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Examining the Relationship Between Male and Female ROTC Experiences and Career Ambition

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ABSTRACT

An exploratory study of how experiences within ROTC programs affect the career ambitions of male and female cadets. Fourteen cadets from two New England universities were interviewed and asked questions regarding experiential factors including but not limited to physical training, uniforms, and treatment by commanding officers. Air Force and Army ROTC programs are included in the study. Findings not only show how certain experiences of ROTC cadets affect their career ambition, but they also show significant differences in the treatment of female cadets compared to their male counterparts.

BACKGROUND

Gender discrimination in the United States military has been an ongoing issue since women were first integrated into the Armed Forces in the late 1940s. A 2021 study highlights the advantages men still have over women in the armed forces. “Defined by masculine codes and rules that have been constructed over decades, the military’s culture and policies have created a gendered institution that has facilitated discriminating against women” (Portillo, Doan, & Mog, 2021). Over 1,700 universities offer Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) programs. The United States Army commissions over 5,700 cadets each year making up 70 percent of the newly commissioned officer ranks (Lopez, 2016). The circumstances in which new officers are being trained positively or negatively affects their decision for a career in military service and has the potential to influence the attitudes of future military leadership.

Although there is research on gender inequality in the military, there is limited work on discrimination in ROTC and how it affects the career ambitions of cadets. A 2012 study focuses on the perceptions of female ROTC cadets regarding gender and military leadership. The small study of six women found that female cadets feel they must act differently and try harder to compete with or be accepted by their male counterparts (Mahoney, 2012). A study conducted in 2021 examines possible differences in ROTC recruitment of cadets with a diverse background such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Findings of this study did not show a bias in recruitment on gender or ethnicity. However, the author confirms more research needs to be done to conclude a substantial difference (Chico-Lugo, R. E., 2021).

The possible existence of gender disparities in ROTC could have a significant impact on the career ambition of cadets. Previous research explores why men and women develop different career aspirations. A 2010 study focuses on how gender, recruitment, and political ambition impact a woman’s intent to run for public office. Findings show that women who are highly

qualified for a position are less likely to be recruited to run for office than their male counterparts. Limited recruitment opportunities for women are shown to negatively affect their political ambition (Fox, R. L., & Lawless, J. L., 2010). A 2014 extension of that study focuses on the origins of the gender gap in political ambition. Political socialization is used to examine life experiences of participants. Findings conclude that women are at a disadvantage in terms of willingness to get involved in politics compared to males (Fox, R. L., & Lawless, J. L., 2014).

Further research exists regarding female leadership roles. A 2021 study about the lack of representation in female university deanship roles has similar results in that both men and women show no difference in their chances of being recommended for a deanship role. However, the authors found that men and women have different goals and ambition in seeking such roles (Henningsen, L., Eagly, A., & Jonas, K., 2021). A 2018 study on men and women's career advancement in public administration also shows lower levels of ambition in female principals and superintendents. This result may be attributed to gender bias in policy and management (Maranto, R., Teodoro, M. P., Carroll, K., & Cheng, A., 2018). A 2016 study on service women's identity through trans locational positionality found that women are more likely to blame their gender for differences in treatment by military leadership officials. Results shed light on socially constructed stereotypes of gender in the military and workplace (Doan, A. E. & Portillo, S. (2016).

Extracurricular activities and commitments could influence ROTC cadets' career ambitions. Previous research exists on personality traits and ambition of servicepeople. A 2014 study focuses on the relationship between personality traits and military enlistment. Findings show that ROTC cadets are more sensation seeking than their non-ROTC peers. This suggests that ROTC cadets have a unique set of personality traits their non-ROTC peers may possess

(Montes, K. S., & Weatherly, J. N., 2014). A 1999 study examines personality characteristics of future military leaders. Findings show that midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy are, on average, more ambitious than the average individual (Brinkmyer, K. R., Holmes, E. K., Johnson, B. W., Lall, R., Yatko, B. R. 1999).

History of Army ROTC

ROTC was formally established along with the passage of the National Defense Act of 1916. The reasoning behind its creation was to “provide a source of Reserve Officers who could be called to active duty” (Kohler, 1970), if needed. In 1919, Army ROTC had become fully established at many land-grant and private universities across the nation. From 1919 to 1920, 57,282 students enrolled in the program. Over the next fifteen years, enrollment numbers continued to increase. In 1986, Cadet Command had been implemented into the program, which allows for senior ROTC cadets to lead their fellow cadets and develop their leadership skills to commission as officers. The Cadet Command program has since been a great success for Army ROTC. Today, Army ROTC is the largest of all ROTC service branches. Over 20,000 cadets participate at 273 programs at various universities around the country (Kotakis, 2016).

History of Air Force ROTC

The first units of the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) were created at universities across the United States between 1920 and 1923. At the time, only males could join the program as women were not yet permitted to serve in the United States Military. The same gender policy was followed in the Army. AFROTC continued to grow when General Dwight D. Eisenhower, chief of staff of the War Department, signed General Order No. 124.

This further established seventy-eight units at various universities across the country. Opportunities for cadets within AFROTC expanded in 1973, when enlisted men and women pursuing a college degree could participate through competition in the AFROTC Airman Scholarship and Commissioning Program. This program allowed for men and women to compete to become commissioned officers following completion of their college degree. Today, AFROTC has 145 detachments and more than 1,100 cross-town universities as well as many headquarters throughout the nation (Royce, 1991).

Recent Changes of Physical Fitness Assessments

The Army has recently made changes to their physical training and assessment standards for all servicepeople. Within the Army, the APFT (Army Physical Fitness Test) has recently been changed to the ACFT (Army Combat Fitness Test). The difference between the two Army physical fitness tests as described by the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) called for the addition of requirement differences between age and gender. Instead of both male and female standards being the same as in the APFT, the ACPT considers inherent differences between male and female anatomy and allows each gender to have separate requirements for activities such as sprints, pushups, and sit ups (Defense Department, 2020. Military One Source, 2022.). The AFPFA (Air Force Physical Fitness Test) has also been adjusted to account for biological differences between the physical ability of male and females in the Air Force (Secretary of the Air Force, 2022).

Recent Uniform Changes

Both the Army and Air Force have recently made changes to their uniform requirements. These changes include many adaptations of dress and appearance regulations to be more accepting of various cultures and ethnicities as well as anatomical differences between genders. For Army cadets, uniform regulations are stated in AR670-1 (Army Regulation 670-1). Updates to the Army regulations were made in January of 2021 and again in May 2021 with the introduction of ALARACT 040/2021 (All Army Activities 040/2021) into Army uniform regulations. According to the Army, ALARACT 040/2021 will be formally added to formal protocols along with other changes when AR670-1 is revised (Headquarters, 2021, Department of the Army, 2021). For Air Force cadets, they must follow AFI32-2903 (Air Force Instruction 32-2903). Revisions to AFI32-2903 began in February 2020 and continued in April 2022 with the addition of new dress and appearance regulations (Secretary of the Air Force, 2022). These changes not only apply to ROTC cadets, but to each branch as a whole.

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The purpose of this study is to investigate the possible variation in experiences between male and female cadets to better understand how these differences affect their career ambition. Conducting an in-depth study of these experiences builds upon the limited existing research and will bring more attention to the gender divide that may exist within ROTC programs. This study incorporates ideas from previous career ambition research and applies it to the future careers of male and female ROTC cadets. By examining possible differences in ROTC experiences between men and women, this study attempts to determine if there are casual factors shaping different career ambitions between genders.

