

**Creating a Context for Positive Character Development:
Adult Leader Attributes in Cub Scouting**

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Abstract

Out-of-school time (OST) programs are a major influence on promoting positive youth development in the lives of young people in the United States. Recent research has attempted to understand how OST programs make significant and sustained change in the members that they serve, especially in the area of character development. The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) is an exemplar of a program which has sought to promote leadership and character development over its rich history of more than a century. Within the structure of the BSA, adult leaders have been positioned as a key component to the delivery of the program. In this study, the role of adult volunteers is focused upon with a specific eye to attributes of the leaders. Using Multilevel Modeling, group association is examined in its relationship with individual youth outcomes. Analyses show that no significant relationship exists in the data to predict group differences in the outcome based on pack membership. Interpretations for this finding are discussed as well as the limitations of the data. Based on these interpretations, recommendations for policies and programs of the BSA are offered.

Acknowledgements

“For life—which is in any way worthy, is like ascending a mountain. When you have climbed to the first shoulder of the hill, you find another rise above you, and yet another peak, and the height to be achieved seems infinity: but you find as you ascend that the air becomes purer and more bracing, that the clouds gather more frequently below than above, that the sun is warmer than before and that you not only get a clearer view of Heaven, but that you gain a wider view of earth, and that your horizon is perpetually growing larger.” ~ Endicott Peabody

When one attempts the climb big mountains, and not lose life or sanity in the process, a strong support team is required. Such has been my experience on this expedition.

I am deeply grateful to my guides along the trail: George Scarlett, Jun Wang, and Christy McWayne. They have been instrumental in helping me both explore the valleys and meadows, but also pointing me back to the trail when needed. This journey would never have begun, continued, or ended without the constant support of Rich Lerner, my base camp operator. He has been a mentor, an advocate, and a friend over the 15 years that we have known each other and I expect that, even though we won't be actively climbing together, our relationship will always be important to both of us.

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Harrington, who constantly asked, “Well, why not?” and Gary Butler, who balanced that with, “Yes, but why?” were the perfect duo to learn about the rich history, functioning, and great potential of the BSA. I will be forever in debt to them and will do my best to carry on their legacy. In addition, I thank Trent Nichols for being my outside reader.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) has a rich history in the United States that extends over one hundred years and has impacted the lives of over a hundred million members (Townley, 2007). Currently, there are just under two and a half million active Scouts (Boy Scouts of America, 2014). Scouts are assisted in the programs of the BSA by roughly a million adult volunteers (Boy Scouts of America, 2014). These adults are an essential component in the functioning and success of the BSA and, therefore, comprise a large part of the context in which the Scouting program is experienced. The attributes of the volunteer adults that form the supportive network of the BSA are, then, of a certain degree of importance. To further examine this array of qualities, there are many directions that one could take. For the purpose of this study, the number of adults serving a unit, the tenure of leadership, the training received by the leaders, and the defined role of the adult volunteer were considered.

In order to fully explore the components in the BSA program that might contribute to developmental change in youth, one must understand the contextual embeddedness of development. The relational developmental systems (RDS) perspective is rooted in the idea that individuals are embedded within multiple levels of an integrated system, and that change in behavior exists as a consequence of mutually influential relationships between the developing person and his or her biology, psychological characteristics, family, community, culture, physical and designed ecology, and time in history (Lerner, 2015; Overton, 2015). Through participation in cultural activities, people direct their actions and

thoughts using previous concepts to construct new ideas and further actions (Mascolo & Fischer, 2015). Furthermore, human development does not exist apart from the world as an internal or solely personal experience; rather it is simultaneously a cause and effect of its own development and the development of the context (Overton, 2006). Such a relationship is easily displayed in the interaction of individuals and programs.

Out-of-school time (OST) programs are increasingly seen as ecological resources in the context that promote the various assets of positive youth development (PYD) (Lerner, Lerner, Bowers, & Geldhof, 2015; Vandell, Larson, Mahoney, & Watts, 2015). The intent of many of these programs is to create positive changes in the lives of youth participants. There is evidence to suggest that specific characteristics of programs are related to positive outcomes in youth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005; Lerner, 2004, Mahoney, Vandell, Simkins, & Zarrett, 2009). There is other evidence to suggest that those who have participated in specific youth programs have enjoyed some degrees of success over the life span (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002).

Participation in high quality out-of-school-time (OST) activities has been shown to be an influential contextual asset for promoting positive outcomes in the lives of youth (Vandell, et al., 2015). Furthermore, OST activities that are termed youth development (YD) programs (Vandell, et al., 2015) have been shown to provide significant benefits to the lives of youth, families, and society as a whole. YD programs are structured activities that produce positive developmental

outcomes by intentional use of specific program elements (Lerner, 2004). In order to more fully describe what those program elements are and should be, Eccles and Gootman (2002) suggested eight program characteristics that fostered a positive developmental setting: physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mattering, opportunities for skill building, and integration of family, school, and community efforts.

Building on this foundation, further reviews of the OST literature distilled this list of program characteristics to three fundamental features (Blum, 2003; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). That is, within the context of safe spaces for youth, what is termed the “Big Three” (Lerner, 2004) features of YD programs provide the programmatic bedrock on which positive development occurs in OST settings. The “Big Three” are: 1. positive and sustained (for at least one year; Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes & Lowe, 2009) adult-youth relationships; 2. youth activities that build life skills; and 3. youth participation in and leadership of valued community activities (Lerner, 2004). Among the exemplars of YD programs are: 4-H, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, Girl Scouts, and the Boy Scouts of America (BSA).

By creating a safe environment where relationships are developed with caring and competent adults (e.g., Perkins & Borden, 2003; Bowers, Geldhof, Schmid, Napolitano, Minor & Lerner, 2012), where youth are encouraged to take leadership of their development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Larson, 2000), and where needed and useful life skills are developed (Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, &

Lord, 2005), OST, YD programs significantly enhance the opportunities for PYD (Balsano, Phelps, Theokas, Lerner, & Lerner, 2009; Mahoney et al., 2009; Lerner et al., 2015). Furthermore, other positive outcomes which have been associated with personal and social thriving, such as higher grades, school engagement, self-esteem, and resilience, are enhanced (Vandell, et al., 2015).

One specific interest in the study of OST programs has been the relationship between OST programs and character development. Although there has been a resurgence of the topic of character over the past ten years in developmental research (Lerner & Callina, 2014), the importance of the role of character is far from novel. In fact, character has been a topic of consideration within society over the history of recorded time. Greek philosophers, most notably Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, saw character as represented by the presence or lack of moral virtue and argued that the happiness was directly tied to the exercise of “good” virtues. Therefore, character was comprised, for the Greek moralists, of having the “right” or “good” motives and the performing “right” or “good” actions. Judgment of the “goodness” of aim and action were determined by the idea of a natural law. Over time, the natural law of the Greeks was replaced by the law of religion. Such a shift placed the focus more directly on the observable actions of a person and less on the intent behind those behaviors. This split conception of character has continued throughout philosophy and the social sciences with arguments concerning the merits of each domain, the list of what the essential virtues of people should be, and relationship between the motives

and the actions of people (Berkowitz, 2012; Lerner & Callina, 2014, Nucci & Narvaez, 2008).

