analysis***

Data collected during the individual surveys was organized, reduced, coded, interpreted and safely stored. The researcher followed Yin's (2018) guidelines for case study research. From the surveys, the researcher gained an initial perspective from each of the prime subjects about their school's JROTC program. Yin (2018) also stongly suggested strong data collection and

organization techniques. This process helps with using computer-assisted software to determine if any meaningful patterns emerge. As meaningful patterns develops from the software analysis, a full explanation or even a good description for the research data also appears, which helps bolster the research premise (Yin, 2018). Through careful organization and attention to detail in looking for patterns, the researcher can study the phenomena as it appears.

As the surveys were already in an electronic document form, the researcher carefully transcribed, organized, and coded from the surveys. Themes were developed based on the coding (van Manen, 2016). Next, the themes were analyzed via computer software to see if any other meaningful patterns emerged, which could then be a topic for further exploration in the upcoming interviews and focus groups (van Manen, 2016; Yin, 2018). All the data was securely stored in a physical safe at the researcher's residence.

## Interviews

Patton (2015) and Yin (2018) described the interview process as the key component of the case study. Yin (2018) also asserted that interviews should resemble guided conversations rather than structured queries. The researcher should start with some initial or familiar questions for the participants but allow them to fully elaborate and discuss their experiences with the study's focal point, letting the conversation go where it may. This way, the full richness of the collected data can contribute more about the phenomenon being examined (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018).

### Data Collection Approach #2, Individual Interviews

The participants were given a choice of a face-to-face interview or an interview via video teleconferencing (Zoom or Microsoft Teams). The participants were also informed of the intended data recording as Zoom and Microsoft Teams each have recording capability the

researcher intended to use for later transcription. The individual interviews followed the same format whether conducted vis-à-vis or remotely via Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

The interview format was as follows. Participants agreed to meet after school in their classroom or office during their available planning time. Each interview was planned for 60 minutes. This would allow for: five minutes for the necessary introductions, 30 minutes for the researcher questions, 20 minutes for any additional comments or discussions, and five minutes for the conclusion. A set of questions was posed to each of the participants. The alignment of interview questions to the research questions is also provided. The same set of questions were given to each of the school entities (school administrator, school guidance counselor, and JROTC instructor) but were worded specifically to apply for each entity's position.

***Individual Interview Questions***

1. Please discuss how long you have been a/n (administrator, counselor, JROTC instructor). CRQ
2. Please discuss what made you go into education and become a/n (administrator, counselor, JROTC instructor). CRQ
3. Please discuss your thoughts about the JROTC program at your high school. CRQ and SQ1
4. Please discuss your experiences interacting with the: JROTC program, guidance counselors, and school administrators. CRQ and SQ1
5. Please discuss your role in the school's overall master class schedule. SQ1
6. Please explain how students get put into your school's JROTC program. SQ1
7. Please discuss any observable behaviors that you see from students before they enter the JROTC program. SQ2

8. Please discuss any observable behaviors from students you know from the period of time they have been in the JROTC program as cadets. SQ2
9. Please explain your perception of JROTC cadets in regard to class attendance. SQ1 and SQ2
10. Please explain your perception of JROTC cadets in regard to student discipline. SQ2 and SQ3
11. Please explain your perception of JROTC cadets in regard to student activities. SQ1 and SQ3
12. Please explain your perception of JROTC cadets in regard to academic performance. SQ3
13. Please describe or define what you think the defining characteristics of the JROTC cadets are at your school. SQ2
14. Please discuss anything else where you think the student's enrollment as cadets in the JROTC program brought about some other noticeable result. CRQ and SQ3

Questions 1 and 2 are general knowledge questions designed to help establish each participant's worldview that was previously submitted via electronic survey. These questions are relatively straightforward and non-threatening and were meant to establish a rapport between the participant and the researcher (Patton, 2015). The questions in the in-person interview format further elucidated any other information not previously provided by the participant. The questions were adjusted as necessary for each participant, depending on who was being interviewed.

Question 3 establishes the participants' views towards the phenomena being examined in this case study, which is the JROTC program at their school (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). This question could potentially yield some in-depth knowledge if any of the research participants are

biased towards the JROTC program. Question 4 establishes the working relationship amongst the three separate school entities. Questions 5 and 6 further examined the working relationship among the faculty participants and how students get placed into the JROTC program.

Questions 7 and 8 are purely phenomenological. These questions ask how each of the participants perceived the students before they entered the program, or right as they were entering, and how they currently view the students' performance and behavior in the program (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016; Yin, 2018). These two questions offer participants further opportunities to offer any more insight or breadth of answers to what they already answered on the surveys. Although phenomenological in approach, they are critical in underpinning the "how" of JROTC student development by contrasting the time differential of before/after JROTC (Yin, 2018). These two questions are also important as they relate to the two theories on which this study was built, establishing the baseline for sense of belonging per Maslow's (1943) theory and the self-efficacy theory according to Bandura (1997).

Questions 9 through 13 describe the participants' views towards the JROTC cadets framed against both theoretical underpinnings. Since the case study is examining the perceptions of the school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors, these questions determined the participant's priorities for their daily duties in the overall functioning of their school. These questions were then greatly scrutinized to determine if they fit both theoretical underpinnings. As discussed in the data analysis, a response could be coded for being appropriate for "self-efficacy" instead of "motivational." For example, a JROTC cadet observed high in attendance (sense of belonging) could also demonstrate a high degree of self-esteem and confidence as grades are now important to the cadet and missing a class would not be to their benefit.

Question 14 is again what Patton (2015) described as a valuable, one-shot question designed to offer the researcher one more chance to gain valuable insight. This one-shot question served as the closing question (Patton, 2015), giving the participant freedom to add to what has already been said, and keeping him or her in the role of expert on describing their experiences with the JROTC program.

### *Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan*

Data collected during the individual interviews was again transcribed, organized, reduced, coded, interpreted and safely stored. The researcher will again follow Yin's (2018) guidelines for case study research. With the surveys, the researcher recieved an initial impression. However, with the individual interviews, the researcher gleaned more in-depth perception of the experiences from each of the prime subjects about how their school's JROTC program affects student development.

The interviews were then transcribed, allowing the researcher to ensure accuracy within the data collected. The initial transcription was performed via computer software, and the researcher checked for any errors in the transcription. Once again, the research data will be carefully organized and categorized for the subsequent computer analysis. This will also serve to find if any meaningful patterns emerge (Yin, 2018).

The researcher also took field notes simultaneously during the individual interview data collection process to further document emerging themes (Yin, 2018). This documentation presented the researcher with a near-real-time opportunity to make adjustments to any upcoming interview questions. These field notes also assisted the researcher with an audit trail if any new interview questions were needed (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The collected data was then transcribed and coded from the individual interviews and the researcher's field notes. The researcher first manually looked for any developing themes to emerge based on the coding. As a cross-check, emergent themes were also developed via computer software. The researcher used this software for axial coding; however, the researcher decided upon the initial subject codes.

Another strength of the individual interviews is what Yin (2018) calls the comparative structures explanation of the same phenomenon observed by different perspectives. This same phenomenon, or case being described here is the different observations of the school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors. Each interview, and any subsequent follow-up interviews, offer the researcher the opportunity to further enrich the data already collected (Yin, 2018). Through more data collection, the data comparisons and interpretations offered different and richer perspectives of the same phenomenon, and more fuller explanations of just how JROTC affects student development were developed.

Finally, Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested the researcher engage in epoché (or bracketing) process throughout the data analysis process the researcher so that any biases or reactions to the data could be put aside and documented also in the field notes. For example, some items to look for, or bracket, would be potential bias from school administrators in positively viewing all aspects of their respective school. Biased data was categorized and isolated, thus ensuring the validity of the research (Yin, 2018).

## Focus Groups

Focus groups were assembled from each high school for ease of schedule and further exploration of the participants' responses. If possible, focus groups were assembled across different high schools with similar functions (i.e., guidance counselors), keeping in mind that

school administrators may or may not have the time to attend a focus group session due to each high school having dissimilar schedules. The focus groups were semi-structured interviews. The questions were open-ended questions upon commencement, but the researcher acted as a facilitator to extract the most meaningful conversation (data) from the research participants. The objective for the focus groups was to learn more in-depth about any commonalities, differences, or contradictory responses for clarification (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2013).

The focus group questions were based on the original participant interview questions, but altered to prompt deeper participant responses and further patterns. This measure was deemed appropriate for the case study as Yin (2018) and as Krueger and Casey (2015) suggested, the objective was to illuminate the views of each member in the group.

**Data Collection Approach #3, Focus Group Interviews**

The focus group was convened either in person or via video teleconferencing (Zoom or Microsoft Teams) for ease of facilitating. In addition to responding to inquiries, participants were asked for any clarification if any answers given during the survey and interviews were contradictory. Since the interview was conducted remotely, the participants were again informed of the intended data recording as Zoom and Microsoft Teams had recording capability the researcher intended to use for later transcription.

Participants agreed to meet after school during their available planning time. Each focus group would be planned for 60 minutes. This would allow for: five minutes for the necessary introductions, 30 minutes for the researcher questions, 20 minutes for any additional group comments or discussions, and five minutes for the concluding remarks. A set of questions as again posed to all the participants. The alignment of these focus group questions to the research

questions is provided. The same set of questions was given to each of the school entities (school administrator, school guidance counselor, and JROTC instructor) but was worded specifically to encompass each entity's position in the school

***Standard Open-Ended Focus Group Questions***

1. Please discuss each of your reasons for being in education. CRQ
2. From the responses given, please discuss the similarities (if any) or differences (if any). CRQ
3. Please discuss your working relationship with the other members of the focus group. CRQ
4. From the responses given, are there more or fewer commonalities (if any) regarding attitudes towards the JROTC program? SQ1
5. From the responses given, do you see that there are more or fewer differences (if any) in attitudes towards the JROTC program?
6. Please discuss the qualities you think an ideal student should have attending your high school. SQ2 and SQ3
7. From these qualities, how does the ideal student compare to a JROTC cadet currently attending your high school? SQ2 and SQ3
8. Please pick a known student at your high school (common to all) that is enrolled as a cadet in the JROTC program. How would each of you describe the changes (if any) you have observed in that student since being enrolled in the JROTC program? SQ2
9. How would each of you describe that student from #8 with regards to attendance? Academic achievement? Disciplinary record? School activities? CRQ, SQ1, and SQ3
10. Would you describe the JROTC program as a "good fit" from the student previously

described in question #8? CRQ and SQ3

11. Regarding the student in question #8, how would you describe their daily demeanor or outlook? CRQ, SQ2 and SQ3
12. What other benefits do you see students gaining from the JROTC program? CRQ

Questions 1 and 2 are general knowledge questions designed to help establish each participants' worldview baselines within the focus group. These questions are relatively straightforward and non-threatening and will help develop a rapport between the participants as well as the researcher (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Patton, 2015).

Questions 3 through 5 are designed to demonstrate how other departments in the school perceive the JROTC program, as well as what the JROTC instructors themselves think of their program in relation to other departments in the school. These questions will also clear up any misperceptions toward the JROTC program within the genteel polity of the focus group.

Questions 6 and 7 are "perception versus reality" questions, regarding what each of the three entities perceive as the ideal student and compared against the reality of an actual JROTC cadet. These questions explored in-depth the perceptions the three key school entities had towards the JROTC program and any preconceived notions or expectations versus reality. These questions, while seemingly harmless, critically contributed to the study since the participants will not have guarded responses (Yin, 2018; Zainal, 2007).

Question 8 is the research question phrased in another form for the participants. Question 9 asks about other observables that most educators can relate to compared against the research question. Question 10 relates to Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation while question 11 relates to Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy. Question 12 is soliciting for any other information that is not already known.

### *Focus Group Data Analysis*

Although this case study sought to demonstrate how multiple perspectives viewed the high school JROTC program and its effect on student development, it was not bound to strict phenomenological methodology. However, as Yin (2018) emphasized, even though the case study here is the JROTC program (an organization), data collection still occurs from individuals as they perceive that organization. Researchers must be careful not to distort the data and discuss individuals instead of the organization, which would turn the whole case study into an open-ended survey (Yin, 2018). The design study analysis for the case study, where the data was gathered from individuals, reflected the organizational outcome (Patton, 2015). In this case, the outcome for the data analysis was an answer to the research question that asked how multiple perspectives perceived how the JROTC program in their high school affects student development.

Data from the initial online surveys and individual interviews was collected and saved prior to the focus group interviews. According to Yin (2018), case study researchers can arrange and rearrange the data in different ways to look for any emerging themes or patterns, and from this develop an analytic strategy. By using the transcribed notes from the interviews, the researcher again organized the data into categories and/or codes. Some data software assisted the research in this process to better identify patterns and assist with the triangulation of data (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). This will help process the data more expediently. When patterns or similarities were found, they were categorized by similarity and then labeled as invariant constituents (Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) also defined invariant constituents as the “similar grouping of words” used by multiple participants in a qualitative study which contain the “structural description” or the “bones” of the experience for the whole group of people being

studied (p. 576). When this process is finished, the third step, according to Yin (2018), is that the first two processes are continually reviewed and synthesized. As the data is being continually built upon, further structural comparisons are also made with before/after comparison perspective being applied (Yin, 2018). While identifying themes and patterns, the researcher actively looked for any themes from each of the multiple perspectives that pertained to a "sense of belonging" with JROTC or "self-efficacy" or "self-confidence" arising from the JROTC program.

