Socioeconomic Background: Enlistees versus ROTC Cadets

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Research Proposal

The intent of this research project is to determine what socioeconomic factors lead to enlisting versus enrolling as an ROTC cadet. It provides details that lead them to take the military route but specifically, which one. The research for this particular topic will be done using mostly data analysis and interviews with four ROTC cadets. Before starting this project, I hypothesized that ROTC cadets would have the advantage of a higher socioeconomic background than enlistees. This hypothesis was formulated not just at random but from personal observations. I have witnessed both enlistee lifestyles and that of a cadet. By the end of all my research, I hope to find some distinct differences in each of the career paths within the military that I present.

Annotated Bibliography

Bachman, Freedman-Doan, O'Malley, and Segal. "Who Chooses Military Service? Correlates of Propensity and Enlistment in the United States Armed Forces." *â□"Maryland Population Research Center*. Web. 13 May 2012. <http://www.popcenter.umd.edu/mprc-associates/dsegal/david-segal-publications/dsegal-32>.

The authors, here, present information that lead an individual to either enlisting or not enlisting. They indicate that indicate that individuals with the highest level of educational success are more likely to plan on college. A person's own decision of whether or not they are successful also can result in enlisting or not. Their data also indicates how positive and negative views of the military can have an affect on decisions made towards the military. The work done in this study will be pertinent to my research because it individual perspectives that lead to enlisting or not.

Berkowitz, Hintz, and Nieva. "CAREER DECISIONMAKING: YOUTH FUTURES IN CONTEXT." *CAREER DECISIONMAKING: YOUTH FUTURES IN CONTEXT*. Web. 22 May 2012. <http://www.ijoa.org/imta96/paper25.html>.

Berkowitz, Hintz, and Nieva did some work on a model that suggests where in the military suits you best if anywhere at all. The data broke people up into three groups based on a financial standpoint. The groups were organized into upper, middle, and lower class. Depending on what class people fell in, it would almost dictate your interest in the military. The work done in this study will be pertinent to my research because it compares people's interest in either enlisting or enrolling as an ROTC cadet based off an income based class system.

Card, Goodstadt, Gross, and Shanner. "Development of a ROTC/ Army Career Commitment Model." 1976-03-00. 71 pgs.

In this study, Card, Goodstadt, Gross, and Shanner are able to investigate the career path of an ROTC cadet versus a civilian. The data suggested interesting things concerning characteristics of ROTC cadets. They demonstrated the "B" average achieved in high school. They also displayed cadets early ambition in high school. This ambition was conveyed through majors being selected for college late in high school. The work done in this study will be pertinent to my research because it provides some insight into the previous pathways walked by cadets.

Legree, Peter. "CSU East Bay Faculty Profile." *CSU East Bay Faculty Profile*. Web. 13 May 2012. <http://www20.csueastbay.edu/directory/profiles/mgmt/martindaniel.html>.

Legree provides results that describe perceptions of parental attitudes toward enlistment. His results showed some correlation between youth's perception on military involvement and parental perception. However weak the correlation may have been, it did result in children having similar attitudes about the military as their parents. The work done in this study will be pertinent to my research because it reflects parental attitudes on the military in their children.

Hoover, Eric. "ROTC Enjoys Interest, but Will It Enlist More Recruits?" November 16, 2001. American Journal of Sociology.

Hoover's interview with a female went against his original hypothesis of people going into ROTC more so because of patriotism than anything else. She wanted ROTC more for educational attainment and for a strong base for furthering career goals. Patriotism did still play a role. It was just a smaller role than

originally expected. The work done in this study will be pertinent to my research because it conveyed personal reasons for choosing ROTC.

Kleykamp, M. A. (2006), College, Jobs, or the Military? Enlistment During a Time of War. Social Science Quarterly, 87: 272–290. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6237.2006.00380.x

Kleykamp wrote about what options can be explored after high school and the reasons people did so. He discusses enlisting in competition with enrolling in college. Enlistment was also looked at as a potential support network for follow on education. Kleykamp also depicted enlistment as another means of attaining education. The things learned within the organization cannot be learned anywhere else. In addition, he states that high assessments may lead to an increased likelihood of going to college, but people are still more likely to choose the military after high school than work. The work done in this study will be pertinent to my research because it compares the military to other choices after high school.

Kubitschek, Warren N., Mare, Robert D., and Winship, Christopher. "The Transition from Youth to Adult: Understanding the Age Pattern of Employment." American Journal of Sociology. Vol. 90, No. 2 (Sep., 1984), pp. 326-358. The University of Chicago Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2779218

These authors provide details that entail youths transitioning into adulthood. They explain people with the best prospects for success in the labor market usually enter the labor market at older ages. They imply that the youth labor force is made up of people with lower employability. The work done in this study will be pertinent to my research because it provides details for when people decide to enter the workforce and the implications of that decision.

Michael C. Seeborg. "Race, Poverty, and Enlistment: Some Evidence from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth" *Journal of Economics* 20.1 (1994): 15-24. Available at: http://works.bepress.com/michael_seeborg/8

Seeborg writes about the relation of race and poverty with enlistment. He develops a model of the enlistment decision and provides descriptive statistics that indicate similar reasoning behind enlistment for white and black military personnel. In addition, he also found results that stated the decision to enlist is directly related to minority status and poverty status at age 17. The work done in this study will be pertinent to my research because it demonstrates what military path is more likely to be chosen based off of minority and poverty status.