In current research on the topic, scholars continue to emphasize character development as a multidimensional construct (e.g., Lickona & Davidson, 2005; Seider, 2012; Shields, 2011). The research on character contains several domains (Lickona & Davidson, 2005; Lerner & Callina, 2014; Seider, 2012): moral virtues (e.g., courage, honesty, fairness), performance character (e.g., attributes such as initiative, diligence, perseverance), civic character (e.g., attributes such as social skills and social knowledge that enable responsible and engaged citizenship), and intellectual character (e.g. attributes such as love of learning and seeking truth; (Baehr, 2013).

Current conceptualizations of the bases of character development adopt a RDS approach (e.g., Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006; Lerner & Callina, 2014; Sokol, Hammond, & Berkowitz, 2010), thus moving the theoretical body of knowledge forward by emphasizing that character develops through mutually beneficial relationships between an individual and his or her contexts. Adding this relational developmental systems approach to the topic of character highlights the relative absence of information about the role of specific individual-context relations in promoting the character development of youth. The lack of literature is especially noticeable when examining the role that OST programs play in impacting character during childhood and early adolescence (e.g., Lerner & Callina, 2014). If community-based OST youth programs constitute an important context for positive development attributes, such as the domains of character of interest, in

programs such as those of the BSA, then further investigation into the processes between the context and the individual by which character is influenced is of concern (e.g., Lerner, et al., 2015; Vandell, et al., 2015).

A lot of attention has been devoted to considering intensity, duration, and engagement of youth in OST programs as bases for character development (e.g., Wang et al, 2015b), and the effects of OST programs on attributes such as character have been increasingly more often conceptualized within RDS-based models that emphasize individual \Leftrightarrow context relations (Ettekal et al, in press; Wang, et al, in press). Yet, the emphasis in the analyses of the connection between character and OST programs most often emphasize the individual side of the individual \Leftrightarrow context relation. The context, therefore, needs more attention. This focus is important, in regard to OST programs focused on character development, and more generally in RDS-based models of YD that stress that positive development derives from individual \Leftrightarrow context relations between features of the OST program and youth attributes.

Given that the BSA may be an exemplar of such a YD program, and has explicitly been a program designed to foster character development, it is useful to explore the contextual elements of BSA programs and their influence on positive outcomes for youth. Moreover, it is important to understand how both the concept of character and the necessity for such character are explained through the conception and evolution of the BSA. Of specific concern to this study is how the BSA exemplifies the first point of the Big Three: Positive youth-adult relationships.

Scouting and Character

The history of Scouting can be traced back to the turn of the 20th century when a British Army officer, Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell, published a handbook called *Scouting for Boys* (1908). This book was Baden-Powell's response to his observation that his men during the Boer War did not have even basic knowledge of how to survive in the outdoors. The goal was to create a resource that would eliminate this ignorance from future generations:

“[Scouting] aims to teach the boys how to live, not merely how to make a living. There lies a certain danger in inculcating in the individual the ambition to win prizes and scholarships, and holding up to him as success the securing of pay, position, and power, unless there is a corresponding instruction in service for others. With this inculcation of self-interest into all grades of society it is scarcely surprising that we have as a result a country divided against itself, with self-seeking individuals in unscrupulous rivalry with one another for supremacy, and similarly with cliques and political parties, religious sects and social classes, all to the detriment of national interests and unity. Therefore the aim of the Scout training is to replace Self with Service, to make the lads individually efficient, morally and physically, with the object of using that efficiency for the service of the community” (2005, p. 2).

Scouting, at the time of its conception, was a social intervention for adolescent boys designed to balance out much of the misdirection of society. Interestingly, this movement echoed the general sentiment in the late nineteenth century that the youth have lost connection with the fundamental aspects that support healthy functioning and drive optimal contribution to society (Macleod, 1983). One approach within this more general movement to correct this imbalance was referred to as Muscular Christianity. Advocates of Muscular Christianity believed, in general, that fitness was central to fulfilling the religious obligations that one has and, therefore, essential to living a pious life. The prototype of this movement was the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) which was formed to "empower young people" by enact Christian principles through equally developing the "body, mind, and spirit" (YMCA, 2014). One of the most notable figures in the Muscular Christianity movement was Theodore Roosevelt, who was raised in a home which practiced the tenets. It is not surprising, therefore, that Roosevelt would also be remember in history as one of the major advocates and promoters of Scouting in the United States.

Baden-Powell could not have anticipated the ground swell that would occur among the boys of England around this work. The focus on resourcefulness, adaptability, and the qualities of leadership resonated with the boys and would continue to connect with international populations. The membership of Scouting has grown in the United States from 2,000 in 1910 to about two million today (Boy Scouts of America, 2014).

Character is explicitly defined in the BSA by the Scout Oath and Scout Law. These statements of the fundamental ideals of Scouting are a central feature to the program and are, therefore, recited at all meetings and many other Scouting gatherings. The Scout Oath is a pledge of dedication to the ideals of Scouting and describes the actions and efforts that one will make in their life. The Scout Oath reads (Boy Scouts of America, 2011):

“On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; To help other people at all times: To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.”

The Scout Law is a list of the virtues that are representative of the exemplar Scout. This list is similar in ways to many of the lists of “good” virtues offered by institutions and societies over time. The Scout Law is comprised of twelve virtues and is recited following the Scout Oath as such (Boy Scouts of America, 2011):

“A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.”

With the expansion of popularity in Scouting came a diversification of program options which keep the central theme of the Scout Oath and Law. Cub Scouts was added in 1930 to accommodate the need to serve younger populations (9 – 11 year olds) and then modified in 1949 to include 8 year olds. Tiger Cubs was added to the portfolio of program offerings in 1982 and was made available to all 1st grade boys. At the other end of the age spectrum, Venturing was added in 1998 to include 14 – 21 year-olds and invited, for the first time in the BSA,

girls to participate. This array of programmatic options advances have made Scouting available to youth ranging in age from 7 to 21.

Due to the diverse options in today's Scouting programming, identifying where and why transformative developmental character change may occur in Scouts is challenging. Questions about which programs, for which youth, create what results are real, important, and currently remain unanswered. Nevertheless, research has revealed several general benefits of Scouting.

Extant research shows that participation in BSA programs is associated with several positive developmental changes among youth. BSA programs are associated with youth participants' character development, well-being, values, relationships, decision-making skills, and commitment to achieving goals (see Harris Interactive, 2003; Jang et al., 2011; Louis Harris & Associates, 1998; Polson, Kim, Jang, Johnson, & Smith, 2013). Although causality cannot be inferred from these patterns of association, and issues of endogeneity cannot be ruled out (Lerner et al., 2015; Vandell, et al., 2015), BSA leaders believe that these associations may be linked to six areas of healthy youth development associated with Scouting programs: 1. Strong Personal Values and Character, 2. Positive Sense of Self-worth and Usefulness, 3. Caring and Nurturing Relationships, 4. Productive and Creative Use of Time, 5. A Desire to Learn, and 6. Social Adeptness (Harris Interactive, 2003).