Using the transcribed notes from the focus groups, the focus group structure allowed for a deeper understanding of the subject. Again, the researcher organized the data into categories and/or codes for better pattern identification using the computer software, which also assisted with the triangulation of data (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). The focus groups allowed for a lively discussion of how one perception resonated or differed from the other school departments' perceptions (von Manen, 1997). Follow-up sessions were scheduled as needed to ensure the captured dialogue was correct and to confirm each research participant's approval. This case study broke from von Manen's (1997) assertions against using automated software for qualitative research. Later researchers (Flick et al., 2004; Zainal, 2007) have argued for using automated software as a means of speeding up the comparative pattern process. If the automated software aids this venue, then its usage is acceptable in qualitative research. But when the automated software usage performs statistical analysis of two or more comparative data, then the study shifts to a quantitative role and is therefore unacceptable (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

One of the prime advantages of a case study is the inherent triangulation of data (Flick, 2004; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2018). As Yin (2018) described, "A case study relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needed to converge in a triangulating fashion" (p. 15) As case

studies use multiple sources of evidence, the findings are more likely to be convincing and accurate (Yin, 2018). Additionally, according to Flick (2004), triangulation of data is the combination of multiple sources to complement the strong points of the study while illustrating limitations. This opens the case study data to the potential for theory generation, instead of only theory validation. This case study also used three sources of evidence for describing the effect of a high school's JROTC program on cadets: the school administrator, the school guidance counselor, and the JROTC instructor. Also in this case study, three forms of data collection were utilized: the initial survey, the individual interviews, and the focus group.

The researcher again followed Creswell and Poth's (2018) suggestions of providing a synthesis of the phenomena and its meanings gathered during the analysis. The researcher also be applied coding and used the computer software system for developing further possible meanings and constructing a list of qualities for the experience and themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). This coding process also constructed the focus group structural descriptions. Finally, throughout the data analysis process the researcher also engaged in the epoché (or bracketing) process, so that any biases or reactions that arose in the focus group to the data could be put aside and documented also in the field notes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

**Data Synthesis**

Several researchers suggested using multiple forms of data collection to allow for triangulation (Flick, 2004; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2018). This research study utilized three methods for data collection and triangulation: individual surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups. Upon data analysis from those three methods, the researcher will synthesize the data. Using the

various coding methods available, such as axial and narrative coding, the researcher properly coded and reviewed the data across the many categories (Flick, 2004; Flick, et al., 2004).

Using phenomenological reduction, the researcher evaluated the dominant themes arising from the data (Flick, 2004; Patton, 2015). In this way, the researcher determined the strongest themes arising from the research participants while simultaneously sorting out irrelevant ones. Phenomenological reduction ceases when the data categories are saturated and there is no further categorization (Patton, 2015).

The research used a process called synthesis, originally developed by Moustakas (1994). In this process, the researcher combined the structural and contextual meanings of the participants experiences, thereby creating a composite description of the research participants experience. If there was any doubt, or gaps in the data, the researcher had to revisit the research participants for further data or to cross-check the information (Moustakas, 1994). This is also what Yin (2018) called the linear-analytic process, in which the researcher combined the various data meanings, based on the problem being studied and the supporting background literature. This also helped validate the research process.

## Trustworthiness

Provisions were made to address Guba's (1981) four steps for qualitative research trustworthiness. The benchmark for any qualitative research is high levels of credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These measures are referred to throughout the study with scholarly citations and measures for the current study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also cited other key aspects used to support trustworthiness in a qualitative research study, such as internal and external validity, objectivity, and reliability. The most significant aspect of trustworthiness in this study is the triangulation of evidence from

multiple perspectives in the school—the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors.

## Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research refers to the extent to which the research findings accurately describe reality (Guba, 1981). Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Creswell and Creswell (2018) also suggested other qualitative techniques to include credibility, such as triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. The researcher will utilize all three techniques for this study.

### *Triangulation*

Triangulation is the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a thorough understanding of phenomena (Patton, 2015). In this study, the researcher is gathering data from multiple sources (school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors). Also in this study, the researcher is collecting data from three methods, an individual survey, individual interviews, and focus groups. The triangulation of data contributes to the overall credibility of the results and lessens the potential bias in the case study. (Yin, 2018).

### *Member Checking (Cross Checking)*

Guba (1981) also referred to member checking as soliciting feedback from the research participants or clarifying their responses. The researcher in this study used the term “cross checking” as synonymous with “member checking.” During the interviews, the researcher and participants engaged in activities to construct collaboratively and precisely the meaning of the described experiences, as well to clarify any responses, recurrent themes, and interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, collaboration with the research participants during the

focus group sessions also ensured a precise narrative before finalizing the results. However, Yin (2018) also cautioned against any extensive or prolonged stay with the participants. A prolonged stay in the field also lessens the credibility of the results as more contact between researchers and participants could bias and skew the results (Yin, 2018). The researcher planned only an hour with the research participants and did not plan on any extended stays.

### *Peer Debriefing*

Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested peer debriefing as another method for ensuring credibility. In peer debriefing, another peer person or colleague outside of the research reviews the study to add more credibility. For this case, the chair and other dissertation committee members reviewed the study and lended debriefing comments. Additionally, other JROTC instructors not in the targeted school district could lend their expertise by reviewing the study as well.

## Dependability

Research dependability will occur with a complete procedural description of the steps taken in each of the data collection steps, as well as a rich description of the emerging themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The completed study would allow all the clear and concise details regarding the research methodology. This would allow for replication by other scholars, and is one of the prime reasons for conducting the study. The researcher can display the study's dependability by demonstrating the study's findings can be repeated elsewhere with a clear and concise description of the steps, processes, and procedures the researcher undertook all throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Confirmability

Confirmability was established with up front admissions of the researcher's background and any potential biases identified beforehand (Guba, 1981). In this research, the possibility existed of school administrators talking about programs and events in their school too positively (Fiarman, 2016; Orr et al., 2018). To offset this, this study balanced that perspective with those of the school guidance counselors and the JROTC instructors. Other third-party members, persons not affiliated with school administration, school guidance or JROTC, audited or "peer debriefed" the material to ensure that the strict interview protocols were conformed to, thus giving the study further conformability.

Conformability means that the data collected is verifiably true and not concocted (Guba, 1981). As this qualitative study needed to be conducted in more than one high school in the school district to achieve the minimum amount of participants (10 or more), the same research questions were asked at each high school. Additionally, after each interview and focus group session, research participants were given the opportunity to review the notes and ensure the accuracy of the data before the data reduction process.

**Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent that this study can be replicated elsewhere. This issue is the main reason for conducting this research. A case study can greatly contribute to the research by rich and thick descriptions that thoroughly illustrate the topic being researched (Patton, 2015). With this rich and thick description, future researchers will have enough guidelines for attempting to replicate the study, an obvious sign for transferability. Previous research on JROTC was confined to a region or a particular demographic (inner-city school vs. rural school, Southern U.S. vs. Western U.S.) and the results were not transferable. The conundrum of getting a sufficient sample from the thousands of JROTC programs throughout the

country stymied previous research (Blake, 2016). This JROTC study has inherent transferability in that this small qualitative study can be performed in any school or district and the results will be applicable to all demographics and regions. This study can also be used by school stakeholders or district decision makers to assess the health of their JROTC program.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are necessary for any qualitative research study. The protection of human subjects from any harm is paramount. Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Yin (2018) stressed the need for researchers to gain the appropriate permissions prior to conducting any research. Therefore, the requirements of securing IRB approval from Liberty University and approval from the targeted school districts Georgia will be complied prior to any communication with anyone in the high schools for actual research.

All research participants were presented with a document of informed consent and had the research purpose, benefits, potential risks, and other pertinent details explained to them in minute detail (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). This way, full transparency was established at the beginning of the study. The research participants then signed this informed consent document, and it was secured on file. If any research participants elected to withdraw from the study, they were free to do so without penalty.

No deceptive measures were used with all the research participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All research participants were given pseudonyms for referral purposes and any identifiable information (names, titles, school, etc.) was scrubbed from the research manuscript. As Moustakas (1994) suggested, confidentiality of the research participants is an ethical consideration to maintain, as well as maintaining overall validity of the study.

Research data was secured; papers were stored in a physical safe and electronic information was encrypted with password protections in an external hard drive. External data hard drives was also stored in the safe for safekeeping when not in use. In accordance with Liberty University and Privacy Act considerations, this information will be stored for a period of three years and then purged. Purging will consist of shredding papers and deleting all electronic files.

## Summary

This study attempted to assess how a high school's JROTC program affects student development of personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment by fusing the perspectives of school administrators, JROTC instructors, and school guidance counselors for a more holistic view. These three perspectives were also the primary contributing data sources. The data was collected in three different forms: initial online surveys, open-structured interviews, and focus groups. Sampling was purposeful to minimize any potential bias and ensure research transferability. The CCSD site chosen was also purposeful in that the school district offered the most diverse points on the educational demographic spectrum: Title 1 high schools and high schools in semi-affluent suburbs, where more than one JROTC military branch was represented, and an ethnically diverse population present to contribute to research credibility.

Data analysis occurred following Creswell and Poth's (2018), Yin's (2018), and Florczak's (2017) guidelines for qualitative research. As this was an explanatory case study, Yin's (2018) guidelines were also adhered to. All research participants had an opportunity to review the data for accuracy and truthfulness prior to submission. The results will be discussed in Chapter Four.

# CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

## Overview

The purpose of this explanatory case study was to examine how a high school's JROTC program affected student development of their personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment by fusing together the perspectives of the school administrators, JROTC instructors, and school guidance counselors for a more holistic view. The research also strove to explore just how similar or different those perspectives were, viewing the student development from three different perspectives in the school that would have the most interaction with the students as JROTC cadets throughout their high school years. The research was guided by the central research question: What are the benefits the school's JROTC program provides to the cadets enrolled? This question was further addressed with the sub-research questions:

1. How do the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program provides a sense of belonging to those enrolled in the JROTC program?
2. How do the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program increases self-esteem to those cadets enrolled in the program?
3. How do the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive their school's JROTC program increases self-efficacy behaviors to those cadets enrolled in the program?

This chapter also includes participants, data collected, and responses to the research questions. Finally, the data incorporates themes which emerged through the analysis.

## Participants

The research utilized a qualitative explanatory case study and conducted 12 individual online surveys, 12 individual online interviews, and three sets of online focus group interviews. This study's recruitment plan required a selective sampling method Yin (2018) described for case studies. Selective criterion was the most appropriate selection process because the study required specific participants. Participants had to be JROTC instructors, school guidance counselors, and school administrators from the selected school to be eligible for the study. Pseudonyms were utilized in such a way that their anonymity could not be compromised. The participants recruited were three school administrators, four school guidance counselors, and five JROTC instructors. The participant table is below:

**Table 1**

*Participants*

| Participant | Years of Exp. | Highest Degree Earned | Content Area |
|---|---|---|---|
| Benton | 10-14 | Master's | School Administrator |
| Race | 20+ | Master'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 |

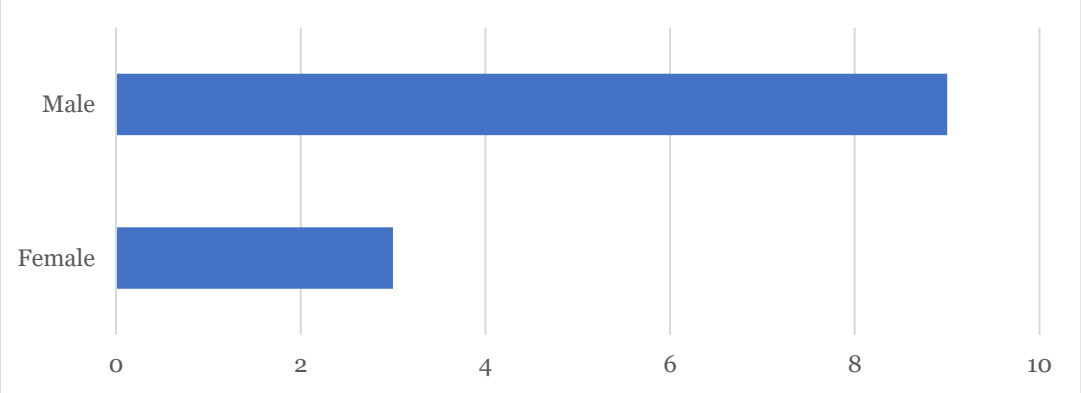
Upon Liberty University's IRB and each school district's approval, each potential participant received a solicitation email and consent form for participating in the study (Appendix E). Four participants initially responded positively, five responded after a second follow-up email was sent, and three responded after the second follow-up email and heavy prompting from a colleague, providing 12 participants for the study. Two potential participants responded and declined due to being very junior in experience, and 16 potential participants did not respond. Once participants responded with the signed consent form, the link was emailed to them for the initial individual survey on Survey Monkey. When the initial individual survey was completed, I coordinated with the research participant for a convenient time to conduct the individual interview. When at least one participant in each of the key areas of the same school (school administration, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors) completed the individual interview, a time was coordinated for the focus group session. Both the individual interview and the focus group sessions were conducted virtually on Zoom. Only two respondents were unable to participate in the focus group—a school guidance counselor and a JROTC instructor. But their survey responses and individual interview responses were included in the analysis. Three focus group sessions occurred—two focus groups with three participants, and another with four participants, totaling 10 participants contributing towards the focus groups.