"Oaths of Enlistment and Oaths of Office"
<http://www.history.army.mil/html/faq/oaths.html>

This website provided some brief history and detail for enlisting. It spoke about the initial rank one receives upon entrance into the military. It also spoke about the importance of the position even though it is so low in the rank structure. The information given will be pertinent to my research because it simply tells what it means to be enlisted.

"ROTC History"
<http://www.jscc.edu/uploads/ROTC/Documents/ROTC%20HISTORY.pdf>

This website provides good detail concerning history and overall information for the ROTC program. It defines what it is and how it began. It also shows what the end result for this program is. The information provided will be pertinent to my research because it gives information that will better orient the reader to the topic of the research.

Outline

I. Introduction
   A. What does it mean to be enlisted?
      1. Define enlisting
   B. What does it mean to be ROTC?
      1. Define ROTC
   C. Describe the pathways of enlisting and becoming an ROTC cadets
   D. Provide the purpose of the research
II. Enlistment
   A. Enlistment and its relation to race and poverty
      1. Prospecting enlistment is a way out of poverty
      2. Enlistment is a more tolerant environment
   B. Transition of youth to adulthood
      1. Enlistment and lower employability
      2. Enlistment and poorer prospects
   C. The decision to take the next step out of high school
      1. Least capable students leave school first
      2. The armed forces recruit people with average ability
   D. Options that can be explored
      1. Military in competition with college
      2. Enlistment as a possible support network for education
      3. Enlistment takes precedence over employment out of high school
   E. Those that are closest affecting the decision to enlist
      1. The influence of the parents
      2. The influence of the entire family
      3. The influence of the community
   F. Perspectives of individuals that lead to enlisting or not enlisting
      1. Success in school leading to not enlisting
      2. Those who view the military in a positive light are more likely to enlist
      3. Those who view the military in a negative light are less likely to enlist
III. ROTC
   A. Describe limited data collection and the interview
   B. Relevant data is presented
      1. Data dealing with the pursuit of ROTC
         a. Thoughts towards patriotism
         b. Educational attainment is sought out for
      2. Data dealing with education
         a. The education demonstrated is above average from high school through college
         b. Choosing college majors late in high school
      3. Data dealing with income
         a. A model that suggests where in the military people will go based on a financial standpoint
      4. Data dealing with the economy
         a. ROTC looks attractive to when the economy is down
IV. Interviews with ROTC Cadets
   A. Introduce the questions for ROTC cadets
   B. Provide insight into the interview and what to expect
   C. Cadet Blue's interview
   D. Cadet Red's interview
   E. Cadet Green's interview

F. Cadet Purple's interview
G. Introduce similarities and differences in the interviews
H. The answers were provided and compared for each question
    1. Why did you choose to enroll in ROTC?
    2. Did you consider enlisting?
    3. Do you consider college a privilege?
    4. Did you feel forced to make a decision regarding pursuit of a job, enlisting, or enrolling in ROTC after high school or did you make the choice willingly?
    5. Which category does your family fall under financially: not very well off, slightly below average, average, slightly above average, well off, or wealthy?
    6. Do you consider yourself better off than the average enlistee?
        a. If so, what makes you say so?
    7. Do you think everyone has the same opportunity to enroll in ROTC as you did? Why or why not?
I. Responses that stand out are interpreted

V. Personal journey to ROTC
A. There is some brief history provided on my step-father
B. How discipline was introduced to my family
C. I began to revere my step-dad
    1. He made life-long friends
    2. He had a high aspiration for achievement
    3. He took pride in all his work
D. My decision to enroll in ROTC
E. How my socioeconomic background affected my decision
    1. I never had to hold down a job to assist my parents
    2. I could afford to go to school

VI. Conclusion
A. The breakdown of potential reasons for the path that splits when deciding what to do in the military
    1. May be due to aspiration for educational attainment
    2. May be due to more ambition for careers of higher status
    3. Better grades might translate into higher standards
    4. Values of enlistees versus cadets
B. Generalizations that can be made about the research
    1. Choosing to serve for economic purposes
    2. Those looking to find a way out are likely to choose enlisting
    3. Family and community can have an influence for what military path you choose
    4. The ensuing choice based off limited opportunities financially and educationally
    5. Interviews resulted in concluding generalization about their socioeconomic background versus enlistees

Socioeconomic Background: Enlistees versus ROTC Cadets

I. Introduction

What does it mean to be enlisted? It is a person who has a military rank that is lower than a commissioned or warrant officer. Soldiers that are not officers are enlisted. Enlisted rank is where most military personnel start. Enlisted by title refers to the lowest ranks of military service. Even though it is considered the lowest rank, it is a very important role. These soldiers form the core of the working force known as the military (http://www.history.army.mil).

What does it mean to be in ROTC? It is Reserved Officer Training Corps, which is the enrollment of students in college as well as receiving training to become an officer in the military. The idea of military instruction in civilian colleges was spread by Captain Alden when he established the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy. Students of this program graduate with a degree and commission officers at the end (http://www.jscc.edu).

The end result is very different for these two routes in the military. They are both taking on the role of participating in a great force known as the U.S. military, but ROTC Cadets will, upon completion of the program, command over those who choose to enlist. Enlistees will go through training known as Basic Training where they will be taught how to become physically and mentally tough. The completion of this training will result in enlistment as, for what is commonly known as the lowest rank in the military, private. ROTC Cadets will go through a process of taking college courses and required military science courses. After their third year of school and the program, they will get sent to a Leadership Development Assessment Course.