The significance of this study is to provide more information on what influences ROTC cadets' career ambition and how their ROTC experiences influence those ambitions. This study also sheds light on gender discrimination within ROTC programs. Despite many initiatives within the United States military to make male and female servicepeople more equal, differences still exist that may put one gender at a disadvantage. ROTC produces many officers in various branches of the military leading to a possible continuation of ROTC gender discrimination into the military at large. Identifying and ending gender discrimination in ROTC would only have a positive impact on such issues at higher levels. This study offers evidence that could influence new legislation regarding ROTC policies.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question that guided this study is: do male and female cadets have different experiences in ROTC programs that shape their career ambition? This inquiry is derived from personal interest and previous studies on gender in the military and career ambition noted above.

METHODOLOGY

To answer the research question, one-on-one interviews were conducted. This qualitative approach allows for more depth in the data that a quantitative approach might not allow.

Fourteen cadets from two public universities in New England participated. Both Air Force and Army ROTC programs were included as seven cadets were from each program. Eight male cadets and six female cadets participated. Three out of fourteen interviews were conducted in-person. The remaining interviews were conducted online via web conferencing. Cadets received a \$50 Amazon Gift Card for their participation, as a financial benefit was used as an incentive to

gain more participants. Interviews took between twenty to forty minutes to complete given the length and depth of each cadets' answers. Cadets were notified of the time commitment through written and verbal notification.

Selection of Participants

Participants were selected through random sampling. At one university, cadets were sent a recruitment email (appendix B) directly stating the purpose of the study and the incentive they would receive upon completion of an interview. At the second university, a member of the ROTC department disbursed the recruitment email to cadets. In both cases, cadets were advised to send an email stating their interest in participating directly to the author. The author responded to all interested cadets with an information sheet and all necessary electronic consent and photo-video release forms. Any sensitive information was placed in locked electronic folders on secured servers.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this study was to establish trust with each cadet to make them comfortable enough to share both positive and negative ROTC experiences. The interviews began with simple biographical questions to make cadets feel more comfortable answering questions from the researcher. The questions gradually increased in complexity to learn more about their collegiate careers, reasons for joining ROTC, and ultimately, their view of any disparities within the program. These questions were formulated as open-ended to allow the cadet to offer as much unsolicited information as possible.

Confidentiality and Ethics

Participants are protected through a signed electronic consent form and a photo-video release form. Participants were also given an information sheet outlining what the study entails and the confidential nature of their responses before completing an interview. Any identifying features of their responses were kept out of the final analysis to protect their identity. Direct quotes used in this study are protected by pseudonyms for each cadet. A pseudonym key is kept in a locked file along with the emails and signed forms from each cadet.

Limitations

The limitations of this study were that only three ROTC detachments (two Army, one Air Force) were included and only fourteen cadets participated, leaving out a sizeable cadet population at each university and within the nation. Given the timeline of recruitment for this study (June-July 2022), many cadets were unavailable to participate given summer training and travel commitments. A sizeable number of male cadets were interested in participating, while few females responded to the recruitment email. This could be because of a lower number of females in ROTC programs, or because of a reluctance to speak on the issue at hand.

Interview Questions

Cadets were asked to answer a series of interview questions (appendix A) pertaining to six experiential factors: physical training, uniforms, treatment by commanding officers, extracurricular activities, family support, and career ambition. Each factor played a role in identifying specific experiences cadets have had as well as extenuating factors that could influence their career ambitions.

Analysis of Interviews

Each interview was recorded either through the video-conferencing software used or voice recording. Interviews were transcribed and cadets were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Thematic analysis was adopted for this study given the qualitative nature of the data collected and the small number of participants. Graphs were created to give visuals of the data.

FINDINGS

Individual Factor Findings

Many cadets provided specific, useful accounts of their experiences as they relate to each of the six factors of the interview questions: physical training, uniforms, treatment by commanding officers, extracurricular activities, family support, and career ambition. Findings are presented through direct quotations and graphs.

Physical Training

Cadets were asked a series of questions regarding specifics about the physical training they have done in their respective Army or Air Force ROTC. Questions sought information on specific types of physical training completed, if cadets found the requirements challenging, and if they personally noticed any difference between male and female ROTC physical training requirements. Unanimously, cadets acknowledged a difference in physical training and/or physical fitness assessments. While questions focused on physical training, cadets spoke about physical fitness assessments they are required to complete. Multiple cadets from both Army and Air Force ROTC detachments explained these requirement discrepancies are due to “biological

differences” between males and females. For example, Cadet Luke spoke about such differences by explaining the “high level of fitness” his Air Force ROTC detachment strives for.

“During PT, during our workouts, we usually try to strive for a high level of fitness and throughout our whole program, we try to strive for a high-level fitness, making sure that everybody is fit and healthy. However, there are some basic biological drawbacks that might stop some people from doing that. I think an example is the Air Force has a mandated physical test that everybody has to take every year. It's basically comprised of a one-and-a-half-mile run, as many pushups as you can do in a minute, and as many sit-ups as you can do in a minute. Of course, the only difference between the male and females is that the females have to do less as their maximum. For the run, they have to run a little bit slower and pushups there a little bit less. Same for sit-ups. But, other than that, I can't really say there's too much.”

Another example is Cadet Abby, who also spoke about the biological differences between men and women in physical training.

“For physical fitness particularly, there are different requirements, mostly because of muscle development with males and females, I believe. I'm not quite sure on that, but that's kind of how I look at it. There are huge differences in the numbers that you can get to get a 100 on the test and for males to get 100 on the test. I have realized that it is definitely a lot easier for me to score higher score than it is for a male to. But as in our program, I've noticed that there are plenty of males who score well above what I score. It

makes plenty of sense based off muscle development, athleticism, things like that. But there are definitely females in the program who have no issue completing what needs to be done.”

Multiple cadets spoke about the challenges cadets face in terms of their personal fitness level in physical training. For example, Cadet Bonnie spoke in detail about the difference between how average fitness-level female cadets versus high fitness-level cadets are treated by cadre:

“We had this guy come in and give a talk. He's a sergeant in the (National) Guard and he was talking about how I asked him about female leadership that he's seen during his time in service. It's been impressive. His examples were all based around physical strength. I was like, okay, that's right. Of course, you have to meet the physical expectations of being in the military, whether you're a man or a woman. But he had given many examples of his male counterparts that had impressed outside of physical fitness. But his examples of women that have impressed have only been based on physical fitness. So it's kind of looking for that, women can be excellent soldiers, and average athletes. But if they're average athletes, that excellent soldiering ability gets ignored.”

Another example is Cadet Ellen. Cadet Ellen spoke of similar treatment in regard to the divide between male and female physical fitness standards.

“I have noticed a kind of special treatment but it wasn't in a way that really affected me. It was more, if I was a guy and I was really athletic, I would be try to suck up or

whatever. But, obviously, I'm not a guy and I'm also not insanely athletic like some other girls are. Sometimes, the more athletic girls... get more, they can get respect a little easier from some of the cadre because cadre... finds that more respectable. I haven't always loved that, but I'm not in the lower athletic, I'm kind of in the middle, so I'm pretty neutral. People don't pull me aside to tell me to work on my athletics, but they're not rewarding me for being the fastest runner or anything.”