Recruitment was challenging due to the lengthy IRB process that started at the end of August. When all revisions, approvals and permissions were granted in early October, the high school calendars throughout Georgia were in full swing with various homecomings and associated activities. Only through persistent attempts was initial contact established and the interviews conducted. Of note, only one district was extremely prompt and helpful as their principal was going through the doctoral process at another university and realized the importance of recruiting subjects for the research process. This school's administrator stressed the importance of research participation to the potential research candidates at his school which led to very expedient responses.

The following illustrates the background demographics of the selected participants.

**Figure 2**

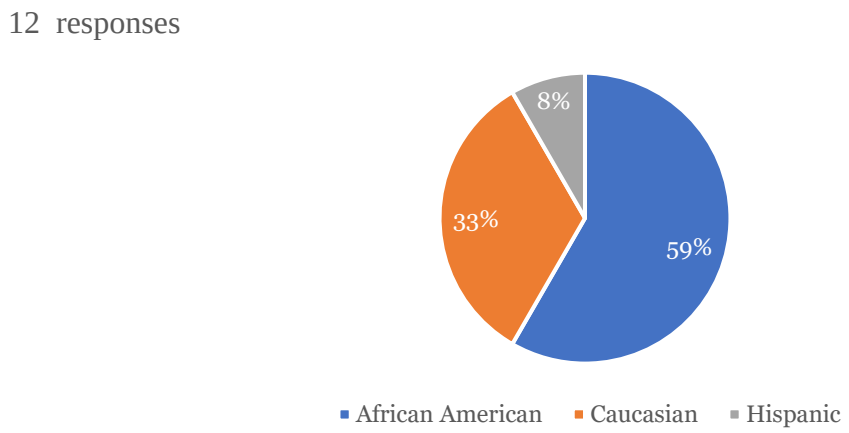
Particpant Genders




Twelve participants were recruited and participated in this study. Of those 12 participants, nine were males and three were females. From the school guidance counselors recruited for this study, three were females and one was male. All the school administrators and JROTC instructors recruited for this study were males.

**Figure 3**

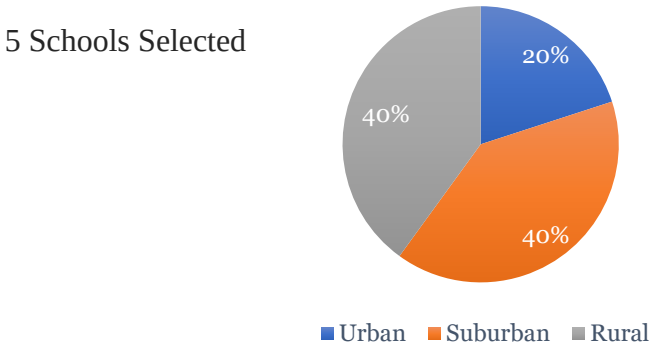
*Research Participant Ethnicity*




The participants represent a typical cross section of Georgia public school employees. Of the 12 participants available for this study, seven were African American, four were Caucasian, and one was Hispanic. According to the most recent statistics released by the Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement (2021), 44% of teachers in Georgia were African American, 42% were Caucasian, and 8% were Hispanic. The Georgia Governor's report cited that high poverty areas had more minority teachers than low poverty areas (2021).

**Figure 4**

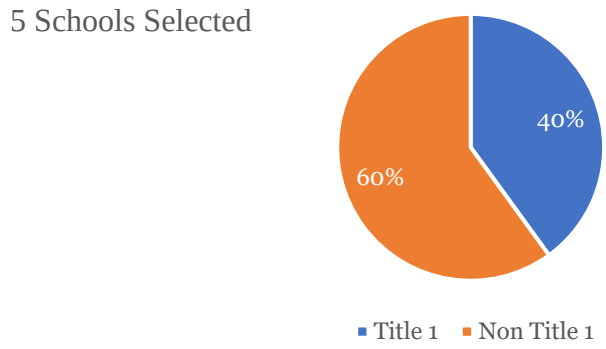
*School Settings*



Of the five high schools selected for this research study, two were suburban, two were rural, and one was urban. Figure 4 above confirms the majority of high schools selected were rural and suburban. However, the opposite is true for the high schools in Georgia. Most high schools in Georgia are located in urban and suburban areas (Georgia Department of Education, 2021b). Intuitively, this makes sense as the highly populated areas are the urban and suburban areas.

**Figure 5**

*School Economics*




Of those five schools from which the research participants were selected, only the urban school and one of the rural schools were Title 1 and received federal assistance. However, the opposite was true for the Georgia high schools. Georgia has a high number of high schools which are Title 1 and receive federal assistance (Georgia Department of Education, 2021b).

**School Administrators**

The most challenging population sample from which to recruit were the school administrators. All school administrators recruited for this study were male assistant principals with the most experience levels. The ratio of male to female administrators is roughly equal throughout Georgia; however most assistant principals at the high school level are male (Georgia

Department of Education, 2021b). As discovered in the individual interviews, the school principals were extremely busy.

All three school administrators admitted that as assistant principals, they were the "face of the school." This meant being visible in the school hallways during class changes, being present at the many school events (games, activities, etc.) throughout the day, as well as participating in designated areas of responsibility in the school (discipline, scheduling, etc.), which greatly occupied their time. However, all three graciously lent their time for the interviews.

All three school administrators were very supportive and spoke positively about their school's JROTC program. They mentioned that overall, the students selected as cadets in their school's respective JROTC program were "a good fit" for the cadets in the program and demonstrated a high degree of "discipline." When asked to discuss discipline in their school further, all three administrators responded that the JROTC cadets were "well behaved" and "very respectful." All three school administrators worried less about discipline issues arising from the JROTC cadets than the rest of the student population. Although there were a few outliers with discipline issues, these issues were very minor or stemmed from the fact the "student no longer wanted to be a JROTC cadet" and subsequent removal from the JROTC program. These responses corresponded to Fiarman's (2016) study which stated school administrators were less likely to speak ill about their own school.

***Benton***

Benton was an assistant principal at a Title 1 rural high school. Benton's responsibility was the Career Technical Agricultural and Education (CTAE) department as well as discipline. "Benton" was the newest minted school administrator but had served several years prior in

education before accepting the step up to the administerial position. Benton was the only school administrator with prior military experience, having served 20+ years in the Air Force before retiring and transitioning into education.

### *Cosmo*

Cosmo was an assistant principal at a suburban high school. Cosmo had served several years as an assistant principal. Cosmo's background was in special education. Prior to becoming an administrator, Cosmo headed up the special education department at another high school within the same school district.

### *Barney*

Barney was an assistant principal at a Title 1 urban high school. Barney was the only school administrator interviewed with a doctoral degree. He was also the most experienced by having served the most time of the three research participants as a school administrator. Barney previously served as an assistant principal at a middle school and at another high school within the same school district.

## School Guidance Counselors

The most diverse educational workload belonged to that of the school guidance counselors. In one of the rural schools selected, there was a school guidance counselor assigned to each grade who would follow that grade level throughout the next four years, thus the students would start out as 9$^{th}$ graders and finish at 12$^{th}$ grade with the same school guidance counselor, then start back over again. The rationale for this was the school guidance counselor would really "know" the students under their charge throughout their high school career. In the other rural school and in both suburban schools, a school guidance counselor was strictly assigned to each grade level. Each year throughout high school, students would rotate through each of the school

guidance counselors. Lastly, in the urban school, there were fewer school guidance counselors assigned. School guidance counselors were assigned a certain alphabetical block (i.e. A-G) of the student population and that counselor would shepherd those students throughout their high school careers. This may have been the case at this selected urban high school. However, other urban high schools either utilized this method or a guidance counselor was assigned to all 9th and 10th graders and the students would rotate to the other guidance counselor who was responsible for the 11th and 12th graders.

All school guidance counselors generally viewed JROTC favorably and spoke well of their school's program. Three of the school guidance counselors recruited for this study were female and one was male. Two of the school guidance counselors worked in rural school districts, whereas of the remaining two, one worked in a suburban high school and the other worked in a Title 1 urban high school. Of the guidance counselors at the rural high schools, one belonged to a Title 1 high school. All school guidance counselors had advanced degrees.

***Judy***

Judy was the school guidance counselor at a Title 1 rural high school and was one of four school counselors there. Judy was the only school counselor recruited for this study that was an alumnus of the high school where currently employed. Judy was strictly a counselor, having spent all years of experience in counseling and was quite enthusiastic about the school's JROTC program. In Judy's school the school guidance counselor is assigned a class year (i.e. Class of 2025) and shepherds those class members throughout their high school career.

***Jane***

Jane was the school guidance counselor at a suburban high school. Jane was one of six school guidance counselors. Each school guidance counselor was assigned a specific grade level,

and Jane had the task of all 11th graders. Other guidance counselors at Jane's school were also assigned a specific grade level except two school guidance counselors assigned to the 12th graders and the remaining counselor was assigned all special education students throughout the school. Jane was generally more moderate in demeanor and responses than the other school guidance counselor research participants. Jane was not originally from the area where currently employed but had many years of experience as a school guidance counselor.

***Tom***

Tom was the school guidance counselor at a rural high school. Tom was one of five school guidance counselors. Like Jane at the suburban high school, Tom was also strictly assigned to a specific grade level, in this case the 11th graders. However, unlike Jane's high school, Tom's high school only had one counselor for the 12th graders and one school guidance counselor for student support services. Tom was previously employed at another school district in the state of Georgia as a classroom teacher but recently transferred and assumed the school guidance counselor role.

***Betty***

Betty was the school guidance counselor at a Title 1 urban high school. Betty was one of three school guidance counselors at this high school and assigned to all students of all grades with last names beginning with a P-Z. Like Judy, Betty hailed from the local urban area, however she had attended another high school in the area. Of all the school guidance counselors selected as research participants for this study, Betty was the most experienced.

**JROTC Instructors**

All five JROTC instructors recruited for this study were straightforward and eager to participate. However, they admitted that they were quite busy with their program's extra-

curricular JROTC activities (Drill, Marksmanship, Robotics, etc.) and some with other school duties. Finding the proper time for the interviews and focus groups around those scheduled activities was an added challenge for this research study. All JROTC did graciously lend their time to this study.

The JROTC Instructors presented the most different backgrounds in this study. All four traditional branches of the military (Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force) were represented by the JROTC instructor participants, however, each JROTC instructor was very uniform in responding that their main purpose in JROTC was to "develop citizenship in high school youth" and not to be a recruiting pipeline for the military. Additionally, if a JROTC cadet decided on enlisting after high school, these JROTC instructors would assist that cadet.

A common comment (or complaint) from all five JROTC instructor research participants regarded the fact that they were working for two masters. The JROTC instructors reported to the school leadership and also fell under their respective military branch's regional hierarchy. When asked if others in the school were informed of this, one JROTC instructor responded that "it was briefed to the school leadership and school guidance counselors. However, it was not as well understood as we would like."

***Race***

Race taught Air Force JROTC at a Title 1 rural high school. Race was the most experienced of all the JROTC instructors interviewed with well over 20 years teaching JROTC. Race served in the Air Force for over 20 years. Prior to assuming the current position at the Title 1 rural high school, Race also taught Air Force JROTC at other Title 1 schools, both at urban and suburban locations.

***George***

George taught Navy JROTC at a suburban high school. George had served in the Navy for over 20 years. He was also the most formally prepared JROTC instructor interviewed for this research study, having an educational specialist degree. George had served as an educational counselor for part of his time in the Navy.

### *Elroy*

Elroy taught Navy JROTC alongside George at a suburban high school. However, unlike George who was Navy, Elroy was a Marine having served over 27 years in the United States Marine Corps. During the individual interview, Elroy stated that Navy JROTC prefers having one instructor from the Navy and one from the Marine Corps to properly teach all aspects of the Naval Science and Amphibious Warfare curriculum in Navy JROTC. Elroy previously taught at another Navy JROTC unit.

### *Fred*

Fred taught Army JROTC at a Title 1 urban high school. Fred had served over 20 years in the Army before becoming a JROTC instructor. Fred was the most junior experienced of JROTC instructors interviewed for this research study with five to nine years of experience. Fred had a bachelor's degree and was working on his master's degree at the time of this study.

### *Jerry*

Jerry taught Army JROTC at a suburban high school. Jerry had served over 20 years in the Army before becoming a JROTC instructor. Jerry had excellent educational experience and preparation with a master's degree. Jerry had 15-19 years of experience teaching JROTC, and along with Race, was also one of the most experienced JROTC instructors interviewed.

