

Spring 2018

# Determining Differences in Self-Efficacy Between Male and Female Cadets at the University of North Georgia

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## Recommended Citation

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Determining Differences in Self-Efficacy Between Male and Female Cadets

at the University of North Georgia

A Thesis Submitted to

the Faculty of the University of North Georgia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Business Administration in Management

With Honors

Emily Lockridge

Spring 2018

Accepted by the Honors Faculty  
of the University of North Georgia  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the title of  
Honors Program Graduate

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## **Abstract**

The Corps of Cadets is a diverse group of individuals with different motivations for pursuing a college degree while participating in a Senior Military College ROTC program. The purpose of this study was to determine if gender, contracted status, or a combination of both influenced cadet self-efficacy levels. Self-efficacy levels were determined by surveying a company of cadets using an ROTC specific experience measure and behavior models measure, as well as Eisenberger's abbreviated perceived organizational support scale, the Positive and Negative Affectivity Schedule, and the Big Five Inventory. The hypothesis was that overall there would be a significant difference between males and females with males having higher levels of the self-efficacy antecedents measured. Additionally, it was hypothesized that in general contracted cadets would have overall higher efficacy levels.

## **Literature Review**

### **Self-Efficacy Historical Research**

Self-efficacy is one's belief that they can accomplish a task. It is a key factor of motivation, which has been heavily researched and is very important to organizational behavior. Self-efficacy is linked to goal commitment (Wofford et al, 1992), as well as higher personal goals and performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). People tend to only put themselves in situations they believe that they are capable of handling. Their efficacy expectations are the root of these decisions. Efficacy expectations are a large factor behind what people choose to do, how long they are willing to do it, and how hard they are willing to work at the task (Bandura, 1977).

Bandura explains that “Perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgements of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations” (Bandura, 1982, p.122). Self-efficacy is a powerful tool that “influences individual choices, goals, emotional reactions, effort, coping, and persistence”, but it also “changes as a result of learning, experience, and feedback” (Gist, 1992, p.186). According to Bandura, self-efficacy has four antecedents (Bandura, 1977). In order of effectiveness, they are mastery experiences, behavior models, social persuasion, and physiological states. Mastery experiences are activities that a person has participated in themselves, and are the most effective because the person has successfully completed the activity and therefore believes they could successfully repeat it. This antecedent can be broken down into three parts: first the necessary skills must be taught, then there can be guided success, which in turn leads to self-directed success (Bandura, 1989). Gist asserts that “mastery is facilitated when gradual accomplishments build the skills, coping abilities, and exposure needed for task performance” (Gist, 1987, p.473). By going through this three step process the individual not only learns the skills but builds the self-confidence necessary to successfully achieve task completion. Behavior modeling is when a person has witnessed someone else successfully completing an activity, so they know that it can be accomplished without having to complete the task themselves. If a person sees someone else fail at a task they can learn from that experience. However, they are less likely to believe they can complete the task because they have not seen it completed successfully. This is because “people partly judge their capabilities in comparison with others” (Bandura, 1989, p.365). Social persuasion is the idea that people can be led to believe that they can handle a previously daunting task based on an explanation of how to complete the task without having seen it or completed it themselves as well as verbal encouragement from surrounding people. This is a weaker efficacy builder due to

the fact that the individual has not actually experienced a successful completion of the task, either on their own or by seeing another. However, if enough encouragement is given people are more likely to rise to the occasion and achieve success (Bandura, 1989). Physical/ Emotional arousal is based on the effects one's physiological state has on task performance. For example, negative emotions typically would cause lowered performance ability. The best way to increase self-efficacy through this avenue is to increase physical ability and reduce stress (Bandura, 1989).

