

Running head: JROTC AND STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps and  
Student Leadership in Secondary Schools

Marilynn M. Hawkins

Southeastern Louisiana University

### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, or JROTC, has a statistically significant difference on the values, leadership, teamwork, and discipline of high school seniors who participate in the program as compared to those high school seniors who do not participate in the program. The development of teams consisting of students, faculty, and staff by administrators within high schools today has helped them to develop discipline policies for students with very positive results. This team approach has been found to be more beneficial than the autocratic approach in leadership of the past where students gained leadership skills from clubs such as Future Farmers, Future Homemakers, and 4-H. The JROTC students who take the elective course do practice team leadership within their program through mentoring, and a mixture of democratic cooperative and autocratic submissive styles. This quasi-experimental research design was developed to test 60 high school male and female seniors, 30 who were enrolled in JROTC and 30 who were not. A 50 question objective style test was developed to be given in March of the student participant's senior year in order to test their attitudes toward leadership, teamwork, discipline and values.

## Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps and Student Leadership in Secondary Schools

### Purpose

The purpose of this study will be to determine if Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, JROTC, training has an effect on discipline, values, teamwork, and leadership of high school seniors in secondary schools of today.

### Review of Related Literature

There has been a growing concern in secondary schools to have students participate in the leadership of their high school. Principals have developed teams of students who have met often with the administration to help them in developing policies within the school. It has been the trend today to have a more democratic form of leadership, or team approach, where there has been equal input from faculty, staff, students, as-well-as administrators. More tasks within the high school today require a team approach rather than one individual being responsible for getting the work done. (Cooke & Kiekel, 2001)

In some cases, school officials have found this kind of student leadership invaluable, because they have been making a direct connection between school violence issues and the development of these student leadership programs. Schools have found the need to empower students to control themselves and address the discipline policies of what has been best for all students. In some schools when students have been given a voice in the decision making policies they have become suspicious of the invitation and have been hesitant to participate. However, when these students have seen their ideas being acted upon with results that have been agreeable to the student bodies that they represent, they have begun to consider their cooperation to be an asset to themselves and their peers. (MacDonald, 1999)

This team approach has been considered by some to have helped with the responsibility of policy making in the modern day high school. Many have thought that team leadership and team control has been much better than autocratic control. In describing leadership, four basic styles can be considered: laissez faire, democratic cooperative, autocratic submissive, and autocratic aggressive. Major research studies have shown that the most effective leadership style has been a mixture of the democratic cooperative and the autocratic submissive styles. Laissez faire could be described as an anything goes style of leadership, where autocratic aggressive would be more of an authoritarian style of leadership. (Cassel & Standifer, 2000) Today's youth have not been as willing to submit to authoritarian leadership. Their choice has been a more democratic, or team approach. (Card, 1978)

Another form of leadership is mentoring. Mentoring has been the style of leadership where one buddy can pass on something learned to another. In one high school, mentoring was used between a principal and her replacement with positive results occurring because of the mentoring relationship. (Gross, 2002) The Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, or JROTC, elective course that has been established in high schools has used mentoring to pass on their core of discipline, values, and leadership. The older students have taught, or mentored to the younger students and, thus, have practiced the chain-of-command established in military discipline. This mentoring approach has also occurred between the JROTC student and the non-JROTC student. JROTC students have differed somewhat from their non-JROTC counterparts. Traditionally, JROTC students have been more conservative in nature. They have had a tendency to place greater importance in their lives to responsibility, conformity, adventure, and becoming a successful leader. The non-ROTC students have placed more importance on salary, personal freedom, job security and living environment. It has been thought by many people in education

that JROTC will play an important part in the relationship between civilian and military relationships in the future. (Card, 1977)

JROTC, has been one of the largest federally funded programs in American schools today. It was developed before WWI to help students develop good citizenship, values, and service to their country. General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1992, has been given credit for creating the funding for the JROTC program in high schools. The purpose of JROTC in 1992 was to develop in students the value of citizenship, service, responsibility, and personal accomplishment. (Funk, 2002) Women, as-well-as men, have become a part of the JROTC programs in high schools. National policies have begun to lean toward ending the racial and sexual discrimination in the military forces and JROTC has experienced the result of this practice. The long history of the male dominated military forces has experienced a change with more and more women accepting leadership roles. Women, today, have been taught to be independent thinkers and, thus, have assumed leadership roles. (Kurpius & Lucart, 2000) Also, high schools have not only been concerned with the changing policies of sexual discrimination but also those policies related to racial and ethnic diversity. Educators have been faced with many obstacles when trying to work on race relations within schools. (Connelly, 2000) Different cultures and ethnic groups have been able to come together within the JROTC program where an environment has been provided for students to feel some stability and order in their lives. JROTC has offered clear rules, discipline, consequences, and authority for all to understand. (Funk, 2002)

In years past, schools have significantly developed student leaders through clubs, organizations, and sports. Clubs such as Future Farmers of America (FFA), Future Homemakers of America (FHA), and 4-H have been the training ground for student leadership. Extracurricular

activities such as football, basketball, and baseball programs have always been, and are today, responsible for developing student leaders. (Bosworth, 2002) Today, however, high school doesn't just leave the task of developing student leaders to the clubs and extracurricular sports. Elective programs have been developed to help, such as JROTC and Leadership classes. In the past, teachers have treated students as being incapable of dealing with issues of power and leadership in the administration of the high school. This situation has had a direct connection to the complaint that students lack interest and motivation. (Brouillette, 1997) Today, however, students have been participating more and more in governing their student bodies and the JROTC program has helped them to do this.