## Results

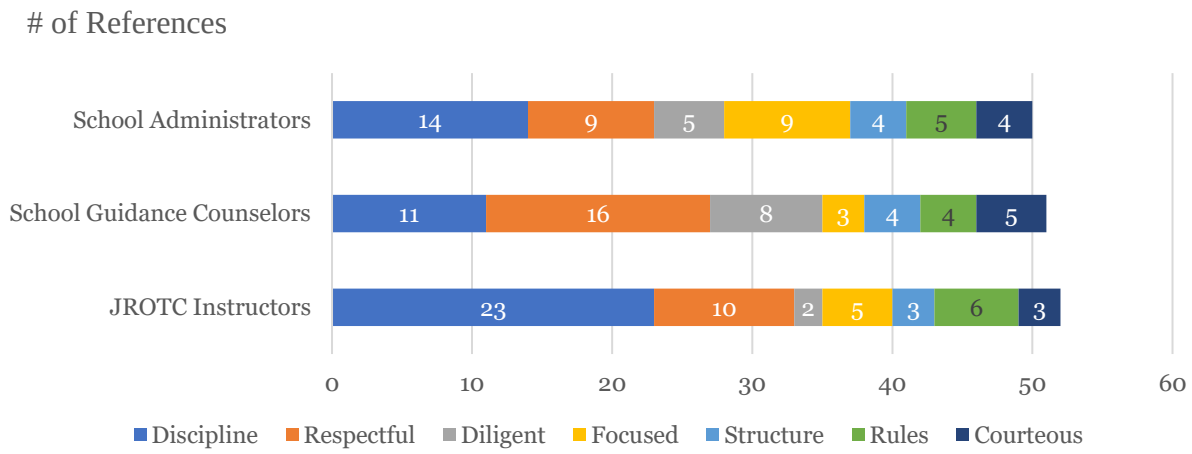
Once research candidates consented to the research study, they were given an individual survey to complete on Survey Monkey. The survey results were then coded on Atlas.ti. Once the individual surveys were completed, the participants also completed an individual interview. Following the individual interviews with the participants, Otter.ai transcribed the Zoom sessions. The data went through several rounds of coding. All coding rounds went through the coding program on Atlas.ti. Manual coding also occurred. The focus group coding procedures followed the same process as the individual interviews. The focus group recordings were transcribed via Otter.ai and then the researcher coded it using Atlas.ti. Triangulation of data was accomplished through the collection methods and member checks were also conducted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After many coding iterations totaling 24 documents, several primary themes emerged from the data: discipline, motivation, sense of belonging, and confidence.

**Theme 1: Discipline**

Discipline was by far the emerging theme, and the word most used when describing JROTC cadets. While discipline was used by each of the school entities throughout the interviews, JROTC instructors used the word "discipline" more frequently to describe JROTC cadets, whereas school administrators and school guidance counselors used the words "respectful," "focused," "courteous," and "diligent" in conjunction with discipline. When clarified by further questioning from the researcher, the concept they were attempting to describe by using the words "respectful" and "diligent" was indeed discipline. JROTC instructors did mention the words "respectful" and "courteous" but not to the extent of the school administrators and guidance counselors. Table 2 explains the breakout.

**Table 2**

*Discipline*




Jerry described the defining characteristic of JROTC cadets by saying, “They're very disciplined students. They know not to wear air pods in uniform, they don't put their hands in their pockets in uniform, they are polite and respectful when they talk to you.” Judy described the JROTC cadets as follows, “Our JROTC program is comprised of some of the most disciplined, respectful, service-oriented students at XXXX High School.” Cosmo described JROTC cadets as “Cadets are focused, malleable, respectful, respectful to adults, and, you know, they’re just teenagers, they're gonna make mistakes. But it is this focus and respect which lends to their good conduct.” It should be noted that each of these participants responding came from different regions throughout Georgia; one came from an urban school district, another from a rural school district, and another from a suburban school district, and each was a different entity of research participant (JROTC instructor, school guidance counselor, school administrator) in their respective school.

***Sub-Theme 1: Discipline Is What Sets JROTC Apart***

The school administrators and guidance counselors offered an interesting insight into the key difference with JROTC programs at their schools. The key difference was discipline. Benton summed it up nicely by clearly stating, “Discipline is what sets JROTC cadets apart from other

students in other (high school) programs." Tom remarked, "The discipline in JROTC provides a good learning environment." Benton added:

> They [JROTC cadets] are respectful. They know what they represent when they wear the uniform. So, they represent themselves and their school with pride. They represent their military branch with pride. All right. I do not see a lot of discipline issues coming from JROTC cadets in my office as I see with some other members of the school, like band members, regular students, football players, and such.

***Sub-Theme 2: Not All High School Students Can Handle Discipline***

Students are mainly removed out of the JROTC program for disciplinary reasons. Judy stated:

> I have been only asked to remove maybe three students from JROTC… ever, and that was like, after many, many, many, many, many chances were given. And those students just completely failed to comply with the rules. Okay, and it wasn't that they were high school expectations, it was more to do with the military standards. You have to follow those rules. See, when you wear the uniform, you have to do that. You cannot do X, Y, Z while in uniform type of thing. Like, boys cannot have hair too long in uniform. It must be according to the rules. But some refuse to abide by that. But you know, some students just completely refuse to comply. So, I had to take them out of the JROTC program.

Elroy added further:

> I teach through discipline. It is taught and reinforced. Their parents are scared to do it, but I do. You can see those that are hungry for discipline, for structure, and those who want to do whatever the heck want to do. Not all high school students can handle discipline. I usually have to find those students another way.

***Sub Theme 3: Discipline Brings About Personal Responsibility***

During the focus group sessions, when each of the focus group participants was describing the ideal JROTC cadet or comparing a JROTC cadet with a model student not in JROTC, the word "responsible" came up once each time in each of the focus group interviews. When each focus group was asked a follow-up question by the researcher to explain how responsibility came about, the answers were related to discipline.

In one focus group, Cosmo stated that the JROTC cadets "had enough internalized discipline to include time management. They were responsible enough to get to each of their classes on time with almost no tardies." Jane added, "They are very diligent as they go about through the school. You never see them just hanging out. They're usually on the honor roll." In the next focus group, Judy stated:

> We've got a lot of community events going on down here at XXXX High School that often times myself or the administrators look to the JROTC cadets for assistance. They're our "go-to" bunch. We often need cadets to present the colors for some group or some cadets to man a booth, collect tickets, funds, etc. It amazes me how responsible they are in carrying out those things. They show up on time, look good in uniform, and carry out those community events as best as possible. That can only be through the discipline that they are learning in the JROTC program. They look sharp. They represent themselves, the school and the JROTC program well.

In the last focus group, Barney remarked:

> When talking about being responsible, what I see is that these kids are polite and respectful when speaking, they dress accordingly with their uniforms that they look sharp. They are pretty much punctual and never late. I see that when they are given

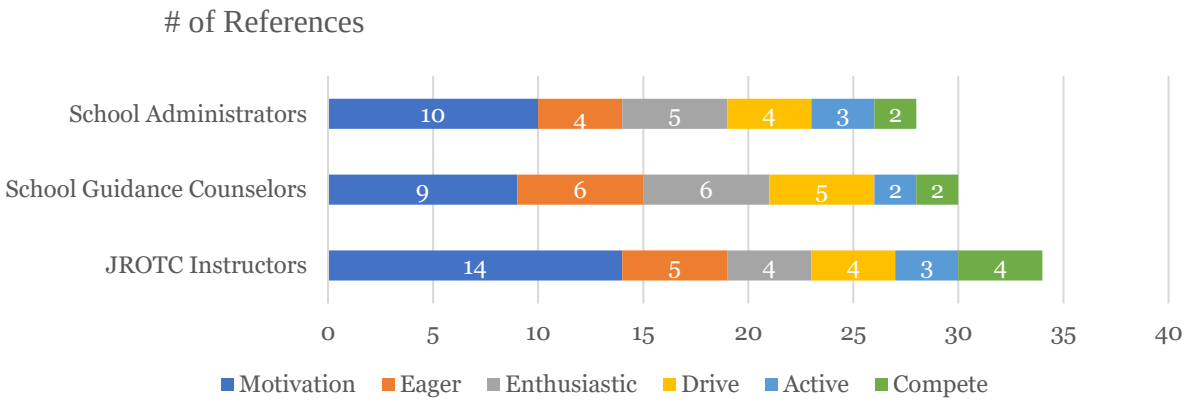
something to do, they can be trusted and responsible enough to carry it out without too much interference. They have the discipline to do these things and this, I gather, was further refined in them in JROTC.

**Theme 2: Motivation**

The next emergent theme was motivation. This word was also used to describe characteristics of JROTC cadets; however, the exact word "motivation" was used almost uniformly amongst school administrators and school guidance counselors. However, JROTC instructors used motivation second only to discipline in frequency. Other words used to describe the higher drive of JROTC cadets included "eager," "driven," "enthusiastic," and "active." When clarified by subsequent questioning by the researcher, the concept the participants were attempting to describe was motivation. Table 3 explains the breakout.

**Table 3**

*Motivation*




.

Jerry described the motivation as "A higher drive… The cadets are motivated to be better. Kids that age are naturally competitive, so they are motivated to do better than their peers." George also explained:

> What motivates the cadets is that they're recognized throughout the school, and they are recognized throughout the community. That's what drives them. I think knowing that someone is looking at them and giving them the accolades or the pat on the back for the accomplishments that they're achieving, whether it be community service, whether it be drill, or a competition or whether it just be "wow," you look really good in that uniform.

Judy also elaborated:

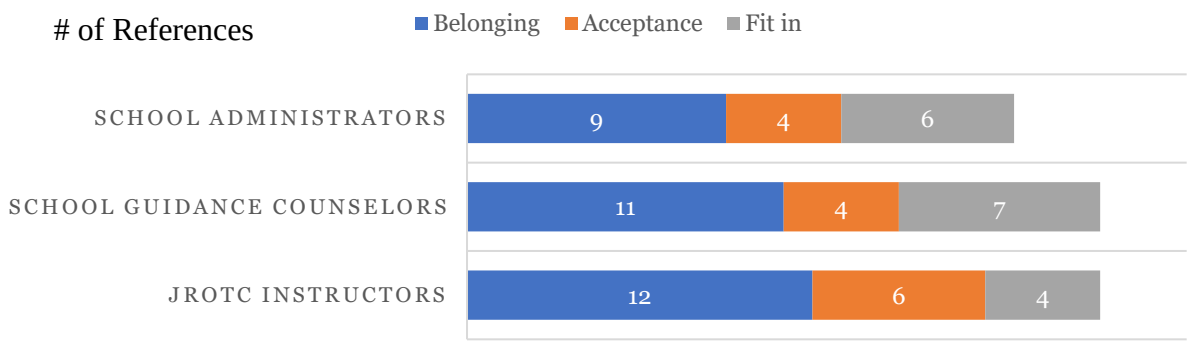
> They [JROTC cadets] are very respectful and represent themselves in their school with pride. This motivates them even further to do better in whatever community events they are doing. We have a lot of community events going on at our school and community and from what I see, they [JROTC cadets] are very eager to do them. Their eagerness is astonishing.

**Theme 3: Sense of Belonging**

The next emergent theme was "sense of belonging." Those words were used to describe how JROTC cadets "fit in" or are "accepted" into JROTC. The exact term "sense of belonging" was mostly used by the JROTC instructors and school guidance counselors to describe that process of "connectedness" with the JROTC program. However, school guidance counselors and administrators also used the phrase "fit in" more often than "sense of belonging" when describing how students fit as cadets into the JROTC program. Ironically, the term "connectedness" was rarely used by any of the research participants and was not found to be of any statistical significance. Table 4 explains the breakout.

**Table 4**

*Sense of Belonging*




Jerry summed up the phenomenon of what makes students remain as JROTC cadets throughout their high school years:

> I think it is a sense of belonging. They find out they are with like-minded folks, and they feel that they belong there. That feeling of being with like-minded peers with similar interests and likes makes them feel good. And when they feel good about belonging there, that gives them confidence.

Betty, a school guidance counselor, also described the challenge of trying to place a student for their classes. Betty stated:

> We go through so many students, and we look at their transcript and records and see if this class or that class would be a good fit for them or not. If a student does not have any interest in music or the band, nor any athletic inclinations, then we try and see if that student would be a good fit in JROTC. We work with the JROTC instructors a lot during the beginning of the year because even though they do their recruiting at the middle school, there are still a bunch of students that we [school guidance counselors] have to figure out where to put them. Most of the time it works out and the student is accepted into JROTC. Sometimes it does not work out because the student refuses to conform to the military regulations for grooming and wearing a uniform and we have to place the student elsewhere.

Barney gave the perspective of a school administrator:

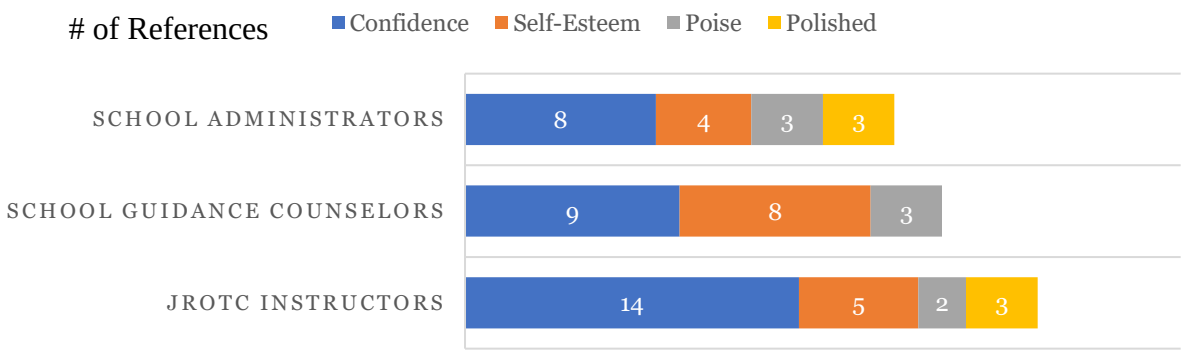
> Kids want to go where they fit in and feel like they belong. I see this a lot as an administrator. I see those kids that don't quite fit in to the band group, or the sports group, or the cheer group. But these kids fit in with JROTC. The JROTC program just instills confidence into those kids that they feel like they belong there.