### **Institution Information**

The institution researched is one of six senior military colleges in the United States, the only one with a strictly Army focus. Many prospective Army officers, between 250 and 300 per year, choose to join the program as a route to earn their commission as a Second Lieutenant because participation in a four-year Reserve Officer Training Corps unit can replace the Basic Officer Leader Course Part A which functions as initial job training for Army officers. According to Gabriel et al., in their survey of the school's cadets 60% of those surveyed during their research cited military reasons such as discipline and professionalism as their primary motive for choosing this program (Gabriel et. al., 2016).

As a cadet at the institution, students are taught military customs and traditions as well as school traditions. They learn military drill and ceremonies, leadership skills, and participate in physical readiness training. Typically, during their third year, cadets who desire to pursue a commission from the school go through the Leadership Development Program, more commonly known as pre-camp, to prepare them for the Advanced Camp phase of their cadet evaluations.

Advanced Camp consists of field training exercises in military tactics as well as leadership experiences.

The purpose of the program is to prepare future Army officers to be better leaders and prepare them to face the challenges of modern warfare, because they are the future of the armed forces. The university strives to produce the best future officers of any four-year ROTC program in the country using their unique methodology.

According to a study done by Jordan et al., female cadets at this institution have significantly lower generalized self-efficacy than their male counterparts (Jordan et. al.,2015), and represent only fifteen percent of the Corps. This is not necessarily surprising, as males tend to have higher self-efficacy ratings in most situations. Bandura supported this statement by saying “Males perceive themselves to be equally efficacious for traditionally male and female vocations. In contrast, females judge themselves highly efficacious for the type of occupations traditionally held by women, but inefficacious in mastering the educational requirements and job functions of vocations dominated by men” (Bandura, 1982, p.136). This supports Jordan et al.’s assertion because the armed forces have historically been a male dominated profession, so it can be inferred that female cadets in a military program would likely have lower efficacy scores than males. It does not have to be this way, however, because according to Bandura these limitations on women are self-inflicted because they believe they cannot do the jobs typically held by men “even when they do not differ from men in actual ability” (Bandura, 1989, p.365). If women’s efficacy increased, the limitations Bandura believes are self-imposed could be mitigated.

### **Operationalized Antecedents**

To operationalize the four antecedents of self-efficacy for the context of this study, the activities and behaviors of the corps had to be analyzed and sorted into categories. For the prior experience antecedent, factors to be evaluated include the Occupational Physical Aptitude Test and Army Physical Fitness Test scores which measure one's physical ability to execute their job, Basic and Advanced Camp attendance which show one's tactical proficiency, and Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps experience which is a high school program designed to introduce students to military traditions and courtesies. Participation in programs like the Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency program, Cadet Troop Leader Training, and specialty units within the corps which are voluntary additional training opportunities also fall under this category. The behavior models antecedent involves the quality of upperclassmen leadership and the presence of student and faculty mentors in the cadet's life. To measure the social persuasion antecedent, cadets surveyed will take the abbreviated Eisenberger scale of perceived organizational support (Eisenberger 1986). The physical and emotional state antecedent will be measured using OPAT and APFT score for the physical aspect, as well as the positive and negative affectivity scale (PANAS; Watson 1988) and Big Five assessment (John 1999) for the emotional aspect. On the Big Five Assessment, the trait Emotional Stability or Neuroticism will be the primary focus. Traits commonly expressed in this factor are anxiety, depression, and insecurity for those scoring high on the scale (Barrick 199), all of which would have a negative effect on task performance.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection**

To carry out this study, one cadet company was informed of the purpose and method of the study during the designated company meeting time, then they were given a series of questionnaires, for a total of 50 participants. This company was selected because it had the second highest number of females of any company while remaining representative of the whole Corps. The company with the highest number was not selected because there were no junior or senior females, nor any in leadership positions. Because this was exploratory research to see what results would be yielded purely from an organic company, the data sets did not have equal numbers of participants for male vs. female or contracted vs. contracted.