In a study conducted by researchers from Baylor University, the relationship between achievement of the rank of Eagle Scout and other indicators of social success was explored (Jang, et al., 2011). The Eagle Scout is the highest

rank within the advancement trajectory of the BSA. In 1911, in the first *Handbook for Boys* the Eagle Scout is described as “the all-round perfect Scout.” More specifically, the Eagle is achieved by earning at least 21 merit badges, demonstrating Scout Spirit as represented in the Boy Scout Oath and Law, an extensive self-lead service project, and leadership within the Scout Troop. Unlike any of the other ranks in Scouting, Eagle Scout is the only rank that can be represented on the uniform beyond the boyhood years of the program and is permanently connected to the earner by the commonly heard statement “Once an Eagle always an Eagle.”

In 2014, the rate of overall BSA participants to Eagle Scouts was just about 6% with the average over the last 20 years being slightly over 4% (Boy Scouts of America, 2015). What is notable is that the rates of Eagle Scouts within high profile, socially valued leadership positions are noticeably higher than the rate of Eagle Scouts in the general population. Jang et al. (2011) found that Eagle Scouts have significantly higher levels than both Scouts and non-Scouts of individual, family, and community contribution. At the individual level, Eagles show higher levels of planning and preparation skills, goal-orientation, and networking. In respect to family, they report having closer relationships with family and friends. Eagles also show many differences when service and engagement of the larger community are concerned: leadership at their place of employment or local community, volunteering for religious and nonreligious organizations, donating money to charitable groups, and working with others to improve their neighborhoods (Jang et al., 2011).

The BSA claims to accomplish positive outcomes in youth, especially those who have attained Eagle Scout status, by enabling boys to strive toward the Scouting Aims of character, citizenship, personal fitness, and leadership (Boy Scouts of America, 2011). Previous research has indicated that duration of involvement may be an important factor in achieving success in the Scouting Aims. Harris (2003) found a marked difference between those Scouts who were active in Scouting for five or more years and those who were involved for fewer than five. Although this research was retrospective and did not account for the intensity of participation, it nonetheless offers a starting point for understanding the processes involved in creating a significant impact on the lives of youth.

Adding to the body of literature about the impact of BSA programs, other scholars examined how changes in the components of character are related to participation. In a study conducted by Hillard et al. (2014), findings indicated that there were no differences between those who are new to Scouting and those who decide not to join Scouting. Building on these findings, Wang et al. (2015) showed that Scouts have significantly different increases in cheerfulness, helpfulness, kindness, obedience, trustworthiness, and hopeful future expectations than the non-Scouts in the comparison sample. Adding to our understanding of the factors which may produce different levels of character outcomes, Lynch et al. (in press), found that engagement played a key role. The pattern of findings suggested that highly-engaged youth who were enrolled in highly-engaged packs demonstrated larger increases in cheerfulness, kindness, and intentional self-regulation (ISR) than highly engaged youth who were members of packs with

lower levels of overall engagement. Of particular interest in this study is the finding that youth who were highly engaged had higher character scores than youth who were engaged at low levels, regardless of the level of pack engagement.

Although engagement was found to play an important role in the positive outcomes of youth in Scouting, other literature suggests that no dimension of activity involvement will be related to program goals when the structure and leadership that supports program curriculum is not readily in place (Urban, Hargraves, & Trochim, 2014). In a poorly-developed program, where the links between program curriculum and goals are not well-defined and validated, even the most engaged participant is unlikely to demonstrate positive change as a result of involvement (Agans, Champine, DeSouza, Mueller, Johnson, & Lerner, 2014). Relationships, especially those between youth and adult leaders, are essential to establish and maintaining engagement and, therefore, positive growth in the OST setting (Christens & Dolan, 2011; Langhout, Collins, & Ellison, 2014).

The Role of the Adult in Scouting

In order to achieve the mission of the BSA to “prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law” and, more specifically, to achieve the Scouting outcomes of Character, Citizenship, Fitness, and Leadership, the structure of the BSA relies primarily on a foundation of adult volunteers who support and deliver the program. Recruiting, engaging, training, and retaining these adult volunteers requires an understanding of the varying social perceptions of youth, the potential

transformative capacity of the youth-adult relationship, and the attributes of the adult volunteers.

According to the literature, adults in the United States have historically been somewhat ambivalent about youth and their roles in society (Guzman, Lippman, Moore, & O'Hare, 2003; Lerner, 2002; Rennekamp, 1993; Zeldin, 2000). This ambivalence is attributed to stereotyping of youth by adults and has been shown to limit the potential of young people at the community level (Camino, 2000; Gilliam & Bales, 2001; Yohalem, 2003; Yohalem & Pittman, 2001; Zeldin & Topitzes, 2002). These preconceived negative stereotypes are believed to widen the degree of separation between adults and young people and to restrict youth from fully participating (Benson, 1997; Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber, 2011).

Positive youth-adult interaction has been and remains a vital protective factor in a young person's life (Perkins & Borden, 2003), especially for young males (Jones & Perkins, 2006). Of central importance is the parent-child relationship (e.g., Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Laursen & Collins, 2009; Lewin-Bizan et al., 2010); yet, increased attention has been given to the role that non-parental adults, such as extended family, teachers, mentors, coaches, and neighbors also play in enhancing positive development in youth (Bowers et al. 2012; Kogan & Brody, 2010; Rhodes & Lowe, 2009).

Important non-parental adults are often the instructors, advocates, and role models in those contexts in which youth participate, such as sports, hobbies, and other out-of-school-time activities. In this way, youth relationships with non-

parental adults serve as “developmental assets” that promote PYD outcomes (Benson et al., 2006; Bowers et al., 2012). Having such relationships and the attributes of these relationships have been associated with a range of psychological, socioemotional, and behavioral outcomes across adolescence (e.g., Bowers et al., 2012; Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005a, b; Greenberger, Chen & Beam, 1998). Although non-parental relationships have an influence on youth throughout the life span, they may be especially significant during adolescence, as youth build identities outside the home (Coté, 2009; Marcia, 1980).

With the correct level and quality of empowerment through youth-adult relationships, young people can be mobilized toward impacting the context through solving community problems (Flanagan & Faison, 2001; McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994; Ostrom, Lerner, & Freel, 1995; Villarruel, Perkins, Borden, & Keith, 2003). Empowerment of youth to participate in community efforts is especially fostered when youth have ownership in a project and feel as though their time and commitment make a difference (Cargo, Grams, Ottoson, Ward, & Green, 2003; Mitra, 2003; Mueller, Wunrow, & Einspruch, 2000). Community engagement, in this case through youth empowerment by youth-adult relationships, has the potential to generate social capital by fostering a sense of belonging among residents and establishing a network base to develop a feeling of trust among neighbors (Coleman, 1988). Furthermore, as youth and adults work together, it may decrease negative perceptions among groups by allowing people to get to know one another who are usually in separate groups (Allport, 1954;

Pettigrew, 1998) or from different generations (Coleman, 1988; Swisher & Whitlock, 2004).