Cadet Lily shares the same sentiment as Cadets Bonnie and Ellen, as she said she is “more respected” partially because “I was half decent in the program and in what I was doing.” Cadets also spoke about judgement from others, specifically those of the opposite sex, during physical training. Cadets said these judgements affected cadets in their performance. An example is Cadet Molly, who experienced judgment from male ROTC peers and pressure to continue physical training despite having a medical issue.

“When a male sits out, everyone seems to treat him like, he's genuinely hurt. And I've heard when a female sits out of training, or, something's wrong, you definitely hear some talk about whether she can handle it, she's pretending or something like that. That's something I definitely had to learn to get over because I went to field training and had huge problems with cramping. I don't know what it was. My calves were hard cramping and I didn't want to go to medical because I didn't want to portray the idea that I'm one of those girls that sits in medical and is trying to get out of the physical portion of the training, so I went through 7 days, not saying a word and not sleeping at night because it was a decision on my part. But it's just because I've seen in my own detachment someone

that is sitting out constantly asking for medical attention, they get that stereotype put on them that they're just avoiding the physical stuff. So, should I have done that? No, I should have gone to some medical health center, but it was like, so important to show all the guys, I can do this just as good as you can.”

Cadet Chloe also spoke about being “bullied” by male cadets for sustained injuries in physical training.

“I’ve had problems with some of my peers being rude to me back when I had a stress fracture. I couldn't let it heal because ROTC was extremely, physically demanding. They basically kind of bullied me. They're trying to think that I'm using my stress fracture as an excuse to be on profile, which is basically, like, you can't do certain exercises because you're hurt. They're bullying me and I had to complained to the cadre about that and the cadre had to speak to them.”

In addition to being asked to describe physical training and observed differences between male and female cadets, cadets were also asked if such requirements were challenging. 71 percent said the requirements were not challenging, while 28 percent of cadets said physical training and assessments were difficult. Most cadets who responded “yes” to the question were female. Cadets who said they have physical difficulties with physical training either overcame them or are actively trying to “be better”. Cadet Abby shared her thoughts on how she has overcome physical training requirements.

“Personally, when I first took the PFA (Air Force Physical Fitness Assessment), it was one of the hardest things that I had to do. But when you go through the program, you want to be the best. You want to be the best you can be. So, you start working out, you start learning how to be better. As I've gone through, I've definitely gotten stronger and wanted to take the test. Every time I've taken the test, it's gotten better.”

The majority of cadets, both male and female, said they notice differences between male and female cadet requirements in physical training. The majority of cadets also stated they did not find the physical fitness requirements of their programs challenging.

Uniforms

Cadets were asked questions about their experiences in relation to uniforms in Army and Air Force ROTC. These questions included what cadets typically wear for physical training, requirements for attire away from ROTC events, any accessories cadets are allowed to wear while in uniform, and hairstyle requirements. These questions were open-ended, allowing cadets to speak upon the most important aspects of their uniform requirements. Although different uniform regulations exist for the Army and Air Force, both branches follow extremely similar guidelines. Each cadet verbally described different aspects of their uniforms. 100 percent of cadets spoke about recent changes to their uniform regulations. Cadet Bonnie spoke about the similarity and difference between men and women in terms of uniforms:

“That's one of the things that is standard, the male and female uniforms for PT are the exact same for OCPs, or the camo print uniform. It's slightly different because the

women's uniform is slightly more cinched in the back to make space for your chest. But because the ROTC department isn't massively funded, a lot of the women end up wearing male uniforms anyway. That is to say the only difference really.”

Although the uniforms do not look any different for male and female cadets, there are sizing differences. Cadets say this is due to a lack of funding within their ROTC programs. Cadet Ellen speaks about how she adapts to the “unisex” uniforms in her Army ROTC program:

“We wear these shorts that are black and it says “ARMY” on the bottom of the pants, and then a shirt that has a black “ARMY” on it. I've only ever been issued the male version, which is, I suppose, like the neutral, everyone can wear this. I guess to be specific, it has... an underlining. It's obviously for a guy, but there are girl versions that have more of a panty shape in them that just stops at your hips. But I don't have those ones and that's not how they issue it to us. So if I wanted it, I'd have to buy it. Also, the sizes are really big. I'm normally a medium kind of person, but in the guys, I always have to wear a small because otherwise it's too big. The pants are kind of weird, because they are kind of big on my waist, but the inner boxer cuts my thighs. I think I ripped some of the seams, so it wasn't tight anymore.”

The “unisex” uniforms mentioned by cadets was described as not being truly unisex. Cadets said funding in ROTC programs is limited, so if female cadets want uniforms that fit the female body, they must pay out of pocket to accommodate their own anatomy. Male cadets did not speak of issues with their uniforms. Multiple male cadets said they had no complaints, and that their

uniforms “got the job done”. When asked if they had to wear anything specific while with non-ROTC peers, every cadet said they are not required to wear any specific attire unless they are associating themselves with the military. If cadets are associating themselves with the military (weekly physical training, ROTC events, etc.), they must wear the required attire for the occasion.

When asked about accessories cadets could wear with their uniforms, cadets spoke of many regulations. The permitted ability to wear a watch, religious necklace, and bracelet were mentioned by most cadets. Some cadets pointed out that men are not allowed to wear earrings, while female can wear studs in “conservative colors”. When asked about hair regulations, 71 percent of cadets mentioned a difference between genders. For example, Cadet Jason mentioned the improvement of female hair regulations.

“There is something in the works because it's been very, I'll just say it bluntly, it's been for white hair styles, and they're kind of working around that and accommodating people with, well, they have different hair. So that's something on the books that's in the works. Typically, everyone gets the high and tight hair style that I have currently. Recently they had the female hairstyle change because everyone used to have this awful bun that was just awful for your hair. A lot of women would lose a lot of their hair, it would just fall out because they had to use so much gel. But now they allow them to have a ponytail or pig tails. But it just can't rest on the collar and no fly ways. No stray hairs. They can have a few different hairstyles now and actually feel like people and not in a 12-year-old boy's uniform.”

Cadet Molly agreed with Cadet Jason and included the perceptions of such changes from society as a whole.

“I see on social media all the time that our hair standards got “more lenient” because we used to have to tie our hair back in a complete bun and you'd have to use hair gel, hairspray and make it nice and tight and all this stuff. And it was genuinely, really unhealthy for your hair. There was a lot of people on active duty, females, complaining their hair's falling out. It's not healthy anymore. So, they changed it that we can do braids and ponytails now. So, there are still really strict standards on the way it has to be, but they made it so that females are more comfortable and they're protecting the health of their hair, and a lot of males saw that as, you're just making it easier for the females. And you see it on social media all the time, and then they try to use it as an excuse for them to be allowed to have beards or something. So, not saying that males shouldn't have beards. I don't really know the reasoning behind that. They definitely pick on our standards a little bit as more lenient, instead of knowing the actual reasoning behind them.”

These differences were often the updated hair guidelines for female cadets. Other differences include facial hair and hair length. Overall, cadets spoke positively about hair and accessory uniform changes.