The completion of this training and graduation from school is commissioning as an officer, which will place that person in a position of command. Both enlistees and cadets have military goals, but different career paths ahead of them.

While the process of enlisting and training to become an officer is important, the following information will provide why a person might go down one path versus the other. That brings us to a question. How might enlistees and cadets differ socially and economically before they choose which path to the military best suits them? Multiple sources will convey whether there is a difference at all. Each side will present the facts and data about previously enlisted soldiers and enrolled ROTC Cadets. The results will then be given in a manner that shows whether or not there is a difference in the socioeconomic background of those that enlist versus enrolling in ROTC. The end goal is to display which route comes from a more advantageous socioeconomic background. The reason this is important is because the two different positions being discussed are very different roles within the military. I wish to seek whether or not their background has any affect for the role they end up in. The methods used for this particular research is mostly consisting of data analysis. There is also a confidential interview that takes place with four ROTC cadets.

II. Enlistment

The first couple of articles that deal with enlistment discuss enlisting and its relationship with race and poverty. Michael Seaborg develops a model of the enlistment decision and provides descriptive statistics that indicate similar reasoning behind enlistment for white and black military personnel. It resulted in similar reasons, but black enlistees show a slightly higher

propensity to enlist for short-term economic reasons (Seeborg 1994: 17). While whites do have a lower propensity than blacks to serve as an enlistee for short term economic reasons, the results still show that a fairly large population of enlistees chooses to serve for economic purposes. Another article by Kleykamp gives reasons for African Americans being overrepresented in the military. It is because they have fewer job opportunities available to them and the military is considered more tolerant of race, rather than discriminatory, compared to other institutions (Kleykamp 2006: 276). African Americans see enlistment as a tangible job they can be a part of out of their limited opportunities, and it is a tolerant environment compared to going elsewhere. Tests were also run to show that the decision to enlist is directly related to minority status and poverty status at age 17(Seeborg 1994: 18). Since the general age of those thinking of enlisting is 17, status at that age could decide whether enlistment, education, or other employment opportunities is the next route available. Enlistment has its advantages to youth that fall under an undesirable status. Prospecting enlistment is a possible way out for those in a poverty stricken situation.

Beyond race and poverty, there is a transition youth have to make into adulthood. Youths are making this transition based on the options available to them. An article by Robert Mare, Christopher Winship, and Warren Kubitschek explains that men who have the best prospects for success in the labor market typically enter the labor market at older ages compared to men with poorer prospects (Mare, Kubitschek, Winship 1984: 332). Therefore, if youths are making an employment decision, the success rates are not as high according to Mare. The majority that enlist is young and Mare would say that typically they had poorer prospects. Also,

because of invested effort in more education paying off in better employment people at younger ages making up the youth labor force consists largely of persons of lower employability (Mare, Kubitschek, Winship 1984: 333). Enlistment is an active choice made at a young age of 17 implying lower employability. This implication is made because those choosing enlistment did not invest effort into education for better employment.

The decision for proceeding to the next step is often made based on performance in school. On average, the least capable students leave school first (Mare, Kubitschek, Winship 1984: 333). A majority of enlistees are making this career choice after high school. They are choosing to go down a career path rather than continuing school. Another implication can be made that those that enlist are not as "capable" as those who choose to continue in their education. The armed forces recruit men of approximately average ability because those with higher ability either remain in school or find civilian jobs, and those of the lowest ability fail to qualify (Mare, Kubitschek, Winship 1984: 334). Mare, Kubitschek, and Winship are describing how joining the armed services reflect the limited options of an individual because of his or her ability.

Kleykamp writes about what options can be explored and reasons why they are explored. Kleykamp states that young individuals choose to go to college, get a job, or enlist (Kleykamp 2006: 275). Obviously, we are more concerned with the enlistment category, so we will focus on that and how the other two categories relate. It is discussed that the military may be competing with colleges for young adults, but the military may also serve as a pathway to college. The Montgomery GI Bill offered by the military is an alternative for paying for school

(Kleykamp 2006: 275). Enlistment here is viewed as a possible support network for follow on education. In addition, the type of education offered by the military cannot be received anywhere else. Individuals can also earn money and learn skills during their service. In some cases, military training can be counted toward a college degree. Thus high educational aspirations also increase the likelihood of enlistment compared to other types of work or other activities (Kleykamp 2006: 275). Kleykamp depicts enlistment with some educational value. The education sought out for through enlistment is just a different type of education or a gateway to the desired education. In comparison to college, Kleykamp states that high assessment in things such as test scores, grades, or high school rank, are less likely to join the military than go to college. However, they are more likely to enlist than work or engage in other activities (Kleykamp 2006: 277). While enlistment is in competition with college, it takes precedence over employment or involvement in other activities out of high school.

The decision to enlist can also be affected by those that are closest. A large portion of those that can affect that decision is made up of parents. Children of enlisted parents are more likely to enlist themselves and in a lot of cases have a career in the military (Kleykamp 2006: 275). Peter Legree has results that describe perceptions of parental attitudes toward enlistment. His results indicate that the youth's perceptions of parental attitudes toward the military and the reported parental attitudes correlate at a low level showing that youth perceptions of parental attitudes cannot function as a proxy for actual parental attitudes (Legree 31). They do, however, have some correlation that translates into some similar perceptions that reflect parental attitudes.