Since the literature suggests that non-parental youth-adult relationships are a key factor in the development of youth and the resulting potential for social change, the following question remains: What are the attributes of leaders in OST programs that optimize the capacity for youth to contribute to the own development as well as to the betterment of the context? Such a mutually beneficial person ↔ context and, more specifically, person ↔ person relationship is the essence of the character development process (Lerner & Callina, 2014; Matthews & Lerner, in press). Accordingly, to examine this question, the concept and definition of leadership must be stated.

Some leadership theories have focused on the characteristics of the leader. Within this research, there is focus on the “innate” qualities of the leader claiming that leaders are “born not made” (Bass, 1981). Others have tried to explain the contexts of leadership, the factors in the environment which require/allow leaders to emerge. This research has explained leadership development by examining the ways in which the attributes of the leader coact with the people and circumstances to form the quality of leadership (Rost, 1991). Psychoanalytic and behavioral scholars attempted to explore and explain leadership by understanding the motives and influences on the leader (Bass, 1981). The majority of work done on leadership has focused on descriptions and theories about who become leaders, why they achieve leadership, and what is the lasting impact of their tenure as leader (see Gardner & Laskin, 2011).

Some research currently exists concerning adult leadership within the BSA. According to Harris (2003), 50% of adult volunteers serve for six or more years and 25% of volunteers serving for more than ten years. In addition, volunteers commit an average of 20 hours of service per month to Scouting. Harris (2003) claims that 83% of volunteers participate in at least one training opportunity offered by the BSA. Beyond the characteristics of adult participation, Harris (2003) indicated that volunteers who become involved in Scouting also strengthen and enhance their own skills and values. Specifically, volunteers report increases in active citizenship, involvement in other community-based organizations (such as religious youth organizations; youth sports associations; parent-teacher associations; organizations such as Girl Scouts, 4-H, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and Big Brothers Big Sisters); environmental awareness; ethical and moral decision making; personal relationship with God; patience and tolerance with diversity; listening and communication skills; teaching and mentoring skills; familial closeness; conflict resolution; overall physical health; emergency preparedness skills; and workplace effectiveness. Findings also point to a decrease in feelings of stress and anxiety (Harris, 2003).

Although this literature contributes to our understanding of the impacts of and on adult leaders, it lacks detail concerning how specific BSA processes (e.g., leader-Scout interactions) may potentially influence specific developmental outcomes (e.g., PYD or character development) among specific groups of Scouts. In fact, few in-depth studies have been conducted with leaders in youth-serving

programs to explore the roles and/or the ways in which they, and the program, work together to influence PYD (Larson, 2000, 2006).

Within Scouting, adults are required to serve in leadership roles. Leaders are used to support the unit and facilitate the implementation of the program. This structure uses adults to serve in roles that are in direct contact with the Scouts (e.g. Cub Master) as well as committee members who serve the unit in more indirect ways.

The BSA asserts that selecting Cub Scout adult leadership is a crucial part of the success of the program. The process of selecting leadership in the traditional scouting program is the responsibility of the chartered organization. The chartered organization is the conduit through which units are formed within councils. They manage the units and control the program of activities to support the goals of both the BSA and the chartered organization. Over 100,000 Scouting units are owned and operated by chartered organizations. Of these, 71.5% of all units are chartered to faith-based organizations, 21.3 % of all units are chartered to civic organizations, and 7.2% of all units are chartered to educational organizations.

The chartered organization, working through the pack committee, selects the leadership. This structure is in place to insure that the values and mission of both the chartered organization and the BSA are reflected in the leaders of the unit. Leaders may be selected when a new pack is formed, new dens are created, or there is a vacancy in one of the existing leadership positions. In order to get a wide variety of opinions, a team is established to select leadership. This team is

appointed by the chartered organization and consists of a representative of the chartered organization, members of the pack committee, and other interested stakeholders in the pack. Candidates are selected from a list of the parents of the Scouts in the pack plus any additional names that are added by the team. Candidates are then rated by the team on a criteria for qualities of leadership that are offered by the BSA. According to this rating, candidates are then ranked in order of preference.

The BSA has a few specific requirements for an adult Cub Scout leader. Volunteers must be: Men or women who are 21 years old or older [who then] are welcomed to become leaders in the pack (people 18 and older may serve the pack in assistant roles) [and are] of “good moral character;” Subscribe to the declaration of principle¹; and are citizens of the U.S. (or meet the alternate citizenship requirement).

Although each chartered organization will have its own specific list of criteria in addition to ones prescribed by the organization, the BSA has offered some attributes that they have found to be important to finding and retaining high quality leadership. Said another way, the BSA has defined how a leader would be considered a “competent and caring” adult with the greatest potential to fulfill the promise of the outcomes of Scouting.

¹ Article IX, Section 1, Clause 1 of the BSA Charter and Bylaws states that “The Boy Scouts of America maintains that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing an obligation to God.”

This list is comprised of the following (Boy Scouts of America, 2006):

1. Accepts the ideals and principles of the Boy Scouts of America and its chartered organization.
2. Sets a positive example as a role model through appearance and consistent ethical behavior (fairness, honesty, trust, and respect for others).
3. Has the ability to delegate tasks that permit use of adult and youth resources.
4. Advocates and enjoys seeing youth development and growth.
5. Appreciates the outdoors and enjoys the natural environment.
6. Has some experience in group activity leadership in club, lodge, or religious organizations.
7. Wins the confidence of parents, youth, and the community.
8. Listens and builds rapport with others in a counseling role.
9. Is willing to invest a definite amount of time for training and unit leadership.
10. Is an active member of the chartered organization or its affiliates.

Following approval of the list by the chartered organization, candidates are contacted and the role and opportunity are discussed. This process is repeated until the positions are filled. Upon agreeing to the role, new adult leaders are welcomed into the pack with introductions to the other adult leaders as well as the Scouts. They work with the other adults to gather the resources to perform their role and to take the required trainings.

In order to examine the role of leaders in the BSA, researchers have asked leaders to explain their role and their perceived influence. Hershberg et al. (2015), using focus groups and interviews, gathered data from “exemplary” leaders in the BSA. The leaders in the “exemplary” group were identified by volunteers who have worked in the Cradle of Liberty Council (COL) in the greater Philadelphia area for many years, and visit packs in the COL on a regular basis. According to these volunteers, leaders were identified as “exemplary” because their packs and/or troops had met many of BSA’s benchmarks under their leadership (e.g., a significant percentage of their Scouts participated in BSA summer camp, met fundraising goals, and showed high levels of Scout advancement). These “exemplary” leaders had a range of experience in Scouting, spanning months, years, and decades. Leaders described that, in the context of BSA programs, and through their own interactions with the BSA curriculum and program components, they were able to engage in supportive relationships with youth, engage youth in skill building activities, and encourage application of these skills in and outside of Scouting (Hershberg et al., 2015). The goal, as stated by those who work with the Cub Scouts, is to guide Scouts through the program so that they will gain autonomy and develop the leadership skills to aid them in succeeding progressively through the upper Boy Scout ranks (ideally, to attain the level of Eagle Scout) and, outside of Scouting, to live lives of honor and contribution in their local and global communities (Hershberg et al., 2015).