### **Survey Administration and Scoring**

Part 1 gathered demographic data like their gender and academic class, as well as prior experiences related to the Corps of Cadets or Army training such as JROTC participation, prior enlistment, specialty unit affiliation, and voluntary cadet training opportunities. This questionnaire was the primary tool for gathering information on the mastery experiences antecedent of self-efficacy. To score this data, one point was granted for each experience a cadet had completed from the following list: prior service (enlistment), JROTC participation, specialty unit affiliation, attendance at Army training schools such as airborne or air assault, basic camp completion, advanced camp completion, and other voluntary training such as the Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency program or Cadet Troop Leader Training. Part 2 was a brief survey regarding the presence and quality of mentors in the cadet's life as well as the perceived quality of their cadet leadership, which granted insight into the behavior models antecedent. This was scored by granting one point for each of the following items the participant indicated that they had: an upperclassman mentor, a Military Science Cadre mentor, a veteran

mentor that is not affiliated with the school, or they are a school legacy (someone who has had family members in the Corps of Cadets before them).

The chain of command rating was tested separately, and was scored by asking participants to rank their chain of command on a scale of one to ten with ten being the best. Part 3 entailed participants taking the abbreviated Eisenberger perceived organizational support questionnaire (Eisenberger 1986) to satisfy questions about the social persuasion antecedent, scored as instructed. Part 4 was in two segments, one to measure physical readiness and one to measure emotional readiness.

For the physical aspect, the cadet's OPAT and APFT scores were analyzed and interpreted in terms of ability to complete military tasks. Most cadets did not know their OPAT score, so this data was not utilized any further. To explore the emotional readiness of participants, they filled out the Big Five Inventory personality test (John, 1999) with emphasis on the neuroticism component as well as the positive and negative affect schedule questionnaire (Watson, 1988). Scores were compiled and analyzed in context of the study, as directed in the instructions. These analyses were done via t-tests of two independent samples.

All measures were tested in several ways, including all male participants vs. all female participants, contracted male participants vs. contracted female participants, noncontracted male participants vs. noncontracted female participants, contracted male participants vs. noncontracted male participants, and contracted female participants vs. noncontracted female participants. Because this is exploratory research and no formal decisions will be made based on this study, an  $\alpha = .1$  was used as the limit for significance during the tests.

## **Hypotheses**

A hypothesis about whether there would be a significant difference ( $\alpha < .1$ ) between the groups was created for each measure prior to data collection.

1. For the mastery experience antecedent, the hypothesis was that in all male vs. female tests the males would be significantly higher and in contracted vs. noncontracted tests contracted would be significantly higher. This is because for many of the experience factors used only contracted cadets are eligible, and males tend to be more competitive candidates.
2. For the behavior models antecedent, the hypothesis was that in all male vs. female tests there would be no significant difference, but in contracted vs. noncontracted tests contracted cadets would be significantly higher. This is because finding a mentor is encouraged in the contracted track military science classes more so than in the noncontracted classes.
3. For the social persuasion antecedent, the hypothesis was that in all male vs. female tests the males would be significantly higher on the perceived organizational support scale and in all contracted vs. noncontracted tests the contracted cadets would be significantly higher. This is because based on anecdotal evidence the cadre seem to favor contracted students as well as males.

There were several hypotheses made about the physiological state antecedent.

4. In relation to the physical readiness aspect measured by Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) scores, the hypothesis was that males would be significantly higher overall, in contracted male vs. noncontracted male, as well as in contracted male vs. contracted female, but that noncontracted males would not be different than

noncontracted females. For females, the expectation was that they would be significantly lower than their male counterparts in all tests except noncontracted male vs. noncontracted female where there would be no difference. Also, it was expected that contracted females would do significantly better than noncontracted females. This is because contracted cadets have more reason to work hard to improve their APFT score than noncontracted. Additionally, many males have more reason than their female counterparts to improve as they are more likely to pursue competitive branches like combat arms which require higher APFT scores.

5. For Occupational Physical Aptitude Test (OPAT) scores the hypotheses were identical to those regarding the APFT as stated previously for the same reasons.

In regards to the emotional state, there were hypotheses about both the PANAS scale and the BFI.

