

Student Name

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### Living with Structure

After only a few days of attending college, my brother announced to me that he decided to join the ROTC Air Force division. “What?” I exclaimed, “I thought you wanted to go through a private company to become a pilot!” He replied quickly that the ROTC would give him all the opportunities he needed to become a successful pilot. His reasons for joining an organization that controls almost every aspect of his life seemed forced to me. For years he and I had dreamed of having professional jobs: me a dentist, and he a pilot. However, I never thought there was a possibility that my little brother would join the military to achieve his dream. To me he seemed too young to take on this kind of responsibility. It also seems like he’s signing his life over for someone else to control. However, he insists that he no longer is a child but he still needs structure in his life, that the military can provide, in order to one day become a pilot.

When I asked him why he chose to become a pilot in this manner, he replied that it was the cheapest and most structural way of doing what he wanted. Although our parents would have paid for him to go through the pilot program at Utah State University, he feels that accepting their money would make him a child in their eyes forever. He also said that by finding the means himself he would value his opportunities more and try to do the best he could in school. “But the main reason is without our parents constantly watching me I needed a way to make my own decisions and to still have structure in my life,” he commented at the end.

My brother is the youngest of five children with the other four children being girls. His whole life he has had to put up with five over protective “mothers.” Before serving a two-year mission in Osorno, Chile he was not allowed to make any decisions on his own. Our mom was always there to tell him when to complete his homework, and his sisters were there to tell him which classes to take and which girls to take out on dates. During his mission he no longer had his mom or his older siblings to tell him what to do, so he learned to make decisions on his own. However, he had the rules of the mission that allowed him to know his boundaries and a mission president that gave him structure to his day. Because he is a timid boy who gets distracted very easily, without rules and a mission president, his mission would have been a failure.

After returning home from his mission and starting college, he said he soon realized that he needed some kind of structure to his days if he wanted to succeed. He knew that he would be wasting our parents’ money if he tried to become a pilot on his own. Although his family is only two hours away from the university he attends, he says that he needed someone he could see every day that would guide him in his path to become a pilot. His answer was the military. In every TV show and movie the military is treated as something that is strict and unforgiving but my brother explained, “It’s not as bad as people think. Instead of shouting at us, they give us direct orders and we follow them. It’s nice to have someone always there to encourage you and to give you counsel.”

Growing up my brother was the favorite in the family. He was also a really great friend because he never argued. When his friends wanted to go snowboarding, he learned how to snowboard. When his friends wanted to form a band, he learned how to play the drums. If someone would have asked him what he wanted to do, he would have responded, “what my friends or my family want me to do sounds good to me.” He has his own opinions, but he

chooses to please others first. To a boy who is used to forming part of a group and doing what they want to do, the Air Force came naturally to him. He says, “The Air Force gives me a chance to follow a system set up to be successful and still have the opportunity to make friends and be part of a group.” Speaking to me he added, “You think that the Air Force controls my life, but I see it as just another group of friends giving me suggestions on what to do next.”

Although he has no money because he does not have time for a job, and no girlfriend because he does not have money to take girls out, he loves his decision to join the Air Force. He explains that soon he will be on scholarship with ROTC and he won’t need a job to have money. He knows that when the military gives him the money he needs to survive, he will value it more than the money our parents give him for food. “We value the things we earn ourselves,” he explains, “that is why I will value my opportunities to become a pilot more this way than if I would have accepted our parents’ money to go through a private company.”

“I think you don’t like my decision because you’re scared of what will happen when there’s a war,” he eventually told me at the end of our interview. “Madi, someone has to do it and I feel proud to be able to take on that responsibility,” he said. He was right in knowing that I fear war. However, my little brother keeps trying to prove to everyone that he is no longer the child we know him as, so there is no reason to fear for him. He can make his own decisions and he knows the consequences.

Throughout our interview I began to realize that in the past few years my brother has become an adult. He knows himself well enough to know that for him the benefits economically and structurally of the military outweigh the risks of war. It takes a man to recognize his own weaknesses and my brother is a man. He has joined the Air Force to overcome his lack of structure in his life, and he knows this will bring him to his goal of becoming a pilot. He has

already performed better than any of his siblings in school, and he attributes it all to the hard work the ROTC encourages him to put into school. Without the orders and structure from the military he doubts he would have ever reached his goals.

Work Cited

Interviewee Last name, First name. Personal interview. 6 Jan. 2016.