Findings from this research also indicate that a sample of current leaders believe that they influence positive youth outcomes by “engaging in ‘caring’

relationships with Scouts; providing Scouts with opportunities to learn new skills and scaffold or ‘lead’ younger peers’ skill development; and provide opportunities for Scouts to apply these skills during Scout meetings, in natural learning environments, and in other contexts, such as schools” (Hershberg et al., 2015). What is most notable in this research is that the leaders’ responses map directly onto the criteria of the Big Three (Hershberg, et al., 2015).

Beyond the qualities of the adults associated with a pack, there is also some warranted consideration of the number of adult leaders that are associated with the group. Volunteer leaders of a Scouting unit are charged with the implementation of the program, management of the unit, and orchestration among the stakeholders for the unit. In enacting these tasks, leaders assume roles within the unit, often through committee participation, that involve collaboration at several levels. When such collaboration is needed, it is important to consider the dynamics associated with distributed leadership. Although the research I have noted about the costs and benefits of additional team members is directly applicable to the volunteer adult leadership of a unit, there is other information that is useful for understanding the effects of group size on the successes of the Scout. This information comes from the theory and research about the *risky shift hypothesis* (see Cartwright, 1973; Sunstein, 2002; Van Swol, 2009).

The risky shift occurs when a group collectively agrees on a course of action that is more extreme than they would have made if asked individually. This phenomenon suggests that when individuals are charged with making a decision in a group condition, consensus may be a result of the average of

individual viewpoints which have polarized through the discussion and collaboration of the group process itself. Therefore, the resulting decisions of groups tend to show more experimentation and are more risky than those made by individuals acting outside of a group process (Cartwright, 1973).

It is important to note that previous research has not been able to establish a significant link between the number of adults serving a Cub Scout unit and the character of youth in the units (Warren, 2015). However, there may be interaction effects between the number of adults and other leader attributes.

The attributes of and the collaboration between the adults in a pack creates an operating culture in which the program is experienced. One distinction that can be made in describing this culture is by attributing the locus of control in the pack to either an adult-driven unit or a youth-driven unit. In adult-driven groups, the adults work to craft an experience with specific goals in mind. Using this type of approach, youth showed marked development of specific skills and talents within the expectations of the crafted experiences (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005). In youth-driven groups, youth exercised ownership over the development of the experiences. By empowering youth to be a formative force in their development, youth in this style of group tended to showed increases in leadership and planning skills (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005). Interestingly, despite the varying approaches, youth showed global gains in self-confidence as general benefits from the experiences of the adults that they were associated with (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005).

As stated previously, the Big Three of YD programs are defined as: 1. positive and sustained (for at least one year; Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes & Lowe, 2009) adult-youth relationships; 2. youth activities that build life skills; and 3. youth participation in and leadership of valued community activities (Lerner, 2004). Given the need to begin to investigate all facets of this conceptualization, the present study represents an initial step in this program of work. That is, this study aimed to explore dimensions of the first point of the Big Three and its relationship with positive character outcomes in Scouting. Although all of the points of the Big Three warrant further investigation in relation to the programs of the BSA, it is beyond the scope of this study to deeply examine all of them. Furthermore, if the BSA is going to expand both the quantity and quality of its programming, then there must be positive adults to facilitate the delivery, so information which helps to clarify the attributes of positive leadership is of immediate concern. More specifically, the aspects of leader competence and tenure may be vital to understanding the impact on the positive character change of the Scouts in a unit. I plan to assess the number of adult leaders supporting the unit, their role in the unit, the tenure of their participation in the unit, and their competence to perform their roles.

CHAPTER 2: METHOD

The Research Context

Data for the present research were derived from the Character and Merit Project (CAMP), which was conducted within the Cradle of Liberty (COL) Council of the BSA in the greater Philadelphia area (Hilliard, et al., 2014). At the point of data collection, the COL served 10,000 Scouts throughout the Council, and was facilitated by volunteer leaders (mostly Cub Scout parents) from 250 packs throughout the region, as well as by professional staff from the COL. All survey data for this study was collected through self-report. This method was chosen for two major reasons. The first is that self-report surveys allow for the collection of large amounts of data that can be easily and systematically aggregated. Having a large data set greatly enhances the ability to make inferential statements about the patterns within the data. Second, perceptions and self-appraisals, as opposed to more “objective” evaluations, are important to understanding the individual’s contextual embeddedness and the formation of one’s identity (see Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). This longitudinal cohort sequential study was conducted over two and a half years and obtained data at five different points in time (e.g., see Wang, 2015b).

Participants

This sample used in this study was derived from the larger study, and involved 356 boys between 6 and 15 years of age ($M = 9.07$, $SD = 1.31$). These Scouts were embedded in 70 packs throughout the council. Participants were: 53% White or European American; 1.7% Black or African American; 1.4%

Hispanic or Latino; 3.1% Multiethnic or Multiracial; 3% Asian or Pacific Islander; 1.4% Other; and 37% did not provide this information.

The subsample for these analyses was selected from the larger CAMP sample. Those Scouts who had complete data for Waves 2, Wave 4, and Wave 5 were selected. These waves of data collection would correspond to spring of Year 1, spring of Year 2, and fall of Year 3. Age was also considered as a selection criteria. Scouts who were at least 6 years old at Wave 2 were included. The mean age in the selected sample was 9 (SD = 1.3). Age was centered at 0 by subtracting 6 from all Wave 2 ages. At the group level, units were selected for inclusion based on size. In the larger study sample, a mean of 53.1 (SD = 25.2) was found. Since there is a requirements that a minimum of five Scouts are needed to register a pack, any packs reporting fewer than five Scouts were excluded. This procedure was used on the upper end of the distribution as well. Therefore, Packs which had more than 100 Scouts were also removed from analyses. With the new sample, the mean number of individuals in a pack changed to 51.8(SD = 20.7).

Measures

The quantitative measures used in the present study were originally designed for older youth. To make these scales more accessible for participants as young as six years, many items were shortened and the vocabulary was simplified. The response scale for each item was 1 to 5, where 1 indicated “Not at all like me” and 5 indicated “Exactly like me.”

To measure helpfulness, a version of the Child Behavior Scale (CBS; Ladd & Profilet, 1996) was adapted. The original version of the CBS contained 59 parent- or adult-rated items designed to measure several constructs, (e.g., aggression with peers, hyperactivity-distractibility). The CBS was adapted for this study to be self-reported by children and to only index prosocial behavior with peers. The resulting scale, the CBS – Helpfulness Self-Report (CBS-HSR) was comprised of seven items for the CAMP pilot study. One item was dropped from the full CAMP Study because it did not add to the reliability of the scale, leaving a total of six items.