Meaning that whatever the beliefs of a parent are on enlistment can have some influence, whether in a positive or negative light for their children.

Other people of close relation that have influences toward enlistment include the family in its entirety and the community. Kleykamp says that those with lower family incomes, larger family sizes, and less educated parents are more likely to enlist (Kleykamp 2006: 277). Kleykamp also writes about how the community's knowledge of enlistment can show the likeliness of someone to enlist. It is presented that less knowledge about the military being passed around in a community translates into people less likely to enlist (Kleykamp 2006: 276). It is clear that parental actions, family dynamics, and community knowledge can affect the decision to enlist.

So far transitions and options available to young people have been explored in relation to enlistment, but not specific views by the individual that lead to enlisting or not enlisting. The individual perspective on enlistment is different than what has already been presented but is also very sensible. Individuals with the highest level of educational success are more likely to plan on college and thus least likely, on average, to plan on military service (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, O'Malley, and Segal 3). Before, I discussed the implication of people who leave school early being less capable than those who do not. Now, I am discussing the personal choice of an individual. If a person decides he or she is successful in school, he or she will likely choose not to enlist. Enlistment is a two party decision. The military must want you based on requirements that need to be met and the volunteer must want to enlist over other alternatives (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, O'Malley, and Segal 4). Most forget that the social economic background that

can affect the decision to enlist can be as simple as choosing enlistment over other alternatives. In addition, individual insight on the military provides certain perceptions. Individuals who view military service and military missions in strongly positive terms are more likely to be disposed toward enlistment. Individuals who react negatively to order and discipline are less likely to enlist (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, O'Malley, and Segal 4). Individual perspective depicts who chooses military service by enlisting.

III. ROTC

The ROTC route will be recounted quite different than how the enlistee route was portrayed. There has not been nearly as much data collected on the socioeconomic background of ROTC Cadets compared to enlisted soldiers. There were a few places that had relevant data, but a significant portion of the background information for ROTC cadets will be from interviews with four different cadets belonging to four different schools. These interviews were either held face to face or over the phone. The cadets were selected from a summer camp that I attended. I chose them out of convenience and because each of them was from a different location with the United States. The intent was to provide some variation by location and for what type of school they each attended. Each of these cadets has successfully made it through the program and are about to graduate from their relative schools.

First, the relevant data found will be presented. All of the relevant data deals with available options based on pursuits, education, income and the economy that are sparked towards ROTC. An interview by Eric Hoover provided some insight on his hypothesis that the

9/11 terrorist attack would lead to more enlistment in both the active military and ROTC. His interview did not support this hypothesis because the female being interviewed had some obvious feeling towards the terrorist attack but also had other things on her mind. The female Hoover interviewed had been studying up on ROTC already, indicating her interest. During her interview, she replied to Hoover's comments with thoughts toward patriotism but also in pursuit of a graduate degree. She did her homework and found that ROTC gave her options for furthering her education. Other things she looked at as benefits were the chance to travel, to continue her education with worry of burdensome student loans, and to provide a strong foundation for her future career (Hoover 2001: 1). This female's goals of educational attainment imply that she was socialized to believe education is important. She looked at ROTC as a route to help her reach her educational goals and to receive a strong base for her career later on.

Not only is the pursuit important but education in itself and the ambitions it brings show some reasons for choosing ROTC. Card, Goodstadt, Gross, and Shanner provide information that depicts ROTC cadets having a "B" average in high school. Once in college, these students' grades dropped but not by much to a "B-" average (Card, Goodstadt, Gross, and Shanner 59). The education demonstrated is above average and is maintained from high school through college. Another table by these authors implies ROTC cadets are not just above average with their grades but also ambitious in their high school years. Their table shows at what age the cadets had chosen their majors. The numbers were the highest for those that were making this choice late in high school (Card, Goodstadt, Gross, and Shanner 60). By making this choice, it shows ambition and that they know where they are going post high school. Choosing a major

does not leave any room for enlisting. It is a solid decision to go onto college education and the options that brings.

Income also plays a large role for willingly or forcibly deciding to choose where in the military suits you best if anywhere at all. Nieva, Berkowitz, and Hintze have come up with a model that suggests where in the military people will go based on a financial standpoint. They break up people into three groups. It is essentially classes made up of upper, middle, and lower divisions. Groups of lower socioeconomic backgrounds, middle and lower, see enlistment as the only choice out of their situation, according to the authors. That situation may be they need money as soon as possible for them to survive or they need money to support their family. It is not always that the people who fall in this group choose not to go to further education, but rather they, out of necessity, need to expedite the process to make the money required of them (Nieva, Berkowitz, and Hintze 4). More affluent groups, the upper class, consider ROTC compared to enlisting. They do not like the idea of being told what to do and they would like to do something involving more self-direction (Nieva, Berkowitz, and Hintze 4). Money, here, is being both a deterrent and an opportunity. Income limits some groups of lower financial class, while it opens up options for those of higher standing. ROTC can almost be viewed as a privilege because the few with the option of college can choose this path. Others are left behind and left to more immediate options.