6. For positive affectivity, the hypothesis was that across the board contracted cadets would be higher based on the anecdotal suggestion that they have more support, but no difference between the genders.
7. For negative affectivity, it was that contracted cadets would be higher as well as females would be higher.

Lastly there were the hypotheses stemming from the Big Five Inventory.

8. For Extroversion, the hypothesis was that females would be higher across the board regardless of contract status because they are pushed to be more outgoing.

9. For conscientiousness, it was that contracted cadets would score higher because they have more cause to do their duty and do it well, but there would be no differences between the genders.
10. For agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness, the hypothesis was that there would be no significant differences between any of the groups.

## Results

The tests for significance yielded some unexpected results. One of these results was that most cadets do not know what their score on the Occupational Physical Aptitude Test is, and therefore it was removed from the analysis because no valuable data could be collected from this measure. In the following pages the results of the t- tests are shown in the tables and explained. The first set of tests shown is all male participants vs. all female participants.

### Male Participants vs. Female Participants

Table 1  
*Male vs. Female Participants*

Measure	S1 mean	S1 SD	S2 mean	S2 SD	P Value
APFT	272.031	44.170	263	39.230	.495
Experience Score	1.289	1.112	1.231	1.013	.861
Behavior Models Score	1.973	1.078	1.615	.961	.271
Chain of Command Rating	6.092	1.917	6.654	2.444	.461
Perceived Organizational Support	4.052	1.150	4.106	1.185	.887
Positive Affectivity	31.316	8.266	27.462	11.414	.277
Negative Affectivity	20.894	7.296	18.154	5.305	.155
<b>Extroversion</b>	<b>2.951</b>	<b>.836</b>	<b>3.483</b>	<b>.833</b>	<b>.059</b>
Agreeableness	3.539	.696	3.688	.633	.484
Conscientiousness	3.578	.651	3.793	.710	.347
Neuroticism	2.566	.848	2.538	.823	.919
Openness	3.405	.642	3.138	.599	.186

Note: SD= standard deviation

For this test, sample one was Male participants with thirty-eight subjects and sample two was Female participants with twelve subjects. The only result that came back significant was that the female participants were more extroverted than the males. Sample 1 had a mean of 2.951 and standard deviation of .836, and sample 2 had a mean of 3.483 and standard deviation of .833.

This produced a p-value of .059, supporting only hypothesis #8.

### Contracted Males vs. Contracted Females

Table 2

*Contracted Males vs. Contracted Females*

Measure	S1 mean	S1 SD	S2 mean	S2 SD	P Value
APFT	291	40.601	271.75	50.619	.527
Experience Score	2	1.265	2	1.155	1.00
Behavior Models Score	1.818	.982	2	.816	.730
Chain of Command Rating	6.636	1.804	7.250	1.500	.531
Perceived Organizational Support	3.977	1.047	4.547	.831	.312
Positive Affectivity	31.545	8.537	34.250	10.210	.658
Negative Affectivity	19.818	6.258	20	4.830	.954
<b>Extroversion</b>	<b>2.627</b>	<b>.906</b>	<b>3.845</b>	<b>1.065</b>	<b>.100</b>
Agreeableness	3.561	.608	3.580	.649	.961
Conscientiousness	3.881	.544	3.996	.454	.691
Neuroticism	2.523	.910	3.125	.784	.253
Openness	3.282	.688	3.225	.330	.834

Note: SD= standard deviation

For this test, sample one was contracted males with eleven subjects and sample two was contracted females with four subjects. Like the male vs. female test, contracted females came back more extroverted than their contracted male counterparts. Sample 1 had a mean of 2.627 and standard deviation of .906, and sample 2 had a mean of 3.845 and standard deviation of 1.065. This produced a p-value of .1 which is equal to the designated  $\alpha$ , making this finding notable but not strictly significant. This would support hypothesis #8.