All items on the CBS-HSR were scored on the 5-point scale, noted above. Some examples of items are “*When someone is sad, I try to make them feel better*” and “*I help my friends.*” The CBS’ prosocial behavior subscale, upon which the present adapted version was based, and had strong reliability (Cronbach’s alpha = .87). Cronbach’s alphas for this measure at Waves 2, 4, and 5 of the CAMP Study were .80, .77, and .80, respectively.

To assess levels of kindness, the nine-item Caring scale derived from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development (Lerner et al., 2005) was modified. After piloting the nine-item modified scale, five items were dropped due to poor reliability, leaving four items for the CAMP Study. Examples of items are “*I’m kind to other kids*” and “*When my friends are upset, I try to make them feel better.*” Reliability for Caring at Grades 6 and 7 in the 4-H Study was high: Cronbach’s alpha= .86 and .84, respectively. Cronbach’s alphas for this measure at Waves 2, 4, and 5 of the CAMP Study were .80, .77, and .83, respectively.

In order to assess general prosociality, a 10-item composite score was created using the items of the Helpfulness and the Kindness scales. Using the sum of the two scales, composites were developed for Wave 2, 4, and 5. Cronbach's alphas for the composite score at Waves 2, 4, and 5 of the CAMP Study were .87, .84, and .87, respectively. Using these composite Prosocial scales, difference scores were obtained to describe the change in Prosocial attributes between Wave 2 and Wave 4, and then Wave 2 and Wave 5. These difference scores were each divided by the number of months that transpired between collection dates to get an average monthly change. These average monthly change scores were then averaged together to find an average change score for the duration between Waves 2 and 5 as described by the following equation: Average Prosocial change = $[(\text{Prosocial Wave 5} - \text{Prosocial Wave 2}) / 18 \text{ months} + (\text{Prosocial Wave 4} - \text{Prosocial Wave 2}) / 12 \text{ months}]$. Average Prosocial change was found to be .0037 (SD = .08).

Group level measures were also gathered that reflected pack level attributes connected to the adult leadership.

The role of the leaders in the pack were obtained from parent self-report surveys. Parents stated the role that they served in the unit (e.g. cubmaster, den leader, committee member, etc.). These roles were then coded based on whether the role had direct or indirect associations with the youth in the unit. Those who were in roles specifically that delivered the program were termed "direct" and those who supported the unit through committee participation were called

“indirect.” 78% of those reporting were direct leaders and 22% were indirect leaders.

In order to assess the consistency of pack leadership, the tenure of the pack leader was gathered. This was established by using the tenure of current leader in days for the period of the study (9/1/2012 – 12/31/2014). The mean tenure in the selected sample was 499.6 days ($SD = 312$).

The total number of registered adults for the pack was gathered from the Cradle of Liberty council data base. This number includes all registered adults who serve in both direct and indirect roles. The mean number of registered adults was 11.77 ($SD = 3.77$).

Percentage of leaders trained was also obtained through the records of the Cradle of Liberty council. This measure describes the percentage of registered adults in a unit that have received both the mandatory trainings, which include Youth Protection Training as well as basic position specific training. These trainings, for the most part, are conducted online by the volunteer leader using materials designed for leaders nation-wide by the BSA National Service Center. In this case, 77% of adults in units on average tended to be fully trained ($SD = 26\%$).

Procedure

Participants were recruited jointly by the Tufts researchers and the Cradle of Liberty Council. Adult Cub Scout leaders were asked to help make parents aware of the study, collect parental consent, and administer the surveys during pack meetings. To obtain parental consent, pack leaders gave each child an

envelope to take home to their parent or guardian. The envelope contained a letter that described the study and provided researchers' contact information if parents had questions or concerns. Each Scout was incentivized to participate with a \$20 gift card upon completion of the survey. Pack leaders followed a detailed protocol during survey administration. Most participants were able to complete the survey within 15 minutes.

Plan for Analysis

This study aimed to explore dimensions of the first point of the Big Three and its relationship with positive character outcomes in Scouting by exploring the aspects of leader competence and tenure and the impact on the positive character change of the Scouts in a unit. Of specific interest is the number of adult leaders supporting the unit, their role in the unit, the tenure of their participation in the unit, and whether or not they had completed BSA training to perform their roles.

Accordingly, the goal of this inquiry is to assess the influence, if any, of group level variables on individual level outcomes, multilevel modeling (MLM) was chosen as the analysis technique. As such, MLM method recognizes the existence of hierarchies in the data by allowing for residual components at each level in the hierarchy. In doing so, the model simultaneously recognizes the contribution of individual variation to the average variation while embedding such differences within a higher-level predictor. Ignoring group membership attributes on individual level outcomes can lead to overstatements of significance in standard regression techniques, due to an overestimation of standard errors of regression coefficients. Therefore, the structure of the data follows, with

individual Prosocial change scores (Level 1) nested within Packs with specific adults (Level 2). As described by the null model:

$$\text{Level 1: } Y_{ij} (\text{prosocial change}) = \beta_{0j} + r_{ij}$$

$$\text{Level 2: } \beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j}$$

In order to examine more deeply the attributes of adult leaders and the effect that they have on the character outcomes of the Scouts, data were gathered from both the local COL council and the National BSA organization. Attributes of interest were: the number of adult leaders in the unit, the role of the leaders (direct or indirect), the training level of the leaders (trained or not trained), and the tenure of the leaders.

Since there is no theoretical or methodological reason to believe that the relationship between age and prosocial change differ across pack association, age was entered into the model as a level 1 fixed effect. The remaining predictors were entered into the model at level 2 due to their descriptive ability of only pack-level attributes. Therefore, the proposed model for analyses is as follows:

$$\text{Level 1: } Y_{ij} (\text{prosocial change}) = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(\text{age}) + r_{ij}$$

$$\text{Level 2: } \beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{tenure})_j + \gamma_{02} (\text{direct})_j + \gamma_{03} (\text{\#adults})_j + \gamma_{04} (\text{trained})_j + u_{0j}$$

In theory, this model would be best in determining the group attributes that are linked to the outcome of interest; however, there needed to be a slight modification due to limitations in the data set. The role that the volunteer played was gathered only from the parents who had children in the study. This step means that the data are limited in describing the entire population of adults who

serve the pack. Since this is the case, the role of the leader must be entered into the model at the individual level. Thus, the modified equation is as follows:

$$\text{Level 1: } Y_{ij} (\text{prosocial change}) = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(\text{age}) + \beta_{2j}(\text{direct}) + r_{ij}$$

$$\text{Level 2: } \beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} (\text{tenure})_j + \gamma_{02} (\text{\#adults})_j + \gamma_{04} (\text{trained})_j + u_{0j}$$

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

The goal of the larger CAMP study was to integrate longitudinal quantitative and qualitative analyses of data in order to examine if and how attributes of character develop in Scouts. In the present analyses, we used the quantitative data collected at the second, fourth, and fifth waves of testing to address the relationship between pack size leader attributes (specifically the number of adults, their role in serving the pack, the percentage of leaders trained in a unit, and the tenure of the current leader) and character development (as indexed by prosocial change).