Taking a glance at the bigger picture, the economy can be an encouraging agent for going into the military. In the article by Hoover, he states that strong economies tend to hurt military

recruiting. However, with the economy down, the ROTC program begins to look more attractive to those who still want their education and a possible job in the private sector. They just need to be willing to do the time in the military for it (Hoover 2001: 1). When the economy is down, the military appears to be a viable option because of job security. It then becomes a question of what are the viable options going into the military. The economy affects people in various ways. Some ways need to be addressed more immediate than others. The fastest way to job security within the military is enlisting, but the longer way, ROTC, has a better pay off.

IV. Interviews With ROTC Cadets

The next portion on ROTC cadets will focus on the interviews. Each person interviewed was asked the following questions: Why did you choose to enroll in ROTC? Did you consider enlisting? Do you consider college a privilege? Did you feel forced to make a decision regarding pursuit of a job, enlisting, or enrolling in ROTC after high school or did you make the choice willingly? Which category does your family fall under financially: not very well off, slightly below average, average, slightly above average, well off, or wealthy? Do you consider yourself better off than the average enlistee? What makes you say so? Do you think everyone has the same opportunity to enroll in ROTC as you did? Why or why not?

The purpose of these questions is to get the perspective of cadets on how they arrived at ROTC and others arrived at enlistment. Each of the cadets interviewed provided both similar and different answers. The open-ended questions demonstrated the most variations. On the flip side, the close-ended questions conveyed the most similarity. I chose to do interviews realizing that I would receive the most completed version of the questionnaire I developed and that the

sample size is not ideal. Even though the sample size is not what I would like it to be, the interviews I had give some great insight into what some cadet's feelings are comparing the socioeconomic background for ROTC cadets versus enlistees. The next section will cover each individual interview because the open-ended questions differed so much from one another. Each person interviewed will be addressed as a different color because all the cadets interviewed wished to remain anonymous. Also, for purposes of anonymity, I will not be disclosing the schools each person is attending but will give a more general area for the school is located.

Cadet Blue

Southwestern United States

Cadet Blue joined ROTC for the adventure aspect and to travel the world. The cadet was then asked a contingency question of "why not do that through enlistment?" Cadet Blue responded saying that if she was going to go into the military, it would be in a leadership role. Cadet Blue said that she did consider enlisting, but she wanted to go in at the highest level possible. When asked if she considered college a privilege, the response was yes. She did not feel forced to make the decision of what to do after high school. Cadet Blue felt that it was a choice she made willingly. Cadet Blue told me that she felt his family fit best into the slightly above average group. She had a hard time deciding between average and slightly above average. Cadet Blue did not like having to answer whether she thought she was better off than an enlistee, but she did answer. She said "I do not like thinking about it but yes I do feel slightly better off." Her reasons for this were due to her experiences at special schools such as Airborne and LDAC.

Airborne is a school where cadets and enlistees are integrated and taught how to jump from airplanes and safely land. LDAC is the Leadership Development Assessment Course. It is where cadets in their third year of the program go assess for the skills they have accumulated over their time in ROTC. Cadet Blue saw specific instances that led her to believe she was better off. She mingled with both cadets and enlistees, but each time she hung out with a cadet in their room, electronics were involved. She said that it was not just high end cell phones but a good majority also had lap tops. Cadet Blue said the enlistees were more likely to be involved in card games or watching TV in the day room. After answering that question, Cadet Blue had an easier time answering the next question. She thought the opportunity to enroll in ROTC is there for everyone but some people have to do a little more work than others to get there.

Cadet Red

Northwestern United States

Cadet Red joined ROTC because he believed in camaraderie. Team work is very important to him. He liked being an asset to a team, and enjoys when a team works well together. Cadet Red was then asked a contingency question, "Can you not be a part of a team by enlisting?" The response was that he also enjoyed be a captain on a lot of those teams. The leadership role made things more interesting and meaningful for him. Cadet Red indicated that he did think about enlisting because he has heard good things about soldiers of enlistment working well together. He has heard them being referred to as a brotherhood of sorts, but in the end taking on a leadership role and going to school meant more to him. Cadet Red thought that

college was a privilege in terms of people who work hard deserve to go to school. The cadet was then asked, "Do you think everyone has the same means to get to college?" He said no but that people who are willing to work hard will have better opportunities. He made the choice of enrolling in ROTC willingly without any sort of force to make a choice. When asked what category he thought his family suited best, the response was confidently said as average. In Cadet Red's experience with enlisted soldiers, he did think that he was better off educationally than enlistees, but he said that enlistees had the upper hand when it comes to military skills and discipline. His experience showed a slight financial difference in favor of ROTC cadets. The educational difference, Cadet Red, thought was evident in the homes they were raised in. The ROTC cadets Cadet Red knows were pushed a little harder to do well in school than his acquaintances that enlisted. Cadet Red's answer to the following question was "I believe the same opportunity can be made available to everyone if we all have the same work ethic. That means parents need to push their kids to do well in school." He addressed the financial arena in a smaller portion saying there probably are people that have to put in more effort and may not have as many options due to finances, but he has not experienced them.