**Theme 4: Confidence**

The last theme to emerge was confidence. All three entities (JROTC instructors, school administrators, and school guidance counselors) primarily used the term "confidence" to describe the aura of self-assuredness that the JROTC cadets had about them. Some other terms like "self-esteem," "self-assuredness," and "poise" were used to describe "confidence," but not used to the extent as "confidence." However, as Table 5 displays, JROTC instructors used the term confidence more often than the other research participants.

**Table 5**

*Confidence*




When describing the phenomenon of confidence, participant responses were varied. Tom described the sense of confidence as coming from the wear of the uniform, "When they [JROTC cadets] dress out in their uniforms on uniform day, they just seem to have this confidence in how

they carry themselves. They don't have to be told that they look sharp, they already know it." However, Race describes the confidence phenomena arising from the various "leadership development activities that JROTC offers which the cadets enjoy." Those activities are usually drill, marksmanship, community service, robotics, color guard activities, etc. Race added, "They get a real sense of satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment from doing these things in the company of their friends and peers, which leads to greater self-esteem and confidence." George elaborated:

> The students that come into JROTC realize that they are doing some things that their peers in other clubs and groups are not doing. They are part of a group that gives them opportunities, many opportunities to learn and excel from and get rewarded for that. Then, they realize "Hey, I have what it takes to be a leader," and that gives them confidence that they didn't know they had, and they can elevate that even more. Especially when they do these things [activities] in front of a large audience or group of people and get recognized for that. This [JROTC] program builds confidence, lots of confidence.

Jerry offered further insight:

> When a student becomes a JROTC cadet, one of the things that happens in JROTC is that cadet is first taught drill. How to do certain military movements in a crisp and orderly fashion. While these drill routines usually apply organizing and moving a group of people from Point A to Point B in an orderly and efficient fashion, this also applies to other things here in JROTC. The old saw "practice makes perfect" takes on a deeper meaning. With regards to drill, the more the cadets perform drill correctly, the more praise and confidence the cadet gains from it, then that cadet can then turn around and teach some

other cadets drill, and the cycle perpetuates. Next, if a cadet must do a marksmanship or robotics competition, that cadet will have practiced, and practiced, and practiced what they need to do for the upcoming competition. Then that cadet will go into the competition with more confidence and come out as a winner. This confidence also translates into any task that comes up. My best cadets figure out what they need to do, practice it, then go out and do it. The cadets usually get a lot of compliments and praise from all around… teachers, friends, parents, etc.

## Outlier Data and Findings

Three unexpected findings emerged during the initial surveys, the individual interviews, and the focus group interviews.

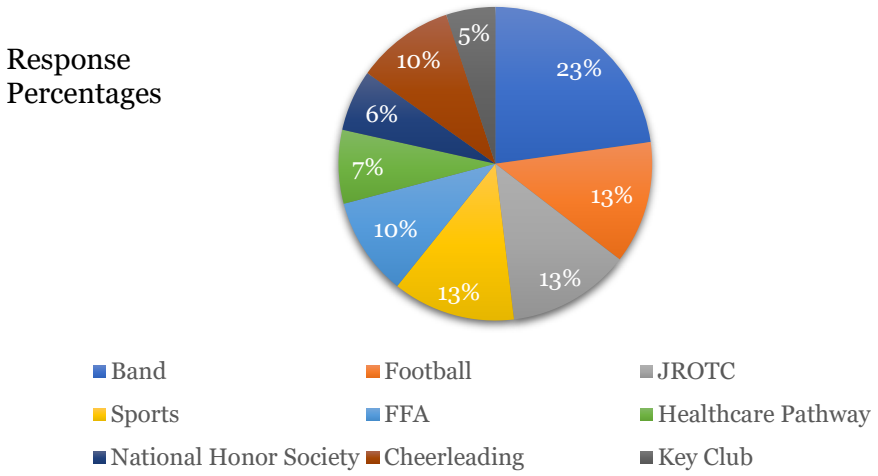
### *Outlier Finding #1: JROTC is Viewed as Second Most Popular Program in High School*

During the initial surveys and in the individual interviews with all the research participants, high school band was viewed as the most popular program in high school. JROTC competed against band and sports programs for participation and popularity. Depending on the high school, JROTC either placed a solid second place or tied with football or some other sports program. This intuitively makes sense given the requirements that students must conform to upon becoming a JROTC cadet. According to the Congressional and DoD requirements, JROTC cadets must wear the uniform at least once a week, or whenever as prescribed by the JROTC instructors (88th U.S. Congress, 1964 [rev 2021]; Department of Defense, 2006). Along with the wear of the uniform comes the hair and grooming standards for JROTC, which are not as strict with other high school programs, such as the band. When questioned about this, some research participants spoke eloquently, giving rise to Sub Theme #2, “Discipline Is Not For All High School Students.” Some JROTC instructors did mention that in recent years, some JROTC

regulations for hair and grooming have lightened up, such as the permitting of ponytails of a certain length for female JROTC cadets (HQ AFJROTC, 2023). But even with the relaxing of certain standards, these hair and grooming regulations were still seen as an impediment to joining JROTC for some high school students.

**Table 6**

*Popular High School Programs*




However, discipline is what sets JROTC apart, whereas band members are sometimes viewed as having less discipline. All three school administrators mentioned in their interviews that they see fewer discipline problems from JROTC cadets. Benton summed it up, “I don’t normally see as many discipline problems coming from JROTC cadets as I do see them from band members or football players, or other general students.” This view corresponds to earlier findings that JROTC cadets present fewer discipline problems for school administrators (Baker, 2023; Bulach, 2002; Minkin, 2014; Quezada, 2020; Stanton, 2019).

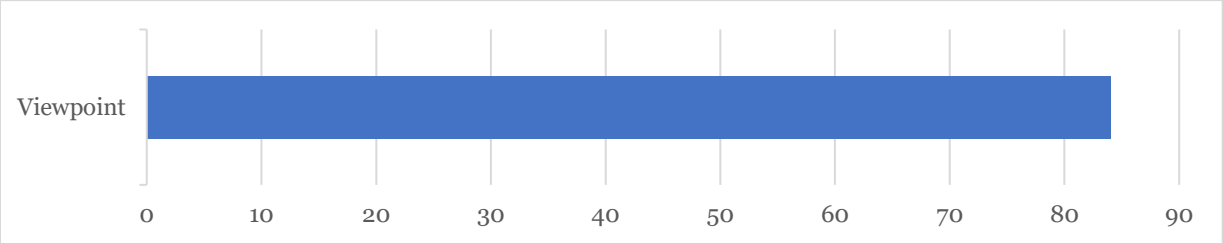
***Outlier Finding #2: A Positive View of JROTC***

All research participants interviewed (school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors) generally had a positive view of the JROTC program at their school. The

results ranged on a scale of 0 to 100, with a median score of 84. It should be noted that only five high schools were selected for this research study out of the 525 public high schools in the state of Georgia (Georgia Department of Education, 2021b). No conflicts between any of the research participants were mentioned in any of individual surveys and interviews, nor were they perceived by the researcher when conducting the focus group sessions.

**Table 7**

*View of JROTC*




Negative Positive

***Outlier Finding #3: The Missing Word***

All research participants interviewed (school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors) for this study either used the word “discipline” or other synonyms to describe the disciplinary characteristics of JROTC cadets. Frequently used other descriptions included: structure, following the rules, following standards, orderly, diligent, accountable, responsible. The one word missing from the discipline discussion was “obedient.” In checking the word frequency usage from Atlas.ti, only Tom used the word “obedient” once during his individual interview in the context of discipline. It is unclear why the word “obedient” was not in the educational lexicon of the research participants.

## Research Question Responses

The following sections include responses to the central research question and the three sub questions. Individual surveys, participant interviews, and focus group interviews helped

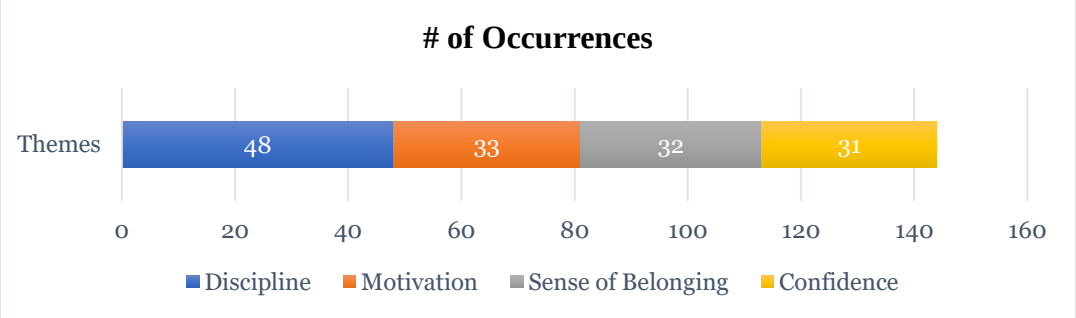
shape the answers to the research questions. Direct quotes were also included to add further validity for the research study. The central research question and sub questions aided in understanding what each of the three main entities (school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors) inside a high school saw as the benefit the JROTC program provided to those enrolled.

**Central Research Question**

The central research question was, "What are the benefits the school's JROTC program provides to the cadets enrolled?" The significant responses that emerged became the central themes and answered the central research question with 1) discipline, 2) motivation, 3) sense of belonging, and 4) confidence. Discipline was by far the most significant response. All research participants described these themes using different terminology. However, even without different terminology, discipline, motivation, sense of belonging, and confidence were still the dominant terms, and themes, in the participant's responses.

**Table 8**

*Responses to the Central Research Question*




The responses to the central research question were nearly universal from all participants. The research participants in this study represented all ends of the population and demographic spectrum, from rural schools to urban schools, from Title 1 schools to affluent locations, and

from high minority populations to balanced school demographics. And finally, all research participants generally had a positive view of the JROTC program at their school.

**Sub-Question 1**

Sub-question 1 asked, “How do the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school’s JROTC program provides a sense of belonging to those enrolled in the JROTC program?” The sense of belonging was provided by being in the program with like-minded people. Jerry previously stated, “I think it is a sense of belonging. They find out they are with like-minded folks, and they feel that they belong there.” Tom observed, “They seem more comfortable around other (JROTC) cadets. They are around people with similar interests.” Benton elaborated further:

> One of the things I see with our JROTC program is that the kids enter it and find out they’re with similar like-minded kids. This sense of camaraderie, or sense of belonging, tugs at them and keeps them there. They want to do all the activities and community service events because they’re doing them along with their friends. Then they realize all the opportunities that JROTC offers. They have the opportunity to go to summer camp and further their leadership skills. They can go into the military after high school with a higher rank and higher pay. Look at the summer flight program that Air Force JROTC has. I mean, how many other opportunities are you're gonna have? To spend your entire summer learning how to fly, for free!

**Sub-Question 2**

Sub-question 2 asked, “How does the school’s JROTC program increase self-esteem in those cadets enrolled in the JROTC program?” Self-esteem was increased by JROTC cadets performing drill and other activities that provided satisfaction, but they also received social

recognitions. All research participants used the terms “confidence” and “self-esteem” interchangeably. Race previously stated that confidence arose from the various “activities that JROTC offers which the cadets enjoy, and they get recognized for.” Additionally, “they get a real sense of satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment, which leads to greater self-esteem and confidence.” Jane observed, “There is something different about the JROTC cadets. They don’t look down at the ground when walking. They are confident and look up.” Fred added further:

> This program gives kids confidence, builds up their self-esteem. When they first come into JROTC, they are shy and not sure what to do. They look down at their shoes a lot. But then the cadets learn to do drill, and how to march. They find that they are good at it, and that builds their confidence. Then the kids do some of the many activities here and they build their confidence even further. Like the confidence course, ironically, at JROTC summer camp. One of those things at summer camp is the rappel tower. The rappel tower is a 50-foot-high tower that must be climbed down, or rappelled, by ropes, kind of like a fireman sliding down a pole. When they rappel down that high tower with just their hands on the ropes, connected by only a small metal carabiner clip. This has to be done in front of their comrades and peers waiting their turn to go on the rappel tower. Doing something like that in the kid’s mind is impossible, but they did it in front of their peers and got recognized for it. You want to talk about building confidence? That builds up their confidence. With that confidence, they don’t walk with a slouch, their posture is erect, they speak more clearly instead of mumbling, they look sharp in the uniform, etc. When they look sharp in uniform, the cadets get compliments from their teachers as well as their peers. All that does wonders for feeling good about themselves and what they’ve accomplished.

**Sub-Question 3**

Sub-question 3 asked, "How does the school's JROTC program increase self-efficacy behaviors in those cadets enrolled in the program?" Like self-esteem, self-efficacy in cadets was increased through mastery of small tasks, like performing drill, then mastery of bigger tasks. In the focus group session, Fred, Barney, and Betty described one girl that came from a single parent household and was shy when she came into JROTC. They described how she initially struggled but then after a few weeks of doing drill, Fred said "something clicked" and observed this cadet began to master the drill steps better than her peers. He noted:

> She was doing the drill so well, that she was confident enough to begin teaching her peers in the platoon. This ability led her to be selected for leading the platoon for a drill competition. She led her platoon so well; her performance earned her the top award from that drill competition. She was taking on bigger tasks and crushing them. From there, she went right up the leadership ladder, taking on other leadership opportunities. She eventually became the cadet commander for the entire cadet corps, about 120 cadets.