### Hypothesis

The directional hypothesis of this study is that the male and female senior students enrolled in Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, JROTC, in high school will score statistically significantly higher than the students who are not enrolled in JROTC with respect to leadership, teamwork, discipline and values.

### Operational Definitions

Senior students are students in high school who are approximately 17 years old and in their final year before graduating. Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, or JROTC, is an elective class that is taught in high schools by retired military officers and staff and it teaches military history, discipline, leadership, and values.

### Methodology

#### *Research Design*

This quasi-experimental study will consist of a research design that is a static group comparison (nonequivalent posttest only control group design). The independent variable will be

the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, JROTC, training that one group of male and female high school senior students with the approximate age of 17 will receive as compared to those male and female high school senior students with the approximate age of 17 who do not receive the Junior Reserve Office Training Corps, JROTC, training. The dependent variable will be the differences in attitudes toward values, discipline, teamwork, and leadership measured by an attitude survey given to both the JROTC and the non-JROTC groups of male and female high school senior students.

### *Sample*

This study will use a convenience sample of 60 male and female senior high school students. Thirty of these male and female senior high school students will be the treatment group who are enrolled in the JROTC program and 30 will be the control group who are not enrolled in the JROTC program in high school and are selected at random. The subjects will be approximately 17 to 18 years of age, have similar socioeconomic backgrounds and all attend the same high school. There will be approximately 50% males and 50% females in each of the two groups. The groups will both include approximately 20% African American, 5% Hispanic, and 75% Caucasian students.

### *Instrumentation*

This study will use an objective style instrument to measure the attitudes of male and female senior high school student's attitudes toward leadership, discipline, and values. The time allowed for taking this test will be 20-30 minutes. The instrument will collect some demographic information on each respondent (grade, age, sex, ethnicity) for use in reporting categorical results. The instrument will consist of 50 questions with 10 questions asking about elective subjects including JROTC, membership in clubs, extracurricular activities and teams on which

the students participate. The other 40 questions will have dichotomous answers scaled as "Important" or "Unimportant". These questions will investigate the differences between JROTC and non-JROTC student's personal values: support, conformity, teamwork, recognition, independence, benevolence, leadership, patriotism, religiousness, need for uniqueness, equalitarianism, acceptance of authority, and intellectualism. The difference between non-JROTC and JROTC groups will equal (% important, JROTC group + % unimportant, non-JROTC group) minus (%unimportant, JROTC group + % important, non-JROTC group) Thus, the positive difference scores reflect values more important to JROTC than to non-JROTC members. Negative difference scores reflect values more important to non-JROTC than to JROTC members. (Card, 1977) The reliability of the instrument will perform approximately 10 "consistency checks" among pairs of items in the instrument to detect random or otherwise inaccurate responses. The validity of the instrument will take the precaution of false responses to the elective subject, clubs, and extracurricular activities by listing a false elective subject, club and extracurricular activity with each section as-well-as flagging unusual patterns of reporting values such as listing leadership as non-important and being enrolled in the Leadership class.

### *Procedures*

The administration of the test will occur during the month of March when the rest of the student body is busy taking the GEE, and Iowa tests because it is near the end of the school year and the seniors do not have any other obligations. It will be conducted in the library on the high school campus. The 30 male and female senior high school students who are enrolled in JROTC will be present. Thirty other male and female senior high school students will be picked randomly from their senior homeroom classes to participate in taking the test. The students will be seated alphabetically with two students per table. The teacher administering the test will pass

out the computer generated instrument to each student along with a number 2 pencil. The test will be timed for 15-20 minutes. Upon completion of the test, the teacher will pick up all of the tests and send them in to be checked.

#### *Data Analysis*

This test will be used to determine that the attitudes toward leadership, values, teamwork and discipline of the JROTC students will have a statistically significant difference from the non-JROTC students in high schools of today.

## References

- Bosworth, C. (2002). Perceptions of leadership a study of rural high school youths' view of leadership. *Rural Educator, 23*(3), 7-13.
- Brouillette, L. (1997). Who defines "democratic leadership"? Three high school principals respond to site-based reforms. *Journal of School Leadership, 7*, 569-589.
- Card, J. J. (1977). Differences in the demographic and sociopsychological profile of ROTC vs. non-ROTC students. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 11*, 196-215.
- Card, J. J. (1978). Career commitment processes in the young adult years: An illustration from the ROTC/Army career path. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 12*, 53-75.
- Cassel, R. N., & Standifer, T. (2000). Comparing the leadership development between high school JROTC cadets and beginning college school administrator students. *Education, 12*, 422-437.
- Connelly, P. I. (2000). Leadership on race in a changing suburban high school. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 36*, 407-424.
- Cooke, N. J., & Kiekel, P. A. (2001). Measuring team knowledge during skill acquisition of a complex task. *International Journal of Cognitive Ergonomics, 5*, 297-315.
- Funk, R. C. (2002). Developing leaders through high school junior ROTC: Integrating theory with practice. *The Journal of Leadership Studies, 8*(4), 43-53.
- Gross, S. J. (2002). Sustaining change through leadership mentoring at one reforming high school. *Journal of In-Service Education, 28*(1), 35-56.
- Kurpius, S. E. R., & Lucart, A. L. (2000). Military and civilian undergraduates: Attitudes toward women, masculinity, and authoritarianism. *Sex Roles, 43*, 255-265.

MacDonald, I. M. (1999). *Linking leadership and decision making to the school Violence issue.*

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research

Association, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED

432 653)