Cadet Green

Midwestern United States

Cadet Green joined ROTC because he wanted to become a leader while also earning a degree. He did consider enlisting because his father went in as enlisted and retired after twenty years of service. The father had some good and bad experiences with the military, but in the end

he told Cadet Green that he would not go back and change anything and that he is who he is because of the military. Cadet Green looked up to his father a great deal, so he wanted to pursue similar goals. However, his father convinced him to go down the ROTC route because he had great leadership potential. Cadet Green's father also thought it might be a good idea to go get a degree instead of leaving education right out of high school like he did. He wanted to be a leader either way, but he was in agreement with his father. Cadet Green said," I think I could put my skills to better use as an officer." Cadet Green thought that college was a privilege. He made it clear that he felt privileged to be able to go to college. He wanted to make it through college because he knows his father did not get a degree, so Cadet Green felt more ambitious to do so. Cadet Green wanted to ensure that he took advantage of his chance to go to college. Cadet Green stated that he willingly chose to enroll in ROTC, but he did receive some guidance for which path to choose. He knew that the military was what he wanted to do, but Cadet Green had to make a difficult choice between enlisting and enrolling in ROTC. When asked what category he thought his family fit into, Cadet Green responded by saying average. Cadet Green did not consider himself/herself better off financially than the average enlistee because he is receiving a scholarship to attend college. Without it, he says that he would have a hard time paying for school. He does, however, believe he is better off educationally because at the end of his time in ROTC, he will not only commission an officer but will graduate with a degree. Cadet Green thought that he came from some similar backgrounds as enlistees, but he did think that he came from a slightly more well off background then enlistees. His reasoning for this was because he knows quite a few people that did not do so hot educationally so their options were more limited,

and he knows others that do not have the same financial support as he to go to college. With options limited and less financial support, Cadet Green says that enlisting seems like a promising option. However, Cadet Green did not want to make enlisting seem negative because he thought of enlisting as well. Cadet Green is merely stating that his options were more open.

Cadet Purple

Southeastern United States

Cadet Purple joined ROTC because he had other friends that had already commissioned through the program and has friends that are presently in the program. He knew of the skills that were acquired by the end of their time in the program, and that drew him in. He also thought that commissioning as an officer is prestigious. Cadet Purple said that enlisting did not really seem like the option that suited him. He knew some people that had gone through it, but he did not like hearing about their experiences as much as he enjoyed that of his ROTC buddies. Cadet Purple did not want to make it seem as if he did not respect enlistees. He just thought that ROTC suited him better. Cadet Purple did think college was a privilege, and he felt fortunate that he was given the opportunity to attend college. Cadet Purple made it clear that enrolling in ROTC was his choice. He said, "I chose to be in ROTC. I would not be nearly as satisfied with my experiences in the program had I not chose this for myself." In addition, he did indicate earlier that he has some friends that had gone through the program and some that currently are. Cadet Purple's response to what category he thought his family fell into was well off. He did not want to come across as arrogant, but he felt like the most honest answer for him was to say well

off. Cadet Purple did consider himself/herself more well off than the average enlistee because he already considered himself/herself well off when compared to the population as a whole. His experiences at schools like Airborne and Air Assault also helped him come to this conclusion. Air Assault school is again another school where cadets are integrated with enlisted soldiers. They are taught how to properly load a helicopter, set up a proper landing zone, and how to rappel from a helicopter. Cadet Purple's experiences were quite similar to Cadet Blue's when addressing this question. Cadet Purple saw similar electronics among the cadets while the enlistees were partaking in more social, personal activities. Cadet Purple did, however, indicate that he thought the enlistees were spending their money in what seemed like an illogical manner in his eyes. He said they were spending money on unnecessary items. Cadet Purple considered himself/ herself fortunate when discussing his opportunity to enroll in ROTC versus other people. He knew that he got to where he was at with some more ease than maybe some other less fortunate people. Cadet Purple does think that ROTC is an attainable goal, but the route there can be very different depending on where you come from.

All of the interviews that took place provided me with some things that were in common for the four subjects and also some interesting differences. Some of the differences that were prevalent had to deal with varying experiences. None of the four cadets being interviewed had the same thing to say or the same take on my questions. We will now dig into the answers for these questions compared to one another.

Why did you choose to enroll in ROTC?

The first question had a lot of similarities. All the responses for joining ROTC were made up of a combination of things. The combinations were adventure and leadership, teamwork and leadership, leadership and education, and friends' experiences and prestige. All of these combinations involved some aspect of leadership or status. However, Cadet Blue and Red had to be asked contingency questions because their original reason for wanting to join ROTC, adventure and teamwork, fits just the same as in enlisting. They then indicated that a leadership route seemed more applicable. I took this as one of two things. Either leadership is something they strive for or enlistment is viewed slightly negative. This implies a difference in how cadets are raised socially versus enlistees, or it could be that goal attainment is higher for cadets than enlistees.

Did you consider enlisting?

The next question dealt with considering enlistment as a possibility. All cadets interviewed had at least acknowledged the choice; there was a bigger variety when it came to these responses. Cadet Blue and Red wanted to strive to be the best, Cadet Green really liked the thought of enlisting out of respect for his father but wanted to take advantage of the skills and opportunity he was provided, and Cadet Purple was on the opposite side of the spectrum because he had never really given enlisting that much thought due to the experiences he had heard of. Cadet Blue and Red could have been socialized into believing in a strive for the best and accept nothing less mentality. Cadet Green was aware of his circumstance, and so he decided that based on his privileges, he should seize the opportunity to enroll in ROTC rather than enlist.

Cadet Purple had a background that favored ROTC, so that was the only choice he was ever going to make for the military.

Do you consider college a privilege?