Treatment by Commanding Officers

Cadets were asked a series of questions regarding how they have been treated by their commanding officers (COs) in ROTC. The term “commanding officer” in this study refers to the

cadre (active-duty service people who lead and train ROTC cadets) of both Army and Air Force detachments, as well as the cadet command. Questions include how cadets have been treated by their COs, if cadets have been offered specific opportunities for advancement or encouraged down a specific career path, if cadet treatment has been positive or negative, and if cadets notice a difference between how their male and female cadet peers are treated. When asked about how individual cadets were treated by their COs, every cadet said they have felt “respected” by those in leadership positions. Responses to this question prompted many cadets to give specific accounts of cadre who have impacted them. However, specific accounts only included male cadre members. One female cadet said that her school’s Army ROTC program does not currently have any female cadre.

Cadets were then asked if they have ever been offered a specific opportunity to advance by cadre. Both men and women said they have been given opportunities, but most of these opportunities were also available to their peers. When asked, Cadet Jason said “not that wasn’t offered to all of my peers.” Almost every other cadet shared this sentiment. Cadets were also asked if they have been encouraged to pursue a specific career path by commanding officers. 92 percent of cadets said they have not been given guidance towards a specific career, but that the choice ultimately comes down to them.

When cadets were asked if they notice a difference between treatment of male and female cadets by commanding officers, 64 percent of cadets said there is a difference while 36 percent said they have not noticed any disparities. These numbers vary slightly between Army and Air Force ROTC cadets. A graph highlighting this response can be found below.

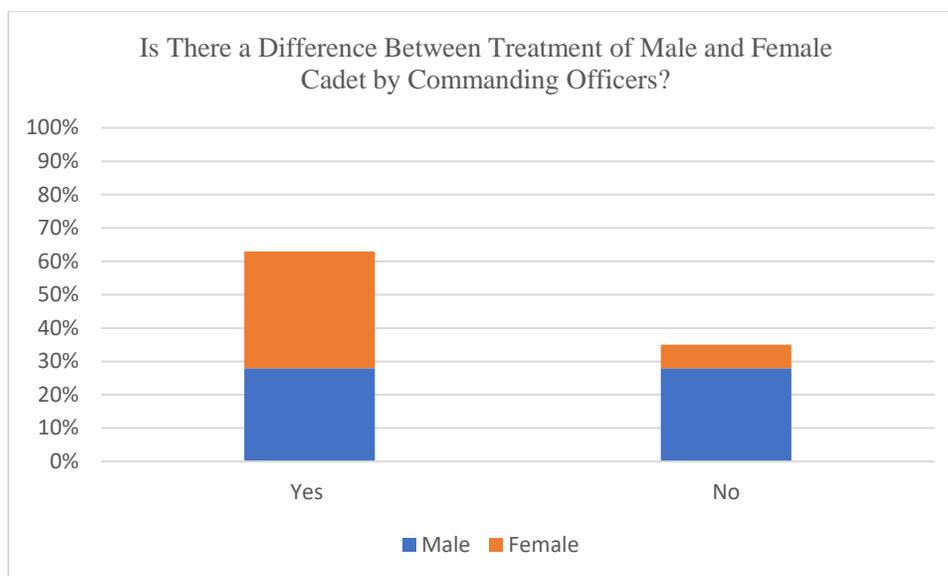


Fig . 1. Response to “Is There a Difference Between Treatment of Male and Female Cadets by Commanding Officers” by Branch and Gender

The majority of female cadets interviewed said they do notice a difference, while results for male cadets were split. The majority of cadets discussed differences in treatment between male and female cadets in physical training environments. For example, Cadet Roger mentions he notices a difference as a male in physical training. “When it comes to strict standards, I would say everyone’s held to the same ones but sometimes in the manner of approach, it could be a little different.” Another example is Cadet Molly, who took the opportunity to discuss a difference in treatment by other male cadets.

“I went to field training, and I was put into a flight. There was four females and the rest were males out of twenty people. So four, including myself, the rest of males. And I was constantly being asked along with the other females, ‘hey, how are you doing, are you okay by the males’, and I’m like, I’m just as tired and sweaty as you are, but I’m not struggling any more than you are. Maybe being gentlemen, but specifically asking the

females, 'how are you doing? You guys okay? You guys feeling good?' Nope. We're fine."

Cadet Mark concurred with Cadet Molly when asked if he notices differences between male and female cadets.

"Yeah, I would say absolutely. The two girls in my class, I myself tend to overlook these kinds of things, but from their opinion, and how they feel about themselves when it comes to training, from what they've told me specifically is for, a guy, they don't really need to try that hard to be intimidating to get their point across and to be assertive. Then when they (female cadets) do it, they say they feel, excuse my language, they come off as a (expletive). That's how they are perceived and it's much harder, they feel themselves, that it's much harder for them to come across and be intimidating and get their message out."

Many other cadets concurred with Cadets Molly and Mark. However, they spoke specifically of differences in treatment pertaining to physical training. Thus, more data and quotations can be found in the physical training section. Overall, both male and female cadets notice a difference in treatment by cadre, cadet command, and other cadets in each ROTC program. It was found that cadre, on average, do not single out cadets for specific advancement opportunities or encourage cadets to choose a specific career path. Rather, they are seen as providing guidance and honesty to cadets about their futures. The difference was mainly present in treatment by cadet command.

Extracurricular Activities

Cadets were asked about extracurricular activities they take part in. Questions included participation in ROTC sponsored clubs, university clubs, and leadership activities before or during cadets' collegiate career. Every cadet gave an extensive list of extracurricular activities they have participated in during past academic years and activities they currently take part in. Activities within ROTC include Drill Team, Ranger Challenge, and Color Guard.

Extracurriculars outside of ROTC programs are vast and correlate with individual cadets' majors and/or hobbies. Some activities include the Tea Club, Poetry Club, and Sky Diving Club. 93 percent of cadets say they participated in leadership activities before their collegiate career. These activities include National Honor Society, class officer positions, and participating in Boy Scouts as Eagle Scouts. Overall, every cadet has taken part in activities beyond their required coursework and required ROTC events.

Family Support

Cadets were asked various questions about family support. Questions included initial and continued family support of ROTC, if cadets' families supported their decision to pursue a collegiate degree, and what role their family has in their career ambitions. The majority of cadets spoke of a level of distaste amongst their families when deciding to join ROTC. 64 percent of cadets said their families originally either did not support or were hesitant about their participation in ROTC. Reasons behind each family's opposition varied. Cadets described causes of opposition stemmed from limited knowledge about ROTC and concern about the safety of the cadet. 93 percent of cadets say their families have changed their opinions of ROTC and are now in support of cadets' participation. Cadets said this change of opinion was due to their family's

increased understanding of ROTC as well as the additional opportunities available to them, and scholarship funds.

When asked if their family plays a role in their career ambitions, 71 percent of cadets said their family play some role in their career ambitions. 50 percent of cadets said a male in their life (brother, father, grandfather, uncle, etc.) influences their ambitions. These male role models inspired cadets to pursue a military or professional career. For example, Cadet Connor says his brother and father influence his military career ambitions. “(My brother) and my dad both were big advocates about going in and becoming an officer versus an enlistee and so they are a big component of why I did it.” Another example is Cadet Paul, who when asked if his family plays a role in his career ambitions, spoke about the role of his father.

“Absolutely. More so my dad, not to say my mom doesn’t give great advice in terms of school. My dad worked in the business world, so he gives me a lot of good jobs advice and career advice. He has really been my north star. I am really lucky in that way to be able to ask him whatever about my job, the career I want, and I love him. He’s just always there for me and he gives me a lot of great advice.”