Betty elaborated further:

> When I placed her in JROTC, she was about an average academic student. I thought that JROTC might help her out with some self-confidence. It did. But what I really noticed was that the self-confidence spread out to her other classes. She was disciplined and used that to excel in all her other classes, not just JROTC. Other teachers took note of her. She graduated near the top of her class and earned a scholarship to Georgia Southern University.

The following table summarizes and illustrates the four main themes and sub-themes, that emerged from the research in a concise visual form.

**Table 9**

*Themes and Sub-Themes*

| Theme 1 | Sub Themes | Quotes |
|---|---|---|
| Discipline | Discipline Is What Sets JROTC Apart | Benton stated, "Discipline is what sets JROTC cadets apart from other students in other (high school) programs."<br><br>Benton added further, "I do not see a lot of [the] discipline issues coming from JROTC cadets in my office as I see with some other members of the school." |
| | Not All High School Students Can Handle Discipline | Judy stated, "I have been only asked to remove maybe three students from JROTC… ever, and that was like, after many, many, many, many, many chances were given. And those students just completely failed to comply with the rules. Okay, and it wasn't that they were high school expectations, it was more to do with the military standards. You have to follow those rules. See, when you wear the uniform, you have to do that."<br><br>Elroy's elaborated, "I teach through discipline. It is taught and reinforced," and later added, "Not all high school students can handle discipline. I usually have to find those students another way." |
| | Discipline Brings About Personal Responsibility | Barney stated, "I see that when they are given something to do, they can be trusted and responsible enough to carry it out without too much interference. They have the discipline to do these things and this, I gather, was further refined in them in JROTC." |

| Theme 2 | Quotes |
|---|---|
| Motivation | George quoted, “What motivates the cadets is that they're recognized throughout the school, and they are recognized throughout the community. That's what drives them.”<br><br>Race stated, “Doing these (JROTC) things in the company of their friends and peers, leads to greater self-esteem and confidence.” |

| Theme 3 | Quotes |
|---|---|
| Sense of Belonging | Jerry described, “I think it is a sense of belonging. They find out they are with like-minded folks, and they feel that they belong there. That feeling of being with like-minded peers with similar interests and likes makes them feel good.”<br><br>Benton stated, “One of the things I see with our JROTC program is that the kids enter it and find out they’re with similar like-minded kids. This sense of camaraderie, or sense of belonging, tugs at them and keeps them there. They want to do all the activities and community service events because they’re doing them along with their friends.”<br><br>Barney summarized, “Kids want to go where they fit in and feel like they belong. I see this a lot as an administrator. I see those kids that don’t quite “fit in” to the band group, or the sports group, or the cheer group. But these kids “fit in” with JROTC. The JROTC program just instills confidence into those kids that they feel like they belong there.” |

| Theme 4 | Quotes |
|---|---|
| Confidence (Self-Esteem) | Jerry noted the confidence comes from doing drill, "With regards to drill, the more the cadets perform drill correctly, the more praise and confidence the cadet gains from it. Then that cadet can then turn around and teach some other cadets drill, and the cycle perpetuates."<br><br>Tom stated, "When they (JROTC cadets) dress out in their uniforms on uniform day, they just seem to have this confidence in how they carry themselves. They don't have to be told that they look sharp, they already know it."<br><br>Betty elaborated further, "When I placed her [a student] in JROTC, she was about an average academic student. I thought that JROTC might help her out with some self-confidence. It did. But what I really noticed was that the self-confidence spread out to her other classes. She was disciplined and used that to excel in all her other classes, not just in JROTC. Other teachers took note of her. She was a real good role model." |

## Summary

In summary, the central research question was, "What are the benefits the school's JROTC program provides to the cadets enrolled?" The sub-questions supporting the central research question were 1) How do the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program provides a sense of belonging to those enrolled in the JROTC program? 2) How do the school administrators, school guidance

counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program increases self-esteem in those cadets enrolled in the JROTC program? And 3), How do the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program increases self-efficacy behaviors in those cadets enrolled in the program?

The main benefit to JROTC cadets observed in the research by school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors was discipline. Other benefits included confidence (self-esteem), motivation, and a sense of belonging. All three school entities agreed JROTC provided a sense of belonging because cadets are placed into the JROTC program with other like-minded cadets. The school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors commented that the JROTC program instilled confidence/self-esteem with the many activities that JROTC has to offer (drill, community service, marksmanship, uniform inspections, robotics, etc.) and the social recognition cadets received performing those activities well from adults and peers. Lastly, school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors observed that their school's JROTC increased self-efficacy behaviors in JROTC cadets through the mastery of small tasks first, then bigger tasks second. The main vehicle for accomplishing this in JROTC was drill. Cadets would first have to master the individual drill movements. Once that task was accomplished, cadets then had to master leading a group of cadets. Those that excelled with that responsibility went further up the leadership ladder or accomplished events with larger responsibilities. The JROTC program provides an environment where disciplined learning takes place, from the building of confidence in the learning of small tasks to larger ones, and the praise JROTC cadets receive for their performance, which furthers their self-esteem.

# CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

## Overview

This purpose of this case study was to examine how a high school's Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program affects student development of their personal responsibility and sense of accomplishment by fusing the perspectives of the school administrators, JROTC instructors, and school guidance counselors for a more holistic view. Maslow's (1943) motivation theory and Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory directed this research to determine if school administrators, JROTC instructors, and school guidance counselors perceived the JROTC program provided a sense of belonging, increased self-esteem, and increased self-efficacy behaviors to those cadets enrolled in the program.

The following information is included in this section (a) Interpretation of Findings; (b) Implications for Policy or Practice; (c) Theoretical and Empirical Implications; (d) Limitations and Delimitations; and (e) Recommendations for Future Research. The findings highlight the researcher's interpretations. The implications for policy and practice provide guidance for school districts and educational stakeholders on how to properly evaluate a school's JROTC program. Theoretical and empirical implication sources were aligned with the data in the research findings. Limitations and delimitations of this research study are also provided. Conclusions and recommendations for any future research are also presented.

## Discussion

A thematic analysis was performed on the collected data. Four distinct themes arose from the data: 1) discipline, 2) motivation, 3) sense of belonging, and 4) confidence (self-esteem). These themes were then compared against Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation and Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which were presented in the literature review in Chapter Two.

Additionally, these themes were also compared with other concepts discussed in the literature review.

**Summary of Thematic Findings**

Four themes were found in the research data: 1) discipline, 2) motivation, 3) sense of belonging, and 4) confidence. However, the themes are best understood in this order: 1) discipline, 2) sense of belonging, 3) motivation, and 4) confidence. The themes are best understood in this order in relation to Maslow's (1943) hierarchical order for sense of belonging, motivation, and self-esteem, and Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory tying in with self-esteem and expanding upon it. The research data roughly supports this order. Three sub-themes under discipline also emerged, including discipline is what sets JROTC cadets apart, not all high school students can handle discipline, and discipline brings about personal responsibility.

**Interpretation of Findings**

One central research question with three sub-set questions were addressed in this research study: What are the benefits the school's JROTC program provides to the cadets enrolled? How do school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program provides a sense of belonging to those enrolled in the JROTC program? How do school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program increases self-esteem in those cadets enrolled in the JROTC program? How do school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors perceive that their school's JROTC program increases self-efficacy behaviors to those cadets enrolled in the program?

The findings show that discipline is the main benefit of the JROTC program, which helps develop the JROTC cadet throughout their time in JROTC. These findings are consistent with

the literature review in that the program seems to transform JROTC cadets into more productive and engaged students (Bulach, 2002; Marks, 2004; Meyer & Rinn, 2022; Schmidt, 2001). Research participant quotes also support this finding, in particular reseach participant Benton's quote, "Discipline is what sets JROTC cadets apart." This quote is also one of the sub-themes under discipline. The other two are, "Not everyone can handle discipline," and "Discipline brings about personal responsibility." To better understand the defining characteristic of discipline in JROTC cadets is to recognize these statements further differentiate JROTC cadets from other students at their high school. The findings also display the interconnectedness of the other three themes that arose in the research. Lastly, the findings in this study support the JROTC's program development of personal responsibility and sense of accomplishment through the lens of Maslow's (1943) motivational hierarchical theory and Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory.

JROTC cadets find a sense of belonging because they realize that they are around similar like-minded people. This was observed by several of the participants from each research participant category (school administrator, JROTC instructor, school guidance counselor). Barney, a school administrator observed, "Kids want to go where they fit in and feel like they belong." Barney also added, "The JROTC program just instills confidence into those kids that they feel like they belong there." Jerry, a JROTC instructor observed, "They (JROTC cadets) find out they are with like-minded folks, and they feel that they belong there." These findings are consistent with the literature review concerning high school students' need for a sense of belonging (Ahn & Davis, 2020; Aune et al., 2021; Davis et al., 2019; Osterman, K., 2023).

The findings show that once JROTC cadets are comfortable with their surroundings, this becomes motivation for them to participate in the various JROTC activities (such as drill), which in turn through repetitive practice, generates and increases confidence and self-esteem. Race, a

JROTC instructor noted, “Doing these (JROTC) things in the company of their friends and peers, leads to greater self-esteem and confidence.” With the sharp and precise performance of the drill maneuvers, JROTC cadets are rewarded for their performance. These rewards become further motivation. George, another JROTC instructor noted earlier, “What motivates the cadets is that they're recognized throughout the school, and they are recognized throughout the community. This is what drives them.” These findings are consistent with the literature review concerning high school students’ motivations for seeking rewards for good performance and the increased self-esteem from the acknowledged good performance (Davidovich & Dorot, 2023; Horval, 2020; Korpershoek et al., 2020; Marzano et al., 2011; Price, 2014; Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023).

Self-efficacy behaviors are increased as JROTC cadets master small tasks, gaining confidence, and then moving on to tasks or events of higher complexity. This furthered Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy theory concerning mastering small tasks, gaining confidence, and then moving on to other tasks or events of higher complexity. Betty, a school guidance counselor observed in a focus group about a particular JROTC cadet, “What I really noticed was that the self-confidence spread out to her other classes. She was disciplined and used that to excel in all her other classes, not just in JROTC.” Fred, a JROTC instructor in the same focus group as Betty observed, “She was taking on bigger tasks and crushing them. From there, she went right up the leadership ladder, taking on other leadership opportunities. She eventually became the cadet commander.” These findings are consistent with the literature review concerning self-efficacy behaviors in adolescent students (Bandura et al., 1996; Cheema & Kitsantas, 2014; Zysberg & Schwabsky, 2021).

The findings show that self-efficacy and motivational theory work in tandem to affect the behavior of JROTC cadets. When JROTC cadets are taught drill movements, they are then

expected to replicate those learned drill movements, and the complexity level for drill increases. As the JROTC cadets master each successive step, their confidence grows. The self-esteem rung of Maslow's (1943) motivational heirarchy is affirmed when JROTC cadets attain self-esteem and confidence from mastering the drill movements presented. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory is also validated as JROTC cadets master small tasks, gaining confidence, and then moving on to other tasks or events of higher complexity. As cadet self-confidence increases, cadets are then recognized and earn promotional rewards for their performance. This in turn, helps build up more of their confidence and self-esteem, as well as motivate them to pursue other goals. Lastly, JROTC cadets discipline themselves to master the tasks/situations presented to them. When those tasks are mastered, the JROTC cadets have accomplished something. This, in essence, is also the JROTC mission of instilling personal responsibility through a sense of accomplishment.

Whether high school students willingly sign up to be JROTC cadets, or are placed into JROTC by school guidance counselors, these high school students eventually discover benefits of being in the JROTC program. The most obvious benefit is the JROTC certificate which guarantees a higher pay grade (i.e. E-2 or E-3 instead of E-1) if high school students choose enlistment after high school (Air Force JROTC, 2022; Army JROTC, 2020). However, the main benefit of being in the JROTC program is more personal and relates to JROTC's mission statement, of developing personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment.

**Interpretation 1 - Discipline Is the Cornerstone in 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 or to define what attracts high school students to become a part of the JROTC

program. The focus on discipline is what Benton said, “sets the JROTC program apart from other [high school] programs,” and caused Tom to remark “Discipline in JROTC provides a good learning environment. The cadets are more apt to learn.” Barney elaborated:

> I see that when they are given something to do, they can be trusted and responsible enough to carry it out without too much interference. They have the discipline to do these things and this, I gather, was further refined in them in JROTC.

In short, the focus on discipline in JROTC also shapes and molds the cadet’s sense of personal responsibility.

Other studies have validated the use of discipline or self-control measures lead to the development of personal responsibility in adolescents (Cook, 2020; Li et al., 2021; Wang, 2021). The focus on discipline to develop personal responsibility meets one of the stated goals of the overall JROTC mission statement as set forth by Congress in 1964, which is to “instill in high school aged youth… personal responsibility.” Discipline is also what underpins self-esteem (Maslow) and self-efficacy (Bandura). When cadets are learning basic drill tasks in JROTC, they learn these tasks through constant repitition. This task mastery gives them the self-esteem and then the self-efficacy needed to move on to higher tasks. These tasks are not only in drill, but also include other activities in JROTC such as marksmanship, flying drones, robotics, rocketry, etc. Discipline reduces the distractions, allowing cadets to focus on assigned task (Schnitzler et al., 2021) Discipline is also interrelated to the other themes found in this research study.