This question had a relatively unanimous "yes" in response to it. Cadet Blue, Green, and Purple all said yes with some ease. Cadet Red did think going to college was a privilege, but it was interesting to hear how he defined it. He defined privilege as something deserving, when really a privilege does not have to be earned at all. Cadet Red then responded to a contingency question saying those who work hard have more opportunities. Cadet Red's response may convey that not all people are aware of the privileged versus the not so privileged.

Did you feel forced to make a decision regarding pursuit of a job, enlisting, or enrolling in ROTC after high school or did you make the choice willingly?

All cadets answered this question as they made the choice to enroll in ROTC willingly. Only two of the cadets indicated that there was some sort of outside influence. Cadet Green said that his father gave him some guidance for making the decision but ultimately it was his own. Cadet Purple had the strongest standpoint out of the four as to how strong he felt about making the decision himself/herself. Cadet Purple did, however, have some outside influence whether he wants to admit it or not. His friends who showed any involvement in the program helped shape his decision.

Which category does your family fall under financially: not very well off, slightly below average, average, slightly above average, well off, or wealthy?

The question had to do with the financial aspect of how income can influence the decision to enroll in ROTC or to enlist. There was some variation categorizing the four subjects. Cadet Red and Green each said their family earned an average income. Both cadets said this with a fair amount of confidence. Cadet Blue was a little higher on the spectrum. He said his family was slightly above average when it comes to income. Cadet Purple was the highest of the four cadets. He said his family was well off in comparison to other family's income. Notice how not one said they were below average. This may or may not be true; each cadet at least has the mentality that they are better off than some other categories of people.

Do you consider yourself better off than the average enlistee? What makes you say so?

All of the cadets considered themselves better off than the average enlistee. The reasons for this varied between the four. The three cadets that considered themselves better off financially were Cadet Blue, Red, and Purple. Cadet Green did not consider himself/herself better off financially because he is receiving a scholarship to attend college, and without it, he would struggle. Cadet Blue and Purple considered themselves better off because of experiences with enlistees. They saw a difference in the amount of technology favoring cadets versus enlistees. Cadet Purple also implied that he saw more financial knowledge in the cadets versus enlistees. Cadet Red considered himself/herself better off in that he had attained more education and slightly more financial support. Cadet Red was the only cadet who talked about enlistees having an upper hand. He said they were more superior in their military skills and their discipline. The responses to this question give some insight for the type of backgrounds cadets

come from and the overlap in their similarities when viewing themselves compared to enlisted soldiers.

Do you think everyone has the same opportunity to enroll in ROTC as you did? Why or why not?

All of the cadets at least acknowledged that there may be fewer opportunities out there for less fortunate people. Cadet Blue and Purple each had something to say in regards to alternate routes. They each agree that they might have a better opportunity than some to enroll, but they both arrived at a similar standpoint in saying that others may have to do it another way. Cadet Green had no hesitation in saying that he had better opportunities to progress to his level. He looked at routes from other less fortunate people's perspective and saw that sometimes more immediate means are necessary. Cadet Red focused less on the financial opportunities that some may lack, and more on how the same opportunity can be presented if the right amount of work ethic is there.

Throughout this questioning process there are responses that stand out indicating some sort of socioeconomic difference. These differences have mainly been described through the experiences of the cadets interviewed. The fact that Cadet Green and Purple were both influenced by an outside party to make the decision to enroll in ROTC shows the affects of socialization within the family and community. Cadet Red experienced what he thought was privileges and therefore had been socialized to believe in what a privilege really is. Each of the four cadets unambiguously described how financial support was in their favor when being

compared to others. They also implied that a lot of the supporting factors given to them that might not be available to everyone else contributed to where they are today, in the ROTC program. Each cadet also implied that they were at least one step ahead of enlistees when it comes to the question of whether or not they thought they were better off than enlistees. Additionally, each of the four subjects openly discussed at least the possibility of having better opportunities that led to their enrollment in ROTC.

V. Personal Journey to ROTC

My experiences toward the military first started when my mother remarried a man that came from a military background. He was just finishing his twenty years in the service and planned on retiring. He ended up retiring as a recruiter at the rank of Sergeant First Class. This rank is among the enlisted ranks. It is quite a few pay grades above what you originally start as when you enlist. And that is exactly what my stepfather did when he was younger. He enlisted right out of high school. He loved his time in the Army. It taught him a lot and it is something he will carry with him forever.

This all affected me at a fairly young age because of the discipline that was put on display through myself and my siblings. My family was not disciplined like most children were. I heard of things like grounding and having things taken away temporarily. That was not my family. My siblings and I committed wrong actions, and our punishment dealt with physical fitness. We would talk back to our parents, and were told to drop down wherever we were and start pushing. Pushing is the way push-ups were described to me. If it was not a mass amount of

push-ups as the consequence, it was guerrilla drills in the backyard. These are made up of a series of drills that test your upper, lower, and core endurance. This is where I first got into physical fitness. If you were to go back to when I first showed interest in the ROTC program, I would have told you that one of the things that appealed to me was the physical aspect.

Going through high school, I saw myself getting more into physical fitness, but I also began to revere my stepdad for multiple things. One of which is the company my stepdad surrounded himself with. He had great friends. A good majority of them he served in the military with. He had made lifelong friends. Another thing I revered my stepdad for was his high aspiration for achievement and for what he had already achieved. My stepdad was always competing for something. He set goals for himself. He also wore the medals and pins he earned proudly on his chest. In addition, my stepfather took pride in all his work. It ranged anywhere from something as simple as ironing his clothes to more complicated paperwork he had done well in advance. He took pride in being prepared. I saw all these things, and I knew that I wanted lifelong friends, achievement to display, and pride in everything I do.