Not every cadet who said their family has played a role in their career ambitions mentioned a male figure. For example, Cadet Lily has a unique take on the question addressing family influence on career ambition. She said her family influences her to work hard to pursue Psychology because of negative experiences in her past.

“My family's influenced me in that one of the reasons I got into psychology is because I've always had a lot of self-awareness because of traumatic experiences. And I've had trouble with a couple family members in that aspect. So, they kind of drove me to psychology and that kind of drove me to think about how I want to apply that to the military.”

Cadet Luke also spoke about the influence of his family in his career ambitions, specifically his grandfather, who has had an impact on his engineering career ambitions.

“My grandfather was an engineer and used to always rave about how much he loved it and all the things he used to do. Because of him, I decided that I really did want it. I really wanted to do engineering. He used to work on a gas turbine, and it was something that was really, really interesting. He used to show me his work and how a turbine would work and stuff and I was like, wow. I don't know if something just clicked in my head. So, that was a big influential person in my family that pushed me towards what I wanted to do.”

When asked about their family's original support of joining ROTC, cadets spoke of wavering support that was remedied by further understanding what the program entails. For example, Cadet Paul's family originally wavered in their support but changed their minds after learning more about ROTC.

“Not wholeheartedly, at least not initially. I think it was a complete healthy amount of skepticism or hesitation. I think it was a long time coming because I had been in ROTC before and I was like, I want to do military. I think that they wanted to know how serious I was and what I meant by that. Did I mean dropping out of high school and enlisting, because that is much different from going through college and commissioning. I think they wanted to know a lot more of what my real plans were. But once they did, they are totally behind me now which is a slight deviation from the first couple years.”

Another major factor of family support was financial assistance. Cadets spoke about the importance of ROTC to them and their families because of the financial support they would receive from the program. For example, Cadet Molly said that receiving her scholarship was a major factor when deciding whether or not to pursue ROTC in college:

“When I first started the JROTC program in high school, it was more of something that I did with my friends, and I actually hated it the first year. I did not like the yelling or any of the military stuff. But I decided to stick with the program because they offered citizenship, development and leadership, and a lot of fun things, too. I stuck with it and started really appreciating the types of people that the military attracted and everyone’s shared motivation and discipline. It was just like a family. Then they threw scholarships in the mix and I was like, all right, good to go. My family was shocked and never really expected me to go to the military beyond the little things that I did in high school, and then when I got the scholarship, that kind of sealed the deal, and I was excited and ready to go.”

Another example is Cadet Paul, who discussed how it felt to receive financial assistance from the Army ROTC.

“Sort of a big thing that happened recently that I am super thrilled about is, I got the Army ROTC two-year scholarship. The last two full years of my tuition should be taken care of, which is such a godsend. That was a big recognition and it felt really good.”

Cadet Ellen explicitly said scholarships were one of her driving factors for seeking out leadership positions. “In high school, I was in a lot of leadership positive because I knew that’s how I get a four-year scholarship.” Overall, it was found that although the majority of cadets lacked support when first deciding to join ROTC, they have now gained the full support of their families. It was also found that the majority of cadets say their families play a major role in their career ambitions.

Career Ambition

Cadets were asked questions about their career ambitions and how ROTC has played a role in them. Questions were directed towards past career interests, ROTC impacts, and future career goals. When asked what cadets wanted to be when they grew up, 28 percent of cadets said they always knew they wanted to be a part of the military in some way. Other cadets had varying aspirations including being an astronaut, lawyer, and doctor. No majority aspiration was present. Cadets were then asked if their ROTC experiences have changed their childhood career aspirations. Although not every cadet directly said ROTC has changed their aspirations, 71

percent said ROTC has “opened their eyes” to futures they had never considered before. For example, Cadet Jason said he has been “humbled” due to his ROTC experiences.

“ROTC has humbled me a lot. I went from a position where I was in the top 10 to, I sit around the middle of my class. It's not necessarily that I've gotten worse. I'm in with a very competitive group of people... A lot of what I learned in ROTC, I had this mindset of, you don't want to be a logistics person, you don't want to be in the background sitting in a chair doing all that. But ROTC has opened my eyes to where these people have a lot more than just that job. They actually take care of the people they're managing. They're not the one stacking the shelves. They're not the ones necessarily filling out the Excel sheets. They're the ones making sure that these people can get home to their family, that they're being taken care of, that their emotional needs are met and... that's what I care about.”

When asked if ROTC has had a positive or negative impact on their career ambitions, every cadet said ROTC has made a positive impact. For example, Cadet Roger specifically talks about how ROTC has challenged his leadership skills and character.

“I'd say pretty positive. Just because you're a nurse, just because you're a teacher, just because you're in the military, doesn't make you a good person. There are a lot of good people in those professions, and you have to surround yourself with these people. Some of them just want to do good and really push other people and develop other people. I think that has helped me out a lot and definitely just seeing people. Especially some more

senior leaders want to give back and just simply help people which is awesome. On the flip side you see some examples of really poor leadership and they are probably not the best people. You wouldn't want to invite them to your Sunday dinner or anything like that. And it kind of shows like, oh man, I never want to become that. You feel a little bit of introspection, like, reflection on yourself. What am I doing that's probably not the best or hey, what could I do to better myself today?"

Next, cadets were asked if they plan on pursuing a career in military service. 50 percent of cadets gave a confident "yes", 28.6 percent said they were not sure, and 21.4 percent said they do not plan on pursuing a career in military service past their post-graduation commission requirement. A chart displaying responses by gender can be found below.

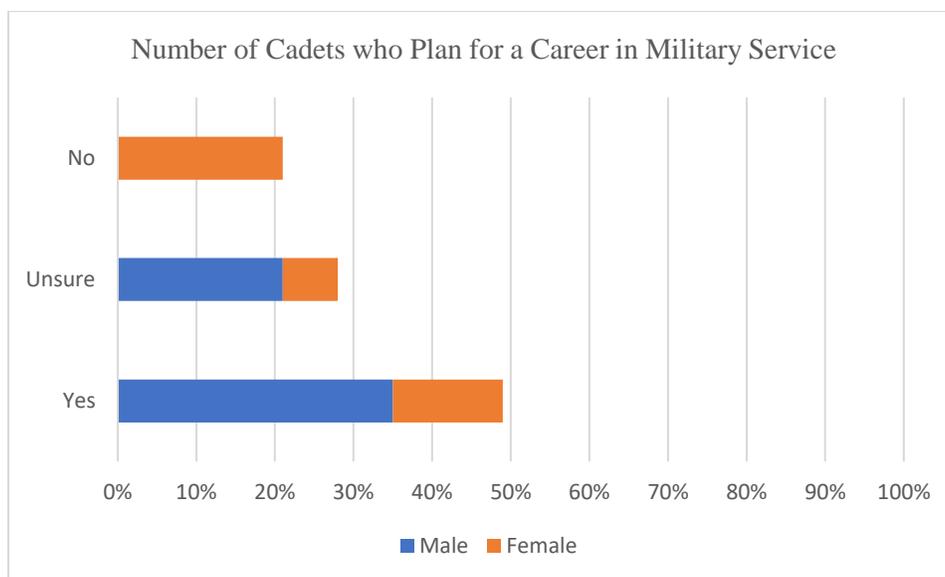


Fig. 2. Response to "Do You Plan on Pursuing a Career in Military Service" by Gender

Every male cadet interviewed expressed openness to a military career in some capacity, while most female cadets had no interest or were hesitant to devote their lives to the Armed Forces. Many male cadets were not concerned with a civilian job and what their college major could provide them. Female cadets were more interested in pursuing a civilian job that pertains to their college degree after their commission was complete. When asked if she wants to pursue a military career, Cadet Bonnie spoke about the possibility of settling down and having a family, a concept no male cadet mentioned.