### Noncontracted Males vs. Noncontracted Females

Table 3

*Noncontracted Males vs. Noncontracted Females*

Measure	S1 mean	S1 SD	S2 mean	S2 SD	P Value
APFT	261.409	43.385	252	35.374	.542
Experience Score	1	.920	.875	.835	.722
Behavior Models Score	2.037	1.126	1.375	1.061	.152
Chain of Command Rating	5.870	1.949	6.313	2.987	.703
Perceived Organizational Support	4.082	1.208	3.843	1.381	.669
Positive Affectivity	31.222	8.317	24.250	11.841	.154
<b>Negative Affectivity</b>	<b>21.333</b>	<b>7.746</b>	<b>16.125</b>	<b>4.518</b>	<b>.027</b>
Extroversion	3.083	.785	3.315	.770	.470
Agreeableness	3.531	.739	3.759	.701	.441
Conscientiousness	3.455	.659	3.707	.861	.462
Neuroticism	2.583	.839	2.125	.612	.109
Openness	3.456	.628	3.063	.741	.202

Note: SD= standard deviation

For this test, sample one was noncontracted males with twenty-seven subjects and sample two was noncontracted females with eight subjects. The significant result this series of tests yielded was that noncontracted males scored higher on the negative aspects of the PANAS measure when compared to their female counterparts. Sample 1 had a mean of 21.333 and standard deviation of 7.746, and sample 2 had a mean of 16.125 and standard deviation of 4.518. This yielded a p-value of .027. This directly contradicts hypothesis #7.

### Contracted Males vs. Noncontracted Males

Table 4

*Contracted Males vs. Noncontracted Males*

Measure	S1 mean	S1 SD	S2 mean	S2 SD	P Value
<b>APFT</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>40.601</b>	<b>261.409</b>	<b>43.385</b>	<b>.060</b>
<b>Experience Score</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.265</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.920</b>	<b>.032</b>
Behavior Models Score	1.818	.982	2.037	1.126	.557
Chain of Command Rating	6.636	1.804	5.870	1.949	.260
Perceived Organizational Support	3.977	1.047	4.082	1.208	.792
Positive Affectivity	31.545	8.537	31.222	8.317	.916

Negative Affectivity	19.818	6.258	21.333	7.746	.535
Extroversion	2.627	.906	3.083	.785	.164
Agreeableness	3.561	.608	3.531	.739	.899
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	<b>3.881</b>	<b>.544</b>	<b>3.455</b>	<b>.659</b>	<b>.052</b>
Neuroticism	2.523	.910	2.583	.839	.851
Openness	3.282	.688	3.456	.628	.479

Note: SD= standard deviation

For this test, sample one was contracted males with eleven subjects and sample two was noncontracted males with twenty-seven subjects. These tests yielded many anticipated results, with contracted males scoring higher on the APFT, Experience, and Conscientiousness measures. For APFT scores, sample 1 had a mean of 291 and standard deviation 40.601, while sample 2 had a mean of 261.409 and standard deviation 43.385. For Experience, sample 1 had a mean of 2 with standard deviation 1.265 while sample 2 had a mean of 1 and standard deviation of .920. For conscientiousness, sample 1 had a mean of 3.881 and standard deviation .544 while sample 2 had a mean of 3.455 and standard deviation .659. This produced p-values of .06, .032, and .052 respectively. This is supportive of hypotheses #1, 4 and 9.

### Contracted Females vs. Noncontracted Females

Table 5  
*Contracted Females vs. Noncontracted Females*

Measure	S1 mean	S1 SD	S2 mean	S2 SD	P Value
APFT	271.75	50.619	252	35.374	.518
Experience Score	2	1.155	.875	.835	.148
Behavior Models Score	2	.816	1.375	1.061	.293
Chain of Command Rating	7.250	1.500	6.313	2.987	.486
Perceived Organizational Support	4.547	.831	3.843	1.381	.300
Positive Affectivity	34.250	10.210	24.250	11.841	.173
Negative Affectivity	20	4.830	16.125	4.518	.231
Extroversion	3.845	1.065	3.315	.770	.419
Agreeableness	3.580	.649	3.759	.701	.675
Conscientiousness	3.996	.454	3.707	.861	.463
<b>Neuroticism</b>	<b>3.125</b>	<b>.784</b>	<b>2.125</b>	<b>.612</b>	<b>.077</b>
Openness	3.225	.330	3.063	.741	.611