It was not until the end of high school that I really started to think about what I wanted to do when I grew up. I had always looked up to my stepdad so I considered the military. When I went to speak with him, he told me nothing would make him more proud then to see me follow in his footsteps. However, he also told me that there is another route I could take. It was a route he saw more suited to me simply because he helped raise me to believe that I should strive to be better than my parents. He told me about ROTC. He saw great leadership potential in me, and I

figured if my parents believed enough in me to be a great leader, then I might as well check it out. Upon my search for what ROTC was, I kept seeing things like camaraderie, travel the world, pride, achievement, and leadership. The leadership aspect never really occurred to me until I went to a university and had a firsthand account of what leadership looked like. The collaboration of my experiences, my research of ROTC, and that account tipped the balance for me choosing to go down the ROTC path. I am now on the road to commissioning in the fall of 2012.

Throughout my entire time in ROTC, not once did I think of how my socioeconomic background did not choose ROTC for me, but it may have made it more available to me. In high school, all I had to worry about was getting all my school work done and play sports. I never once thought that people who had to hold down jobs to help their parents with money or people who had household drama that affected their study environment were out there. I did not realize that I was provided certain privileges whether I earned them or not. I was advantageously placed ahead of people I just described because my time was more open to do well educationally. I also did not think of those that cannot afford to go to school. I know ROTC provides scholarships to go to school, but the scholarship does not pay for everything. You can make a choice to have room and board paid for or tuition paid for. There are also cadets who are not on the scholarship so they just receive a monthly stipend. The stipend can be as much as $500 a month. That is not enough to go to college. I am not saying that my availability in high school and the financial support my parents provided dictated me to go into ROTC, but it sure did leave my options open.

Options that I cannot say everyone has. Someone without these options but has similar feelings as I did towards the military would most likely find themselves enlisting. That is not a bad thing, but it does set limits on what choices you had for the military.

VI. Conclusion

Since the data for socioeconomic backgrounds for both enlistees and ROTC cadets has been presented, the next step is to analyze the data. This first section will break down some potential reasons for the path that splits when deciding what to do in the military. The split may occur because of a different level of aspiration for educational attainment. Enlistees could hold less value in attaining a higher education than that of ROTC cadets. Another reason for the split could be because cadets have more ambition for careers of higher status. The data shows that cadets are making career oriented choices towards becoming an officer at a young age. This age is also the age where enlistees are deciding to enlist. A third possibility for choosing ROTC versus enlisting is that achieving better grades might translate into higher standards. Since the average GPA for cadets was a "B" in high school, it may be implied that because of their good grades, they hold themselves to a higher standard compared to that of enlistees. The information provided earlier indicated that those who leave school earlier did not do as well and are thus of lower employability. Because of this lower employability, enlisting seems like a more reasonable option. The last possibility has to do with the values that have been instilled for enlistees versus cadets. Based on information I found, enlistees are more likely to value such things as order and discipline, where as cadets are more likely to value self-direction. Each of

the values paired with its respective military path matches with the general description of characteristics valued for the positions of enlisted soldiers and commissioned officers. The social and economic standing for which an enlistee or cadet grew up from can incorporate these things, and it would make sense why one would choose ROTC versus enlisting. That does not make the above reasons true of each relative path but the possibility is there. Socially, ideas like educational attainment can be constantly thrown around certain households while not in others. The households that do get this idea tossed around are more likely to strive for it. Economically, people who see and are a part of groups with more income are more likely to have more ambition for that same financial status. People with more money are going to have more options because they can be more flexible with their time. Through these examples, it can be observed how these possibilities for the split between ROTC and enlisting seem sensible.

This next section takes the data and uses it to make good generalizations about why some take the path to commissioning as an officer and why some take the path to enlisting. There are multiple generalizations that can be made using information that was just presented. One of which is choosing to serve for economic purposes. If the military is what a person intends on doing than being less fortunate financially leaves you with one option. That is enlisting. Enlisting serves as an immediate solution for those who are suffering financially. ROTC can be helpful financially if you get a scholarship. However, the scholarship and the time needed to invest in ROTC do not work for someone looking to serve their country if the economy has not worked in their favor. The next generalization is that those who are looking for a way out are more likely to choose enlisting. This is because ROTC cadets have options. Those who need an

answer do not have options. They are limited to enlisting. Enlistment is a military choice that can provide quick results. That is why it is more attractive to those who need an immediate way out. Another generalization that can be made is that family and the community you are in can have an influence for what military path to choose. The data given and the experiences portrayed provide enough information to say the people closest to you impact your life every day. Some may be more impacted than others, but there is still an impact. If the military is a choice someone has made, then the perspective of the ones closest to you will likely aim your ambitions. Another generalization that can be made has been a reoccurring theme for this research. That theme is limited opportunities financially and educationally can cause more people to go in as an enlisted soldier rather than a commissioned officer. These limited opportunities financially can come from a down economy, lack of financial support from your family, or a need for immediate income. The limited opportunities educationally can range anywhere from poor grades to being able to afford college. The last generalization is made from the interviews that were conducted. It is evident from the interviews that cadets place themselves at or come from a higher socioeconomic background than enlistees. In conclusion, generalizations are all that can be made when comparing the socioeconomic background of enlistees and ROTC cadets.

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