“I plan on finishing my six-year National Guard commitment after I commission. We will see what happens at that point. As a right now, no, because of wanting to maybe have a family. I don’t know if I want a family yet, but I want to have the opportunity when I’m 31 to say okay, pause. Do I want to do more military? Or am I done? What’s that opportunity at that point?”

The last question cadets were asked in regard to career ambition was, “what is your current career plan?” Every cadet spoke of pursuing a military career and/or pursuing higher education. Many cadets expressed interest in furthering their education with a graduate degree of professional studies. Overall, ROTC was seen as having a positive impact on the career ambitions of cadets. Cadets’ career plans were varied, with a majority of male cadets planning for a career in military service.

Themes

Two major themes were discovered after analyzing interview transcripts: gender differences and external challenges. These themes are useful when determining the causal factors behind cadet experiences and career ambitions. Sub-themes for gender differences include differences in regulations and differences in treatment. Sub-themes within external challenges are financial assistance and family perceptions. Within each theme lies cadets' responses as well as how such responses relate to each theme.

Theme One: Gender Differences

To better connect physical training and treatment by commanding officers to the research question, cadets were asked if they notice differences between their male and female peers. While not every cadet identified a difference in treatment, every cadet discussed, at times specifically, differences in regulations for male and female cadets. As previously mentioned, these differences in regulations include physical training and physical fitness assessment requirements. Differences in treatment include treatment by cadre, cadet command, and other equally situated cadet peers.

Sub-Theme: Differences in Regulations

Within the gender difference's theme, a sub-theme emerges from the data: differences in regulations. These regulations include physical training, physical fitness assessments, and uniform regulations. Every cadet acknowledges a difference between male and female regulations in some capacity. These regulations were mentioned within different sections of interview questions, prompted and unprompted. This suggests that ROTC regulations in both the Army and

Air Force affect cadets in some capacity. When cadets spoke of physical training and assessments, they often spoke of recent changes that created a more level playing field for both male and female cadets. Recent changes were spoken of in a positive manner as compared to previous regulations that gave male and female cadets the same training requirements.

Cadets were also asked about uniform regulations. Both male and female cadets were quick to point out the recent changes in hairstyle regulations. Cadet Jason spoke about the lack of inclusion with regard to former hairstyle regulations his ROTC program's history. He goes on to compliment new regulations that are more inclusive not only to female hairstyles, but hairstyles that are inclusive of differences races and ethnicities. The differences in regulations between male and female cadets was also mentioned in discussions about differences in treatment. Cadet Molly agreed with Cadet Jason that the new hairstyle requirements for female cadets are more beneficial. Cadet Molly specifically points out the health benefits to the new guidelines, as well as how society as a whole looks at changes in regulations. She makes the interesting point that many people believe females are simply more lenient, without knowing the benefits and disadvantages women have to face when it comes to hair regulations in ROTC.

Overall, current uniform regulations within the Army and Air Force were seen as positive. Cadets did not have many complaints in terms of regulations in their respective ROTC program.

Sub-Theme: Differences in Treatment

A sub-theme found within gender differences is difference in treatment. This treatment ranges from differences in treatment by Army or Air Force cadre to treatment by cadet command. Overall, 64 percent of cadets from both Army and Air Force say there is a difference

in how male and female cadets are treated by cadre, cadet command, and/or other cadets in the program. This is especially true in terms of the physical abilities of female cadets. As previously mentioned, Cadet Bonnie discussed the differences female cadets experience in their treatment by commanding officers in that those who are average athletes have to try much harder to gain respect from their male peers. Cadet Ellen concurred in this opinion, stating that female cadets tend to work harder physically in order to gain the same respect from male cadre members that their male cadet peers achieve from being average. Cadet Lily agrees, saying that she was more respected in her program because she was “half decent” at physical training. These differences in treatment are not only noticed by female cadets. Cadet Mark spoke about how his female peers do not feel heard and must try harder to make assertive points, when male cadets do not need to try so hard to make a difference. These comments lead to an overwhelming theme within the data that suggests female cadets are treated differently than their male counterparts based on their physical capabilities.

Similar stories were shared in terms of other aspects of physical fitness. Many cadets spoke about the difference in treatment between men and women affecting their operations within physical training. Cadet Molly told her personal story of not being able to get medical assistance for an injury due to a stereotype perpetuated by male cadets that those who get medical attention are avoiding physical training. Cadet Chloe had a strikingly similar story, in that she was bullied by her peers for trying to heal a stress fracture injury. These examples of stereotyping within physical training environments contributed to the overall theme of differences in treatment between male and female ROTC cadets.

Overall, differences in treatment by cadet command was more widespread than differences in treatment by Army or Air Force cadre. Female cadets tend to feel they have to

work harder to be as respected as their male counterparts who put in an average amount of work into the program.

Theme Two: External Challenges

Each cadet spoke about unique challenges they have experienced that have affected their ROTC experience and/or their career ambition. Two sub-themes emerged within the theme of challenges: financial assistance and unequal outcomes. Other challenges cadets mentioned were unaccepting family members and personal medical issues that limit their ability in ROTC.

External challenges are important to discuss when researching career ambitions as factors outside ROTC could have the same or greater effect on cadets' ambitions than their military experiences alone.

Sub-Theme: Financial Assistance

Financial assistance within ROTC programs is a major factor for cadets deciding to join the program. About 71 percent of cadets interviewed spoke about the importance of the scholarship they are receiving from their respective ROTC program. Some cadets gave specific details about the impact of receiving such a scholarship. This impact is so important for some cadets that they decided to join ROTC specifically for the financial benefit. Cadet Molly spoke about the overwhelmingly positive impact her ROTC scholarship has had on her and her family. Although hesitant to join ROTC in the beginning, Cadet Molly was ultimately persuaded to join the program because of the scholarship she received. Cadet Paul shared similar gratitude, expressing that receiving the very generous two-year scholarship has been a "god-send" for him and his family.

While every cadet has participated in leadership activities before and during their collegiate career, some of them pursued these opportunities for the purpose of making themselves more competitive for scholarships. Cadet Ellen explicitly said that receiving scholarships from an ROTC program was the driving factor behind why she sought out leadership positions in high school. Financial assistance from ROTC scholarships is seen as a major advantage to cadets and may drive their participation in the program. The financial benefits of ROTC scholarships could ease the burden higher education places on cadets and their families. While not directly caused by ROTC, this challenge has the potential to influence the career ambitions of cadets as they may feel they must temper their ambition to match their financial capabilities.