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Note: SD= standard deviation

For this test, sample one was contracted females with four subjects and sample two was noncontracted females with eight subjects. Surprisingly, the only significant result yielded by this series of tests was that contracted females are higher on neuroticism than their noncontracted counterparts. Sample 1 had a mean of 3.125 and standard deviation .784 while sample 2 had a mean of 2.125 and standard deviation .612. This resulted in a p-value of .077.

### **Discussion**

The results of the t tests were unexpected as many of the initial hypotheses were not supported. There are reasonable explanations for the significant results that were yielded, but these explanations would need further testing and exploration to be confirmed.

In the male vs. female tests, the only significant result was that the females were more extroverted than the males. The same result was found when the populations were limited to contracted males vs. contracted females. This is likely because female cadets are pushed from the moment they arrive at the school to be more confident and outgoing to get them to where they can stand out and be noticed when compared to their male counterparts, whereas males are not because they are already for the most part perceived as capable of standing out on their own merits.

When comparing noncontracted males to noncontracted females, it was discovered that the males have a significantly higher average score on the negative affectivity measure. One reason for this may be that noncontracted males are often questioned as to why they are not contracted yet or not seeking a contract at all when most of them could do so. Since the military is a male dominant profession, there is not as much of a stigma on females who decide not to

pursue a commission. This could have led to some resentment and frustration about the Corps in general, which could in turn explain why males tend to be more negative than females.

Upon evaluation, contracted males scored significantly higher on their APFT, had a higher experience score, and were more conscientious than their noncontracted male counterparts. This makes perfect sense, because males who are contracted are pushed to do better on the fitness test because it will improve their ranking on the national Order of Merit List when branch and component assignments are made. Also, only contracted cadets attend summer training like basic camp, advanced camp, CULP, and other Army schools because one cannot be selected to go until a contract has been signed with Cadet Command. Lastly, conscientiousness is an indicator of job performance and a male who has signed a contract to commission should care more about his performance than a noncontracted male who will be pursuing a career outside of the military profession.

It is interesting, however, that these results were not also found when analyzing contracted females vs. noncontracted females. With a larger sample size of females, it is possible that these results would have manifested as well. As it was, the only significant result from the contracted females vs. noncontracted female tests was that contracted females are more neurotic, or less emotionally stable, than their noncontracted counterparts. This is likely due to the increased level of stress they face from being held to a higher physical and tactical standard than their noncontracted peers as well as the pressure to be good enough to compete with their male peers.

Another finding was that very few of the cadets surveyed were aware of their OPAT score or classification, so this data was unusable. This is likely because the measure is still so new and the method for administering it on campus is not standardized. In the future, the school

should make the cadets aware of their score upon completion of the test similarly to how they do the APFT.

### **Conclusion**

Though anecdotal evidence would suggest that there are stigmas against both female and noncontracted cadets, these results would seem to indicate that there is not a significant difference between the self-efficacy levels of male cadets and female cadets because there are so few significant differences in the antecedents as measured in this study. If this is the case and the Corps of Cadets at the university is truly fostering an environment of equality and fairness for all cadets regardless of gender or contract status, then that is a wonderful thing that should be sustained and encouraged. However, due to the small sample sizes used in this study there should be a broader study done potentially utilizing the entire strength of the Corps rather than only one cadet company. Another issue could have been that even though the survey was anonymous it was still taken in a group setting, so it is possible that some cadets felt uncomfortable sharing their true opinions. A solution to these problems would be to survey more cadets, possibly via an online survey that they could take on their own in more privacy. This would strengthen the results and further show any differences that were possibly hidden from this survey.

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