**Interpretation 2 - A Connection With JROTC**

Most students placed in JROTC find a “connection” or “sense of belonging.” Jerry 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 them with other like-minded people or friends.

Studies have shown how social interaction and approval is very important in the development of high school youth (Aune et al., 2021; Cassel & Ritter, 1999; Davis et al., 2019; Goodenow, 1992; Schmidt, 2001; Youngs, 1993). The social interaction and friendships is the "sense of belonging" where the cadets feel like they "fit in" the JROTC environment since they are comfortable around other like-minded persons, or their anxiety is put to rest, creating a positive learning environment (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020; Allen, 2020). This sense of belonging further reinforces Maslow's (1943) motivational heirarchy theory where people are social in nature and crave social interactions. Once this need for social interaction and a sense of belonging are fulfilled, the person moves on towards self-esteem needs. In the JROTC environment, the sense of belonging is held together by discipline. There are norms of behavior and standards to meet. Failure to meet those standards usually means dismissal from the JROTC program. As Elroy stated, "Not all high school students can handle discipline. I usually have to find those students another way."

**Interpretation 3 - 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. 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 decreases, and cadets start becoming more outgoing. Race also mentioned JROTC cadets like to compete against their peers.

A key component throughout motivation theory is competition (Goodenow, 1992; Horval, 2020; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021; Stoyanov, 2017). The desire to compete against peers often motivates persons to perform better. When the persons performs better, their confidence and self-esteem rises. In JROTC, the motivation to perform better is often reinforced with awards and recognition. George stated, “What motivates the cadets is that they’re recognized throughout the school and they are recognized throughout the community.” This motivation for more awards and recognition usually serves to further temper and discipline the JROTC cadet in continuing to perform even better.

**Interpretation 4 - Confidence.**

Once JROTC cadets fit in and find that sense of belonging they are then motivated to accomplish the tasks at hand in the various JROTC activities, from drill to marksmanship. 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 in 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).

Proper education or learning transference cannot occur in a chaotic or unstructured environment. (Burns et al., 2021; Gaylon et al., 2011; Stanton, 2019). JROTC was often described by the school administrator and guidance counselor research participants as a very structured and orderly learning environment. Other research studies have shown it is the structure and discipline, particulary in JROTC, that enables a proper learning environment (Burns et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021; Schmidt, 2001; Stanton, 2019) This proper environment in JROTC allows for learning, from simple tasks to more complex ones. The natural progression of cadets in the JROTC program stems from learning basic tasks to more complex ones. This progression can be

found in learning drill, to learning academics, to marksmanship. As cadets gain self-esteem and confidence, they usually progress on to more complex tasks and events. This accomplishment of smaller tasks at first, then larger ones align with the stated JROTC mission of "providing a sense of accomplishment."

Additionally, all JROTC cadets were observed by the research participants as having a general air about them of confidence, not just in JROTC, but also in their other classes, their dress and appearance, as well as other activities. This observed transference of self-esteem and confidence from tasks in JROTC to the learning of tasks in other classes is the observable sign of Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory. The transference of confidence from different types of tasks is the key observable of self-efficacy in the JROTC program.

## Implications for Policy or Practice

The findings of this research study demonstrate the need for a better understanding and assessment of JROTC programs both in policy and practice. The headquarters for each JROTC program can put coherent policies or regulations in place that better assess each JROTC program's effectiveness with respect to measuring up against the stated Congressional and DoD objectives of "instilling in high school aged youth a sense of personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment." Likewise, the practice of formal evaluations of JROTC units by each military headquarters, and in some cases by the school district themselves should remain consistent with the policies established by the parent JROTC headquarters as well as aligning to the overall Congressional and DoD JROTC mission.

### *Implications for Policy*

Each military headquarters that oversees their respective JROTC programs should carefully look over and ensure their assessment or evaluation criteria matches or closely matches

the language and intent of the Congressional and DoD mission statements. Accountability of JROTC uniforms and equipment is standard practice in the active-duty military and should also continue for JROTC. The informal practice by some, or all, JROTC military inspectors of interviewing the school administrators and guidance counselors should become formalized into policy and procedure. Specific questions and inspection rubrics can be developed that target the visible manifestations of personal responsibility and accomplishments. Some of the classic military inspection techniques can still be utilized, such as uniform inspections and drill evaluations. Community and activities involvement should also be considered, but not as the sole determining factors. The interviews of the key school entities (school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors) are key and should validate whether a JROTC program at a particular high school is meeting the intent of the JROTC mission statement as set forth by Congress and the DoD.

Once the assessment criteria are set, it should be standardized throughout all the military branches. The policy of adding / subtracting evaluation criteria at the behest of one military branch or the other should be discouraged. The overall evaluation criteria should again meet the intent of the JROTC mission statement as set forth by Congress and the DoD. The JROTC evaluation can also be incorporated for school leaders or district level stakeholders. To avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, each JROTC program should be evaluated from the results of their respective military inspection.

### *Implications for Practice*

The informal practice of interviewing school administrators and guidance counselors should become standard practice in the JROTC assessment and evaluation process. The interviewing process with the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC

instructors should honestly assess the results of the school's JROTC program. Should any discord be discovered amongst those school entities, the focus should remain on the JROTC program results, unless that discord was directly impacting the JROTC program. JROTC assessments should consider the geographic and demographic differences. For instance, an urban and suburban JROTC location may have more community service opportunities than a rural one. The JROTC assessment should not be so fixated on slightly below average JROTC enrollment numbers, unless that was impacting the outward displays of discipline and accomplishments.

Indeed, all JROTC assessments should focus on the outward signs of cadet personal responsibility and accomplishment, as well as high occurrences of transference. Such outward signs may manifest as high percentage of the cadet corps looking sharp in their uniforms, impeccable drill evaluations, low discipline rates, high numbers of cadets on the school honor roll, etc. These outward signs align with the stated Congressional and DoD goals for the program. Personal preferences of the JROTC evaluator should be strongly discouraged. A unit having a high fundraising scheme or cadets accomplishing a DoD Pentagon style PowerPoint briefing are not strong indicators of overall personal responsibility and sense of accomplishment. Lastly, the assessment focus should always be on the cadets and if that JROTC program is focused on their development of personal responsibility and sense of accomplishment.

**Theoretical & Empirical Implications**

This section will address the theoretical and empirical implications of this research study on JROTC. Two theories guided this study. Maslow's theory of human motivation and Bandura's self-efficacy theory provided two lenses to explore the data collected. Empirical implications were derived from the experiences of the three types of stakeholders (school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors) providing a holistic

view of the JROTC program. The empirical implications provide data analysis of the perspectives of the school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors regarding how the high school JROTC program impacts those students enrolled in it.

**Theoretical Implications**

Two theoretical frameworks governed this research study. The first was Maslow's (1943, 1958) theory of human motivation, which was used to specifically explore the middle hierarchal motivation levels of sense of belonging and self-esteem. Maslow's (1943, 1958) motivational theory proposes that people look for a sense of belonging with a group or other people. In other words, people look to connect via social interaction with others. Once this motivational need is satisfied, people feel good about themselves and begin to develop more confidence. This explanatory case study found that the high school JROTC program provided a sense of belonging because those in the program soon realize they are around like-minded people, so they fit in. Once those JROTC cadets realized they fit in, they gained confidence and self-esteem and began taking on the many tasks and activities the JROTC program had to offer. These activities ranged from academics, drill, marksmanship, robotics, etc. The findings here were consistent with Maslow's (1943, 1958) theory of human motivation.

The other theoretical framework governing this study was Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy. The self-efficacy theory worked in conjunction with Maslow's (1943, 1958) motivational theory. In both theories, successful task accomplishment produces self-esteem and confidence. However, in self-efficacy theory, confidence is also gained through progressive task accomplishment. Small tasks are first mastered before moving on to mastery of more complex tasks. Confidence is gained by each successive step and using the previous learning experience as building blocks for the next step. This confidence or self-efficacy is not only manifested in

upward task accomplishment, but also in lateral transference to other similar but related tasks. This explanatory case study found that a high school JROTC program is resplendent with various tasks and activities for the cadets to master, such as drill, marksmanship, color guard, and robotics. Cadets are encouraged to progress and master the small tasks in these activities before moving on to higher ones. As task completion and progression occur, so does gaining confidence and self-efficacy. The findings here were also consistent with Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy.

This research study not only validated the two theories underpinning it, Maslow's (1943) and Bandura's (1997) work, but it also illuminated the specifics for these theories. In the case of Maslow's theory, the research clearly described the sense of belonging as when students were placed as cadets in JROTC, they found themselves surrounded by other similar like-minded people with similar interests. Naturally, they felt accepted and fit into the group. Other research studies about sense of belonging in youth were not quite as clear or succinct (Cassel & Ritter, 1999; Funk, 2002; Gillen-O'Neel, 2021; Goodenow, 1992; Youngs, 1993). The same could be said for Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, where when people practice certain tasks over and over until they are mastered, confidence and self-efficacy rates increase. This confidence and self-efficacy increases further when the simple tasks mastered become building blocks to master more complex tasks. With JROTC, drill and other activities are part of the program. When the JROTC cadets learn drill, they are taught the basic steps until they can master them. Each of the drill steps is a building block for more complex ones. Self-efficacy was noticed from two of the school entities (school administrators and guidance counselors) observing that JROTC cadets walked with erect postures and did not look down at the ground. Transferrence of the self-efficacy from their JROTC classes to other classes and aspects of their lives was also observed in

that JROTC cadets were usually not discipline problems and were mostly found on their school's honor rolls. This was not clearly stated in other studies relating to the importance of self-efficacy in youth (Cheema & Kitsantas, 2014; Schnitzler et al., 2021; Siebert et al., 2022).

**Empirical Implications**

This research study contributed to the field of research about JROTC by being the first study to simultaneously analyze the perspectives of school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors regarding how the high school JROTC program impacts those students enrolled in it. Most previous studies only examined either the perspective of the JROTC instructors or the school administrators only, but never all three school entities at once. The school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors have the most contact with JROTC cadets throughout their entire high school career, which makes their position invaluable to this research study. This study also contributed to the field of research in its attempt to selectively sample from a varied population instead of collecting from a small region and then asserting the results were representative of the entire JROTC population.

While discipline is mentioned throughout many other JROTC studies, no solid connection existed in those previous studies between discipline and either the motivational and/or self-efficacy theories (Bulach, 2002; Funk, 2002; Minkin, 2014; Pema & Mehay, 2009; Taylor, 1999; Walls, 2003). Discipline was the key characteristic in this research study that school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors observed that made self-esteem and self-efficacy possible. In this study, school administrators and school guidance counselors observed that JROTC cadets were more "respectful," "focused," and "diligent," and that could only be the result of the discipline that was being taught and reinforced in JROTC. In the focus groups, all participants readily gave examples of students that became JROTC cadets,

and gradually rose to be top performers in the program, all due to discipline. Other studies have made mention of structured and disciplined learning environments (Gaylon et al., 2011; Minkin, 2014; Narmada et al., 2021; Reiger & Demoulin, 2000). And other studies have validated the use of discipline or self-control measures to the development of personal responsibility in adolescents (Cook, 2020; Li et al., 2021). However, this study made the connection that discipline in JROTC is what enables a proper learning environment which brings about the confidence and self-esteem found in JROTC cadets.

This study confirmed most of the extant literature on the other emergent themes, particularly sense of belonging, motivation, and self-efficacy/confidence. The literature review demonstrated  sense of belonging was important in the development of high school adolescents (Allen, 2020; Goodenow, 1992; Osterman, K., 2023). Research participant Jerry in this study summed up the importance of sense of belonging by saying, “They [JROTC cadets] find out they are with like-minded folks, and they feel that they belong there.” The literature review also revealed how motivation was important in the development of high school youth (Alemayehu & Chen, 2023; Davidovich & Dorot, 2023; Goodenow, 1992; Marzano et al., 2011; Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023; Youngs, 1993). Several research participants in this study noted JROTC cadets were more motivated or had a “higher drive.” Lastly, the literature review demonstrated the importance of self-efficacy behaviors in high school youth (Bandura et al., 1996; Gaylon et al., 2011; Siebert et al., 2022; Spillers & Lovett, 2022). Research participant Race best summarized the self-efficacy behaviors found in JROTC by saying, “They [JROTC cadets] get a real sense of satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment from doing these things in the company of their friends and peers, which leads to greater self-esteem and confidence.”

**Limitations and Delimitations**

This study did encounter some limitations and delimitations in the research conducted. Limitations are weaknesses or potential flaws of a study, and the researcher cannot control them. Several limitations were identified as beyond the scope and control of the researcher. In my role as the researcher, I controlled the delimitation and set the requirements needed to participate in this study. Delimitations limited the scope but made sure the participants were specifically aligned with the purpose of the study.

### *Limitations*

The limitations for this study included the number of participants and the timing of the research study. When final clearance was given by IRB, the school year was already in full swing and fall activities were prominent (homecoming, sporting events, etc.). The most difficult research participants to acquire were the school administrators, as they were the face of the school during many of the school's activities and had other administrative responsibilities.