Sub-Theme: Family Perceptions

Both male and female cadets spoke of unequal outcomes for the same amount of work put into a task between genders. Not only did cadets speak of their family when prompted, but they also spoke of them in terms of inspiration for certain career paths. Many cadets who spoke about their family influences and career ambitions mentioned male figures in their lives. These male figures were brought up multiple times during interviews, suggesting that male role models may play a large role in ROTC cadet's ambitions. Cadet Luke spoke about the impact his grandfather had on his engineering career ambitions. Cadet Paul spoke about the positive impact his father has had on his civilian and military career interests. Family influence also affects cadets while they were first deciding to join ROTC. Many families were hesitant to support cadets, but upon learning new information, gave full support. As mentioned, Cadet Paul said although his family was originally hesitant of his plan to join ROTC, they were eventually

comforted by the fact that he would get a college education at the same time as serving. Cadet Paul now has the full support of his family in terms of his decision to join ROTC, as many cadets do. Overall, cadets stressed the importance of their family's perception of their careers and time in ROTC. This challenge of family acceptance, although separate from ROTC, has the potential to positively or negatively affect cadets' career ambitions and willingness to persist into ROTC programs.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between male and female ROTC experiences and career ambition. This study correlates heavily with those of Darbra Mahoney's 2012 findings about gender and leadership in ROTC (Mahoney, 2012). From my findings, there is correlation between ROTC experiences and career ambition. This study also brought to light a different issue within ROTC programs: gender discrimination. As stated, 64 percent of cadets interviewed said there is a difference between how male and female cadets are treated. While this is a slim majority, it still reflects the fact that discrimination exists within each program. In most cadet accounts, gender differences existed within regulations, treatment by commanding officers, and family support.

Both male and female cadets had many different aspects of physical training they felt contributed to a difference between male and female cadets. The difference most cadets spoke about was the recent change in physical assessment requirements. These differences in assessment requirements can be attributed to the recent changes of Army and Air Force standards of such tests. Both male and female cadets spoke about such gender differences in physical training requirements with a positive attitude, suggesting that different physical training and

physical fitness assessment requirements for each gender is generally accepted by cadets. Cadets do not feel discouraged by these differences. Rather, female cadets feel they are able to work on their individual fitness goals instead of worrying about meeting the same standards as their male counterparts who naturally have a biological advantage in training and beyond. Although male cadets pointed out the gender difference in physical fitness requirements, none of them spoke of them in an ill-willed way.

Stereotypical behavior seems to fuel much of the differences between male and female cadets. Female cadets are seen as incapable of performing at the same level of their male peers in training and assessments, leading to female cadets pushing themselves beyond physical limits to gain the same respect male cadets receive from cadre, cadet command, and ROTC leadership officials. Cadets feel they cannot seek medical attention if needed because of the fear of being looked down upon or belittled, yet multiple females feel they must ignore injuries to be accepted by male peers.

Differences in regulations between male and female cadets naturally lead to disparities in cadet uniform experience. Male and female cadets, aesthetically speaking, must wear the same uniforms. Although the uniforms do not look any different for male and female cadets, there are sizing differences favoring males which prove to be a challenge for female cadets. Cadets mentioned a lack of funding within ROTC programs may prohibit female cadets from receiving uniforms that accurately fit their body types. This may also lead female cadets to purchasing aspects of uniforms out of pocket, putting them at a financial disadvantage their male peers do not have to face. This difference can be fixed by increasing uniform budgets in ROTC programs for female cadet uniform additions. This change would only benefit cadets, as cadets from both genders would be able to perform at their maximum ability without the added stress of ill-fitting

uniforms. Another finding within uniforms is most cadets spoke positively about the recent branch wide changes of uniform regulations, specifically those to hairstyles and accessories. This finding could mean that the majority of male and female cadets see the recent changes as equitable. The experiences of cadets in regard to uniforms did not affect their career ambition or their outlook upon ROTC.

Treatment by commanding officers was the third topic of discussion in interviews. These commanding officers range from cadre members to cadet command. 64 percent of ROTC cadets say they notice a difference between how male and female cadets are treated by cadre and/or cadet command. While this is a small majority, there is still a difference present leading to the conclusion that male and female cadets are not treated equally in Army and Air Force ROTC programs. These differences are mostly present when it comes to physical training and assessments of cadets. Females are, at times, belittled and analyzed more than their male peers simply because of gender. This treatment extends beyond commanding officers, as many male and female cadets described negative treatment towards females by equally situated male cadets. This difference in treatment could be a causal factor in why many female cadets are not considering a career in military service. The lack of female representation in the military and ROTC leadership positions only exacerbates the ostracization of female cadets from their male peers.

Findings support the study by Doan and Portillo in that female cadets often blame their gender as the reason for the treatment they have received by commanding officers (Doan, A. E. Portillo, S. (2016). Other factors may exist that cause a difference in treatment towards female cadets. However, it is unclear exactly what these factors are. Moreover, there is strong evidence from previous research to suggest gender stereotypes surrounding women in the military could

be an underlying factor of negative treatment by commanding officers (Mahoney, 2012, Doan, A. E. & Portillo, S., 2016). Treatment by commanding officers varies between genders and may have an impact on cadet career ambitions.

The fourth section of interview questions related to extracurricular activities. This section was added to examine what kinds of activities cadets participate in beyond required coursework and weekly ROTC training. Every cadet interviewed participated in many extracurriculars that related to ROTC and were part of the university community. These activities paint a unique picture of every cadet, telling a story of ambition and drive. Almost every cadet discussed participation in activities often described as adventurous and daring, including ranger challenge, mountaineering, skydiving, and ruck club. This finding supports the study by Montes and Weatherly on the personality traits of military enlistees in that enlistees are more “sensation seeking” than non-ROTC peers (Montes, K. S., & Weatherly, J. N., 2014). This trait of male and female ROTC cadets could influence their career ambitions, although no correlation was found in this study.

The stressed importance of family in the career ambitions of cadets shows that the majority of cadets are influenced by some experiential factor beyond themselves. Although this factor does not relate directly to ROTC, it does relate in that family support of cadets’ decision to join ROTC plays a role in the career ambitions and attitudes of cadets. It was found that out of the cadets who mentioned the impact of a specific family member, the majority of these individuals were male figures in the cadet’s life. This included fathers, grandfathers, and uncles. This could equate to the fact that male figures in cadets’ life could influence them more than female figures, contributing to the stereotype that men are more knowledgeable and skilled for military service. Another finding within family support is that the majority of cadets did not have

family support when they originally considered ROTC. Families did not have an understanding of ROTC practices as well as when cadets would be signing up for. The majority of families now support cadets, suggesting that a lack of information towards military service could be a causal factor to a lack of family support for cadets. This finding supports those of Anna Baumgartner's study about the meaning attributed to quality of life of women officers (Baumgartner, 2019). Family support is a major factor that ROTC cadets experience and may affect their probability for persistence in the military. More visibility of ROTC programs in the public eye could help eliminate hesitation and negative perspectives in prospective student's families.

Career ambition differed between male and female cadets. Many female cadets were more driven to pursuing a civilian career that correlates with their college major. Most male cadets are planning or considering a career in military service. This finding falls in line with the existing gender stereotype that military careers are more suited for men. Further, these findings could also be the result of limited female cadre members present in ROTC programs. This is also supported in the 2012 study about gender and leadership in ROTC (Mahoney, 2012). This lack of representation has the potential to negatively affect the ambition and drive female cadets have towards devoting their careers to military service. Cadets may not feel they would be accepted into such roles. More data is needed to confirm such conclusions. The importance of female leaders in the ROTC environment as the potential to affect the career ambitions of female cadets.