Before introducing predictors to the models, the outcome variable of prosocial change was examined to assess the ability of the model to account for variance. Prosocial change scores had a mean (in average change per month) of 0.0037 ($SD = 0.081$). In addition, it is important to note that the number of adult volunteers in a Pack had a mean of 11.77 ($SD = 3.77$). Percentage of leaders fully trained in the unit showed a mean of 77% ($SD = 26\%$). Leader tenure had a mean of 500 days ($SD = 312$). In addition, the sample contained 78% direct and 22% indirect adult leaders.

In order to more fully examine the relationships between each of the predictors used and the outcome variable, Pearson product-moment correlations were computed at each of the three times of testing (Waves 1, 2, and 3) among all predictors and the outcome variables. Table 1 presents these correlations. Not surprisingly, the correlations are generally low.

MLM analyses

Turning, then, to the MLM analyses, the results for the intercept of the fixed effect for the null model, $t(328) = .819, p = .413$, indicated that the average intercept was not significantly different than zero. Therefore, the effect of pack grouping on prosocial behavior cannot be attributed to involvement in a specific pack.

Typically, the intraclass correlation (ICC) would be used to estimate the variability of dependent variable due to the clustering at the group level. Since the random intercept could not be computed due to the redundancy of the covariance parameter, the ICC could not be determined. This finding further indicates that there is not variance that can be accounted for in the outcome variable using pack grouping. As such, the idea that pack level association is a valuable predictor for character change was not supported by the MLM analyses.

Nevertheless to exhaust possible analyses of these data, regression analyses were computed. No significant findings were obtained through these additional analyses.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to address the question of what are the salient attributes of an adult unit leader that are associated with character change of individual Cub Scouts. Accordingly, using data from the CAMP data set, I studied 328 Cub Scouts and their pack leaders across 70 packs from the Cradle of Liberty Council. Using MLM across three times of measurement, I addressed the relations among number of adult leaders supporting the unit, their role in the unit, the tenure of their participation in the unit, their competence to perform their roles, and the prosocial development of Scouts who are embedded in packs. Results indicated that prosocial developmental change at the individual level cannot be determined by the pack level variables under consideration. I believe these findings, although not reflecting significant variation at the pack level, have important implications for theory, research, and – perhaps most important – programming for the millions of youth involved in the BSA.

The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is “to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law” (Boy Scouts of America, 2014). The BSA theory of change places group membership as a key agent in bringing about this change. Individuals experiencing the programs of the BSA are doing so through the lens of the delivery model of the program, which relies in great part to the adult volunteers who support units. In past research, there has been a focus on three key elements when considering positive outcomes, known as the Big Three (Lerner, 2004). By creating a safe environment where relationships are

developed with caring and competent adults (e.g., Perkins & Borden, 2003; Bowers, Geldhof, Schmid, Napolitano, Minor & Lerner, 2012), where youth are encouraged to take leadership of their development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Larson, 2000), and where needed and useful life skills are developed (Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005), OST, YD programs significantly enhance the opportunities for PYD (Balsano, Phelps, Theokas, Lerner, & Lerner, 2009; Mahoney et al., 2009; Lerner et al., 2015). Furthermore, other positive outcomes which have been associated with personal and social thriving, such as higher grades, school engagement, self-esteem, and resilience, are enhanced (Vandell, et al., 2015). Through its rich history of impacting the lives of youth in America, the BSA has explicitly and implicitly strived toward enhancing these three programmatic elements.

Although there have been positive associations found in prior research between the Cub Scouting program and character development in boys (Harris Interactive, 2003; Jang et al., 2011; Louis Harris & Associates, 1998; Polson, Kim, Jang, Johnson, & Smith, 2013; Hilliard et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2015; Lynch et al., in press), the current study did not find any significant association between the current set of attributes of adult volunteer leadership and character change. This result is both surprising and revealing, given the strong anecdotal value that is placed on the “right” leadership in the BSA theory of change.

When considering these results, there are several paths that one could take. Prior to interpreting these findings, it is extremely important to note that these analyses are hampered by limitations in the data (to be discussed in more detail in

this section). Furthermore, one must also consider these findings as they relate to the BSA theory of change.

Contrary to the literature presented as well as the emphasis placed on the influence of the role of the adult Scout leader, one interpretation leads us to believe that the importance of the adult leaders in a Cub Scout group is not as impactful for the character development of youth as previously believed. Practically speaking, this view would mean that it may not really matter who the deliverer of the program is, as long as the individual youth is participating in it. Furthermore, in light of the findings of Lynch et al.(in press), it may be far more important for positive development that the individual is engaged in the program, as compared to having a high level of engagement for the whole group or having the adult leaders with particular attributes supporting the delivery of the program. Such an interpretation, reinforced by the positive programmatic outcomes in previous studies, would point to the strength of the BSA program and would suggest to practitioners that they focus their efforts on fostering the positive experience of each Scout through personal engagement with the program and spending less energy in the careful selection of adult leaders.

In making this argument one could draw a comparison to the field of medicine. When a person is suffering from some sort of ailment, then options exist for the treatment, or at least the relief, of the problem. In some cases, like the common cold, seasonal allergies, or a headache, there are options available that do not require the specialized skill set of a doctor and care can be negotiated by either a pharmacist or through one's own previous experience. The

predictability of the remedy is so well established that the supports in context may provide little extra help in attaining the desired outcome for the patient. This situation may also be true for a host of remedies which have been used by medical professionals almost universally, like penicillin for an ear infection. In this case, although to a lesser degree, the action is still very straightforward and relies on a basic level of medical training to diagnose and deliver a prescription.

Of course there are exceptions to these rules. It may be the case that for some, a simple diagnosis was not so simple and a greater level of skill and/or experience may have uncovered some deeper factor that was driving the symptoms.

Continuing this metaphor, for many youth the Scouting program may be a remedy that “cures” (or maybe more precisely “inoculates” against) problems of development as long as Scouts are “taking the medicine.” Through engagement with the program the Scout is an active producer in his own development within a context that is created to deliver the program. However, a word of caution must be supplied here. Although no effect was found in this current study for the attributes of leaders, there is nonetheless reason to believe that the leadership may be important when the “diagnosis” and “treatment plan” are not working for the individual and must be adapted. In this way, the leaders maintain the safe space necessary as the foundation for any program to provide positive outcomes. Further investigation into the attributes which enable adult leaders to recognize and then modify the program in atypical situations would then be a direction that should be followed to fully appraise the usefulness of this analogy, and determine

if there are different effects of leaders for different Scouts, given their individual developmental trajectories and the broader context of their development (e.g., the level of poverty in their communities).