A known problem with previous JROTC studies was the difficulty getting survey responses returned or interview requests granted in a large population sample. Conversely, another problem with previous JROTC studies was selecting from a certain demographic area or region which would impact the study's validity, hence the decision to perform an explanatory case study with 10-15 minimum research participants needed. However, even with that small research sample, each research participants' participation was crucial and the difficulty of coordinating amongst three distinct schedules (school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors) became evident.

### *Delimitations*

Participant requirements were set by the researcher, which set delimitations for the course of the study. These requirements were needed to get a better understanding of how each of the

school's entities recruited for this study perceived the benefits offered by their school's JROTC program. Participants were limited to JROTC instructors, school administrators, and 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), and to include a wide variety of research participant demographics to reflect existing conditions in society and further the validity of this research study.

The other delimitating factor for this study was the explanatory case study method specifically selected as the primary approach for this research. With over 3,500 JROTC units spread across the country, the busy schedule for all high school curriculum and activities in this present day, and previous unsuccessful efforts to canvas enough participants nationwide for a statistical significance guided the development for this case study. Specific school types selected for this study reflect existing demographic conditions. Th selected school types were urban, suburban, and rural, which can be found throughout the country and not only in Georgia.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This explanatory case study attempted to understand multiple perspectives on how a high school JROTC program affected student development. Future research could still be conducted along this study's explanatory case study methodology, so as to quickly canvas enough research participants. Any future research on a high school JROTC program should be very cognizant of the targeted high school's annual calendar. Prior research and study of that annual calendar will dictate the best times for participant availability while also informing the researcher the times the participants will not be available (i.e. homecoming, spring prom, sports schedules, and mandated testing dates). Future research should also focus on acquiring an actual high school principal as one of the school administrators necessary for this study. Additionally, in future studies the

researcher could conduct the focus groups according to academic specialty. For example, one focus group could include all the school administrators in the participant study, the next focus group could include all the JROTC instructors, etc. However, given the different requirements and operating procedures of each school district and the high school itself, this may not be feasible.

Future research could also be expanded geographically. Rural samples could be taken from the Midwestern parts of the country, urban samples could be taken from a major metropolitan city, and suburban samples could be selected from any suburban area. For instance, rural samples selected from schools in rural Oklahoma, urban samples selected from Dallas, Texas. or Baltimore, Maryland, and suburban samples were selected from the suburbs outside of Atlanta, Georgia or Los Angeles, California would make for an interesting study. However, if this is not feasible, simply replicating the study in another state, keeping in mind the same types of school entities (school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors) and the same sample collection from rural, suburban, and urban areas would suffice.

## Conclusion

The multiple perspectives of school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors examined how a high school's JROTC program affected student development. Specifically, what were the benefits of a high school JROTC program to those enrolled? The main benefit to JROTC cadets observed in this study by school administrators, school guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors was discipline. They also observed that discipline supported the other three benefits found in this study: motivation, sense of belonging, and confidence. In a disciplined and structured environment, students placed as JROTC cadets soon found themselves with other like-minded people and thus felt a sense of belonging towards

the JROTC program. Once this sense of belonging was satisfied, the cadets were motivated to participate or accomplish the various activities JROTC had to offer. Most activities in JROTC are broken down in step-by-step task learning. Once these tasks were mastered, the JROTC cadet gained confidence and self-esteem. Further confidence, or self-efficacy was gained when the JROTC cadets built upon the basic tasks learned towards more complex tasks or transferred that confidence into other areas or aspects of their high school life. The outward signs of discipline observed by the research participants of JROTC cadets being sharply dressed in uniform, polite and respectful, rarely tardy, and rarely causing any disciplinary problems reinforces JROTC's mission statement "to instill in students in the United States secondary educational institutions the values of citizenship, service to the United States, and personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment" (88th U.S. Congress, 1964).

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# Appendix A: IRB Approval

## Approval to Conduct Research

**IRB-[FY23-24-254] Review**

IRB, IRB <IRB@liberty.edu>
Tue 10/3/2023 2:03 PM
To: Barry, Kurt Duane [redacted] Cc: IRB, IRB <IRB@liberty.edu>; Woodbridge, Jerry L (Doctor of Education) [redacted]

2 attachments (61 KB)
Barry_254ConsentRevision3.docx; Barry_254RecruitmentRevision2.docx;

Good Afternoon,
The IRB has completed its review of your research application, and you will receive your approval notification shortly. Some minor edits were identified on the attached document(s), and we wanted to make you aware of the edits, but you do not need to return the documents to the IRB. Feel free to contact the IRB if you have any questions.

Thank you,

**Yinong Fang**
*Assistant Research Coordinator*
**Research Ethics Office**

*Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971*

## Appendix B: Site Permission Requests

**Site Permission Request Format: For Each Board of Education**

Aug xx, 2023

[redacted], GA [redacted]

Dear [redacted]

I am a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is "Multiple Perspectives Assessing How a High School Junior Reserve Officer's Training Corps (JROTC) Affects Student Development: A Case Study." The purpose of my research is to truly assess how high school JROTC programs affect student development of personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment by fusing together the perspectives of the school administrators, JROTC instructors, and school guidance counselors for a more holistic view.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research for my case study at the following high schools in your county, [redacted]. I plan to recruit enough participants from the JROTC instructors, the school guidance counselors, and school administrators at those schools.

Participants will be asked to complete the attached survey, complete an interview with me, and participate in a focus group. Participants will be presented with informed consent forms prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Many thanks for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to [redacted]

Sincerely,

Kurt Barry
PhD Candidate Liberty University
[redacted]
[redacted]

**Site Permission Request Format: For Each High School**

Oct xx, 2023

Principal [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] GA [redacted]

Dear [redacted]

I am a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is "Multiple Perspectives Assessing How a High School Junior Reserve Officer's Training Corps (JROTC) Affects Student Development: A Case Study." The purpose of my research is to truly assess how high school JROTC programs affect student development of personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment by fusing together the perspectives of the school administrators, JROTC instructors, and school guidance counselors for a more holistic view.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research for my case study at your high school, [redacted] High School. I plan to recruit and interview participants from the JROTC instructors, the school guidance counselors, and the school administration, yourself included.

Participants will be asked to complete the attached survey, complete an interview with me, and participate in a focus group. Participants will be presented with informed consent forms prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Many thanks for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to [redacted]

Sincerely,

Kurt Barry
PhD Candidate Liberty University
[redacted]
[redacted]

## Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

**Recruitment Email**

Dear [Recipient]

As a student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree. The purpose of my research is to truly assess how a high school Junior Reserve Officer Training Program (JROTC) affects student development of personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment by fusing together the perspectives of the school administrators, the school guidance counselors, and the JROTC instructors for a more holistic view. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be working at a high school in the capacity of a school administrator, a guidance counselor, and a JROTC instructor.

Participants, if willing, will be first asked to take part in an online survey (10 minutes), then a private individual interview (online or in person, audio-and-video recorded) for no more than 45 minutes, then finally take part in an online focus group (audio-and-video recorded) with the researcher as moderator for no more than 45 minutes. Participants will be able to review a transcript of their interview to check the validity of the material and make any corrections. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of the study, but that information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me at [redacted] for more information and complete the screening questions.

If you decide to participate, a consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. You will be asked to provide an electronic signature by using Adobe Sign, DocuSign, or a similar electronic signature program. Once you have completed your signature, the document will be automatically returned to me.

Sincerely,

Kurt Barry
Ph.D. Candidate Liberty University
[redacted]
[redacted]

## Appendix D: Participant Screening Survey

**Participant Screening Survey**

Participant Name (First and Last) _____

Participant Phone Number_____

Participant Email_____

What is your position at your high school? (Check one) School Administration _____

Guidance Counselor _____

JROTC Instructor _____

How long have you been in your current position? _____

How long have you served as a School Administrator / Guidance Counselor / JROTC Instructor?

_____

## Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

### Consent

**Title of the Project:** Multiple Perspectives Assessing How a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) Program Affects Student Development: A Case Study.
**Principal Investigator:** Kurt Barry, Ph.D. Candidate in Higher Education and Leadership in the School of Education at Liberty University

### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate you must be a school guidance counselor, a JROTC instructor, and a member of your high school's administration. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

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

The purpose of the study is to truly examine and understand how a high school JROTC program affects student development of personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment by fusing together the perspectives of school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC instructors.

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

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

1. First, you will take part in an online survey via Survey Monkey. This online survey link will be e-mailed to you and only be 1 and ½ pages in length. It should not take more than 10 minutes to complete. When you have completed the survey, the results will be sent directly to me.
2. Secondly, you will participate in an online (Zoom or MS Teams) or in-person, audio-and-video-recorded interview that will take no more than 45 minutes. Afterward, I will electronically send you the interview transcript for a review of accuracy.
3. Lastly, you will participate in one online (Zoom or MS Teams), audio-and-video-recorded focus group that will take no more than 45 minutes.

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

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

Benefits to society include gathering additional research on how JROTC affects student development through the teaching of personal responsibility and a sense of accomplishment. Currently, there is no study of this kind that fuses together the three perspectives of the different entities inside the high school (school administrators, guidance counselors, and JROTC

instructors) that could best observe student development over the 4-year period of a high school term.

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

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

**How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous and will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While strongly discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer/in a locked file cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted/erased. The researcher and members of her doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

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

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**What are the costs to you to be part of the study?**

To participate in the research, you will not need to pay any costs.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

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

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data

collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Kurt Barry. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [redacted]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Jerry Woodbridge at [redacted].

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

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

**Your Consent**

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

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

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

_____

Printed Subject Name

_____

Signature & Date

# Appendix F: Data Collection Questions

## Individual Survey Questions

1. Please state how long you have been in education. Central Research Question (CRQ)
2. Please discuss how do you view your school. Good or Bad? Why? CRQ
3. Please discuss what are the most popular or successful programs at your school. CRQ
4. From the responses given, why are these programs popular, successful, or well attended? Sub Questions 1 & 2 (SQ1, SQ2)
5. Please discuss how do you view your school's JROTC program? CRQ
6. Please discuss how do you view your school's JROTC program compared to the other popular / successful programs at your school. CRQ and SQ1
7. What do you see as the qualities of the cadets in the JROTC program have compared to those in the other popular programs at your high school? If JROTC cadets are involved in more than one program besides JROTC, please say so and elaborate on the characteristics. CRQ, SQ2 and SQ3
8. How do you interact with (other): school administrators / guidance counselors / JROTC instructors at your school. SQ1
9. How do you perceive the (other): school administrators / guidance counselors / JROTC instructors as viewing the JROTC cadets? SQ1 and SQ2
10. What other benefits do you see students gaining from the JROTC program? CRQ and SQ3

**Individual Interview Questions**

1. Please discuss how long you have been a/n (administrator, counselor, JROTC instructor). Central Research Question (CRQ)
2. Please discuss what made you go into education and become a/n (administrator, counselor, JROTC instructor). CRQ
3. Please discuss your thoughts about the JROTC program at your high school. Sub Question 1 (SQ1)
4. Please discuss your experiences interacting with the: (JROTC program, guidance counselors, and school administrators). CRQ
5. Please discuss your role in the school's overall master class schedule. SQ1 and SQ2
6. Please explain how students get placed into the JROTC program. SQ1 and SQ2
7. Please discuss any observable behaviors that you see from students <u>before</u> they enter the JROTC program. CRQ
8. Please discuss any observable behaviors from students you know that have been in the JROTC program as cadets after a period of time. CRQ
9. Please explain your perception of JROTC cadets with regards to class attendance. CRQ and SQ1
10. Please explain your perception of JROTC cadets with regards to student discipline. CRQ and SQ2
11. Please explain your perception of JROTC cadets with regards to student activities. CRQ and SQ1
12. Please explain your perception of JROTC cadets with regards to academic performance. CRQ and SQ3

13. Please describe or define what you think the defining characteristics of the JROTC cadets are at your school. CRQ and SQ3
14. Please discuss anything else where you think the student's enrollment as cadets in the JROTC program brought about some other noticeable result. CRQ

**Focus Group Interview Questions**

1. Please discuss each of your reasons for being in education. CRQ
2. From the responses given, please discuss the similarities (if any) or differences (if any). CRQ
3. Please discuss your working relationship with the other members of the focus group. CRQ
4. From the responses given, are there more or fewer commonalities (if any) regarding attitudes towards the JROTC program? SQ1
5. From the responses given, do you see that there are more or fewer differences (if any) in attitudes towards the JROTC program?
6. Please discuss the qualities you think an ideal student should have attending your high school. SQ2 and SQ3
7. From these qualities, how does the ideal student compare to a JROTC cadet currently attending your high school? SQ2 and SQ3
8. Please pick a known student in your school (common to all) that is enrolled as a cadet in the JROTC program. How would each of you describe the changes (if any) you have observed in that student since being enrolled in the JROTC program? SQ2
9. How would each of you describe that student from #8 with regards to attendance? Academic achievement? Disciplinary record? School activities? CRQ, SQ1, and SQ3
10. Would you describe the JROTC program as a “good fit” for the student described in question #8? CRQ and SQ3
11. Regarding the student in question #8, how would you describe their daily demeanor or outlook? CRQ, SQ2 and SQ3

12. What other effects do you see students gaining from the JROTC program? CRQ