Every cadet said ROTC has had a positive impact on their career ambitions, even if said cadet does not plan on a career in military service. This could mean that cadets feel they have learned skills that are easily transferable to professional careers. Cadets also spoke about the possibility of pursuing higher education post-graduation. This was not dependent on a planned career in military service. This finding also supports studies focusing on the unique ambition and

drive of ROTC cadets (Brinkmyer, K. R., Holmes, E. K., Johnson, B. W., Lall, R., Yatko, B. R., 1999). Overall, ROTC experiences are found to affect the career ambition of cadets.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further research on ROTC experiences could shed light on gender disparities within various programs. These differences may not only exist within the realm of gender. Research focusing the intersectionality of age, race, economic status, and sexual orientation would help to improve ROTC programs and the military at large. A major goal of ROTC is to train college students to become highly skilled, professional officers in the United States Army and Air Force. Cadets participating in ROTC programs will continue into each respective military branch for some amount of time, namely, to commission if a cadet is on scholarship. If discrimination exists at the lower levels of ROTC, findings solutions to the problem not only improves ROTC programs, but consequently improves the Army and Air Force as a whole. Speaking to cadre and other individuals in leadership positions of various ROTC programs across the country could provide further insight on gender differences not seen by cadets.

Continued research could include more cadets at other universities to gain a large sample size and the ability to assess more experiences that may play a role in career ambitions of cadets. Asking more specific questions pertaining to how cadets are treated by other equally situated cadets may provide more information on gender stereotypes mentioned in the data. Interviewing female ROTC cadre members and those in leadership positions could provide insight into why female leaders chose military careers. It could also gain more information about differences leadership officials see between male and female cadets.

POLICY SOLUTIONS

Gender discrimination in the military, although it exists, can be mitigated through policy changes in ROTC programs. The most important and namely most influential change within ROTC programs is the addition of more female leadership officials. More female representation could remedy problems for female cadets such as not feeling like they have someone to talk to about personal issues. The addition of more female cadre members could also improve the morale of female cadets by adding more camaraderie between female cadets and their superiors. More females in leadership positions may also cut down on stereotypical discrimination between male and female cadets, as male cadets are able to experience more females in command.

Female cadets spoke about being unable to seek medical attention is needed because of fears of not being accepted by other cadets. The addition of more female leadership officials in ROTC could remedy such problems and provide a more comfortable, equal environment within physical training and assessments. More female cadre members in ROTC could contribute to a more comfortable, equal environment within physical training and assessments. They could also provide more resources and first-hand knowledge of a career in military service as a female. This may contribute to more female cadets considering devoting their lives to service. For male cadre and leaders in ROTC, being conscious of gender stereotypes in the military and working to address such differences in respective programs could help in leveling the gender disparities in ROTC.

Female cadets spoke of disparities in uniforms between themselves and male cadets. To remedy the issue of ill-fitting physical training attire, ROTC policies could allow for cadets to provide their own workout gear, as long as the appearance of the clothing for physical training is similar across both genders. This would also eliminate the monetary problem cadets spoke about,

in that female cadets often need to purchase their own uniforms out of pocket while their male cadets do not have to spend money for uniforms. These solutions would not only save ROTC departments funding but would also allow cadets to be in the most versatile, comfortable clothing to complete physical training. This change has the potential to maximize utility for cadets, allowing them to put the most amount of effort into their training without worrying about uniforms that do not fit their body type.

Being aware of gender stereotypes within the military and ROTC as well as educating cadets on how to address them is the best way to change the differences in treatment between male and female cadets. If a comfortable and safe environment is provided for all cadets, it can be assumed that cadets would be able to be the best cadets, and later military officers, that they can. Further diversity and inclusion training could be a beneficial way to open the eyes of cadets of both genders to ways they can be active members of a more equal military.

CONCLUSION

The original research question that guided this study is: do male and female cadets have different experiences in ROTC programs that shape their career ambition? After interviewing fourteen Army and Air Force cadets from two New England universities, it was determined that certain ROTC experiences do have a role in shaping female career ambition. A lack of female leadership in Army and Air Force ROTC programs potentially affects the future career ambition of female cadets. Cadets feel they are limited in who they can approach about personal issues. The addition of more female cadre members has the possibility to assign female cadets and provide a direct example of what a career in military service could look like. They also could lead by example, allowing female cadets the ability to gain inspiration and skills from strong

female role models. More research with larger sample sizes would need to take place to draw a more stable conclusion. Gender differences in treatment by those in ROTC leadership positions, namely cadet command, show there is still work to be done in the United States military to put servicewomen on the same playing field as servicemen. Women are looked at as lesser than in physical training my cadet command and similarly situated cadet peers. An equal outcome for both male and female cadets is not the goal of this research. Rather, the goal is to provide an equal playing field for both male and female cadets to examine within themselves the right career choice for them. ROTC programs are extremely beneficial to the United States military. Addressing these issues will only strengthen the program for individuals and the nation.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographics:

What is your name?

How old are you?

Who Are You:

Tell me a little bit about yourself; background information of who you are and where you are from.

What college do/did you attend?

What is your academic major?

Why did you decide to attend that college?

What level of college have you completed (one year, two years, etc...)?

Are you the first one in your family to go to college?

Have you ever served in the military including JROTC?

Why did you join ROTC?

Physical Training:

Tell me about the kinds of physical training you had to complete when being oriented into ROTC.

Were there different requirements for male and female cadets?

If so, what specifically?

Did you find the requirements challenging?

Uniforms:

Tell me about your uniform for physical training.

What do you wear while you are on campus with your non-ROTC peers?

Are you allowed to wear any accessories with your uniform (earrings, bracelets, etc.)?

Are you required to style your hair a certain way for the program and/or certain uniforms?

Treatment by commanding officers:

Tell me about how you are treated by your commanding officers.

Have you ever been offered an opportunity for advancement by a CO?

Did you accept or reject the offer? Why?

Do your COs encourage you to choose a specific career path, military or otherwise?

Has the treatment you have received from your COs been positive or negative?

Do you notice a difference between how your male/female ROTC peers are treated by COs?

Extracurricular activities:

Tell me about your extracurricular activities.

Do you participate in any ROTC specific clubs or activities regularly?

If so, what are they?

Do you participate in any university sponsored clubs or activities regularly?

If so, what are they?

Have you ever participated in leadership activities, both before and during your collegiate career?

Family support:

- Did your family support your decision to join ROTC?
- Are your family still in support of your commitment to ROTC?
- Did your family support your decision to go to university?
- Does your family play a role in your career ambitions?

Career ambition:

- When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up? Why?
- How has your ROTC experience changed that?
- Has ROTC had a positive or negative impact on your career ambitions? Why?
- Do you plan on pursuing a career in military service?
 - Why or why not?
- What is your current career plan?

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Email title: Exciting Research Participation Opportunity!

Hello Cadets,

My name is Anabelle Bergstrom, and I am a student researcher at the University of Connecticut. I am conducting a study on the relationship between male and female ROTC experiences and career ambition. I am reaching out to request your participation in my study.

Your participation will include a 45-minute interview with me. Interviews will be conducted either in-person or virtually. Questions will include background information about yourself, as well as questions about your experiences with physical training, uniforms, treatment by commanding officers, extracurricular activities, family support, and career ambition.

Upon completion of an interview, you will be emailed a \$50 Amazon gift card approximately one week after the interview has concluded. Participation is completely optional; however, I would be honored and much appreciative of your willingness to participate!

Please email me directly at anabelle.bergstrom@uconn.edu to express interest in the study or if you have any questions.

I hope to hear from you soon!

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