Another interpretation deserving consideration is that the importance of the adult leader is correct in the BSA theory of change, but the attributes used in this study are not the correct ones to determine the quality and impact of adult leaders. One measure which may help to explain the role of effective adult leaders, and was not part of the current study, was engagement at the adult level. Based on the findings from Lynch et al. (in press), engagement was highly predictive of positive outcomes for individuals in Scouting. It may also be the case that engagement is a key to understanding the impact of adult leadership. Turning the engagement metric toward the adults in Scouting could provide a reference for the enthusiasm and connection that the adult feels for the program and the unit that they serve. Much like the engagement items at the individual youth level, it would be important to know whether an adult in a unit, for example, likes to wear the uniform, has a best friend in Scouting, attends summer camp and weekend activities, and likes to go camping. Establishing this information would allow the theoretical importance of engagement for positive outcomes to be understood in relation to the benefits received by the adult, as well as the impact that it may have on the Scouts within a unit. Looking into the concept of engagement further, by parsing the construct into cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions may also provide insight into the driving factors of changes in engagement (see Li & Lerner, 2013).

It may also be true that the variables selected are the correct ones, but the content of the variables is neither valid nor reliable. Consider training, for example. Training, more generally education, is important in the preparation and enculturation of people within an organization. However, what kind of training makes a difference in leader effectiveness? Currently, leaders are trained in Youth Protection (which describes the boundaries of the youth-adult relationship) and position specific training (which describes the responsibilities of the role that the adult has accepted). These facets of training may be effective in creating a space and opportunity for the program to be delivered, but they may not directly impact youth character development. Examining alternative forms of educating leaders may, therefore, be beneficial to elucidate the link between leaders and youth character development.

The relationship quality between the adults and youth, not just their presence or qualifications, may also hold value in predicting the positive developmental outcomes of youth. Data that could speak to the strength and perceived value of the youth-adult relationship would be valuable for understanding the role that volunteer leaders play as non-parental adult mentors. Of course, there is both within group and between group variability in the connection that youth experience with the adults in their units (Baltes, Reese, & Nesselrode, 1977). Examining this dynamic would place the emphasis on the bidirectional relationship between youth and adults and move away from the further parsing of specific attributes of either member of the relationship.

Looking more deeply into how the variables associated with adults in the pack *fit* with the same variables of the Scouts (e.g. Chess & Thomas, 1999; Lerner & Lerner, 1983; Rose, 2015) may also provide further understanding. Fit may provide consistency in other areas beyond the explicit aspects of the program (language, culture, neighborhood proximity, social networks, etc.), such that effectiveness of leadership and, in turn, group effectiveness in delivering the program is based more on the similarity of the attributes between the adult and Scouts rather than the distinct attributes of either one.

However, all of these possibilities will need to be tested in future research, given the nature of the findings delivered from the present analyses. Indeed, there are several limitations of this study which should be acknowledged. First, a wider distribution of pack sizes would be beneficial to making conclusions about the impact of composition. Second, a larger and more diverse sample of individual Scouts would also provide a better base for making any program-wide statements about group composition. Third, due to the way that data were generated to determine the number of adults supporting a unit, it is hard to determine the quality of the registered adult's service. Unfortunately, this distinction currently relies on competence, as described by the tenure and training of a leader. Although this index does describe some aspects of competence, adding measures of perceived effectiveness from both youth and adults would greatly enhance the analyses.

Last, these data provide important information about the individual variables (regarding character growth) and the contextual variables (the

association between pack leaders and youth character) over a relatively short period of time and only during the Cub Scout years. As such, longer-term longitudinal data, that spans over the range of program offerings of the BSA, would provide a better basis for making more accurate statements about the character change of Scouts over the course of their experience in the programs of the BSA.

The results of these additional recommended analyses may help to clarify the role that adult leaders play in character change in Scouts. Although there is information gained from these analyses, the salient attributes which are predictive of the positive character outcomes have yet to be determined. Such findings would inform both the policies and the practices of the BSA in direct ways. In very simple ways, findings from these analyses may be able to provide evidence-based recommendations for the selection, training, and engagement of adult leaders in Cub Scout packs. Even further, having evidence that suggests that specific attributes of leaders have a significant impact on positive character change would point to the importance of both providing quality training and making sure that all leaders have experienced such trainings. Of course, a continued lack of findings may prompt the BSA to reconsider the cost/benefit of the resources directed toward training or the appropriateness of the content of the trainings.

Directions for Future Research

Although these findings may illuminate aspects of Cub Scouting that are predictive of success, as defined by positive character change, the results must be

interpreted with caution. The sample used here is only representative of one council within a much larger and diverse network of Scouting units nationwide. There may be factors such as geography (Northwest U.S. versus other regions), race/ethnicity, practices specific to the COL council, and time in history (legal issues regarding BSA policies and media exposure) which makes these findings limited in their generalizability to the greater BSA organization. In addition, the participants in this study were all in the Cub Scouting program, making inappropriate extensions to the structure and functioning of Boy Scout units, where, by design, the structure makes the youth more central in the delivery of the program. To enhance the chances for the most accurate statements and recommendations to be made about general aspects of adult leadership in the BSA, additional measures and additional age groups would need to be considered and examined.

Exploring further “down the trail” (i.e., in future research) of leader attributes that may account for a range of positive outcomes would be greatly beneficial to the BSA. In order to achieve this goal, a larger data set which contained a nationally representative sample of the BSA population would need to be attained. This sample would gather data from Cub Scouts (to validate the COL findings), Boy Scouts (to extend the analyses to later years), other BSA programs (to resolve if there is a general effect of leaders in any/all BSA programs), and to other youth-serving organizations (to explore if there are differences between the attributes of BSA and non-BSA leaders).

Furthermore, a greater range of measures should be used with adult leaders. Introducing measures that explore attributes like occupation (Does someone who professionally works with children make a better leader?), marital status (Does a single person have more time and energy to devote to leading a unit?), and personal values (Does *fit* between the values of the leader and the community/chartered organization impact youth development?) may provide BSA with more insight into policies and practices for recruiting, training, and retaining competent and caring adult leaders.

Conclusions

In this study, no significant relationships were found between certain attributes of pack leaders (leader tenure, role in pack, number of adult leaders, and training received) and the prosocial development of individual Cub Scouts. Several interpretations were offered to explain the lack of connection between the variables, including those which recognize the limitations inherent in the structure of the current data set. Even with the caveats presented, the findings are important. If the BSA is interested in enhancing positive character change among Scouts, then allocating resources and energy to the attributes of leaders (specifically those studied here) would not be advised. Focusing efforts on those aspects of the unit which enhance the engagement in the program of all members, adults and youth alike, may be the best path to creating positive change of both the youth involved in, and the entire system of individuals who are participants in, the programs of the BSA.

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Table 1. Pearson Product-Moment between Pack-Level Indicators and Scout-Level Indicators at Three Times of Testing

		Prosocial Indicators Across Time		
		Time 1: Prosocial	Time 2: Prosocial	Time 3: Prosocial
Pack-Level Indicators				
Leader Tenure	Pearson Correlation	-.154	-.034	-.076
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.176	.767	.500
	N	79	78	81
Leaders Trained	Pearson Correlation	-.081	-.013	-.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.138	.806	.369
	N	341	342	342
Total Adults	Pearson Correlation	.123*	.062	.109*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	.260	.047
	N	334	336	336
Direct/Indirect Leaders	Pearson Correlation	.096	-.061	-.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.384	.577	.941
	N	85	85	84

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).