Physically Strong, Mentally Awake, and Morally Straight: Boy Scouts of America as a Viable Prevention for Substance Use

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Physically Strong, Mentally Awake, and Morally Straight: Boy Scouts of America as a Viable Prevention for Substance Use.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Recreation and Sports Management

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore character-based recreation programs as a potential factor in youth drug use. Specifically, the study sought to find evidence that the Boys Scouts of America (BSA) might help prepare youth to avoid drug use or delay drug use to later in life. Using Positive Youth Development and Community Capital Theory as frameworks, the study explored character-based youth recreation as a holistic tool for engaging and nurturing youth. Positive Youth Development suggests that youth are best raised in a comprehensive and healthy environment. Community Capital Theory suggests that each community contains valuable resources that can be utilized for the advancement of its residents.

Using qualitative methodology, this study examined leaders affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America in Washington State. Participants were asked about their experiences with the BSA, if/how the BSA works to prevent youth drug use, and their personal experiences with drugs and alcohol. Twelve leaders were sampled and given semi-structured interviews which were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using the process of Thematic Analysis, a systematic approach to generating themes and patterns in the data.

The data revealed a total of five themes and 16 sub-themes. The major themes were: program delivery, drugs and the Boys Scouts of America, current prevention techniques, future prevention techniques, and lack of technical skill. The data revealed that program features of the BSA such as the Boy Scout Oath and Law were highly meaningful to leaders. Participants also suggested that the strong social networks provided by the BSA were valuable to youth development. Participants reported very low drug use and alcohol use which suggests that the BSA could be a viable tool to the prevention of youth substance use.
Acknowledgments

The amount of support and love that has brought me to this point in my academic career simply cannot be overstated. I would like to acknowledge many people who helped make this dissertation a reality.

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It would appear that I am crying now, so I had better wrap up my acknowledgements. This list is nowhere comprehensive, and I have assuredly left many people off. Please accept my apologies and know that I am grateful for all that you have done for me.
Dedication

To Lucy and Lily. You two are my world.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Organization of the Chapter

The organization of Chapter 1 will begin with a background of the topic. This background includes an introduction into the role of youth recreation, character development, community development, and drug prevention. Following the background, research questions are introduced along with theoretical framework and theoretical sensitivity. Definitions and limitations follow thereafter. Chapter 1 concludes with an organizational overview of the dissertation.

Introduction

Recreation programming has long been touted as beneficial to participants and community alike. These programs take the form of: youth, teen, adult, enrichment, sport, senior, and many others. While recreation programs offer participants opportunities for positive leisure experiences, recreation programming also offers the possibility for personal growth. Most commonly found in youth programming, character-based recreation (CBR) and positive youth development (PYD) are programmatic philosophies used to shape and guide an organization’s offerings. With a primary focus on youth, character-based recreation programs endeavor to instill morality, life lessons, virtues, and positive decision-making lessons. These programs are commonly found in non-profit and faith-based organizations. Although sometimes found in sports and municipal parks and recreation, character-based recreation programming is not consistently found in these types of organizations. This study will explore character-based youth
Background

Youth recreation programming is a key component to community recreation. Youth recreation is commonly offered through municipal, education, and non-profit organizations alike. Although the stated mission of any given youth-serving organization may differ from agency to agency, the common thread remains the act of engaging in recreational or leisure activities to serve a higher purpose. Although parental and family influences are paramount to youth development (Witt, 2002), skills and lessons learned through focused programming can have a positive effect on children.

By holistically “treating” a community with: law enforcement, social service, mental health, the faith community, and education, systematic changes can occur (Aisneberg, Dwight-Johnson, O'Brien, Ludman, & Golinelli, 1990). Metaphorically speaking, community diseases, not symptoms, can be treated through this method.

According to the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Federal “Drug Free Communities” grant program, there are 12 sectors within the community needed for complete mobilization. The sectors are: youth, residents, law enforcement, education, business, media, non-profits, faith, civic, healthcare, government, and treatment (President, 2010). In theory, a community that mobilizes these 12 sectors should have the ability to make a strong impact. Each sector has an inherent skill, ability, and influence that can be exploited by a community. For example, a media sector representative would generally have some basic skills
in promotion, marketing, or the proper channels with which to communicate information to the public.

Character-based youth recreation programming could contribute to a youth’s mental, emotional, and physical development. Literature supporting recreation as a contributing factor of positive youth development will be examined, yet character-based youth recreation programming as a potential intervention for future substance use has very little exposure in the research. Although recreation programming has broad-based acceptance as positive use for youth leisure, there is not much empirical support for its long-term effects on participants.

Adolescents can also fill their free time in unhealthy or unproductive ways, such as being involved in vandalism or using alcohol or other drugs. Many adults consider these to be negative behaviors, even though some adolescents may consider these activities to be simply fun and recreational. Some researchers have suggested that these activities can also contribute to development and that they are part of growing up if they are experimental rather than addictive. (Caldwell & Witt, 2011, p. 14)

**Statement of the Problem**

Youth recreation programming is an important component in the human development. Character-based programming takes this idea farther with the addition of curriculum or components that involve virtues or morals in hopes of developing more successful adults. The United States is currently experiencing a dramatic shift in drug policy and public perception. This shift is found in the use of marijuana and tobacco. In the last 20 years, the public perception of marijuana has seen an increase in acceptance, as well as an expansion of individual states allowing its use to varying degrees. Conversely, tobacco use has seen a downtrend in public acceptance as well as an increase in regulation.

Drug policy in the United States has rapidly evolved since the 1970s. Youth use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs can be affected by drug policy. With that in mind, youth
serving organizations must be adequately prepared to help children make positive and healthy choices involving substance use.

Drug use does not support the healthy development of children and youth. This study fills a gap in the literature in a time of rapidly increasing access to drugs among youth.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore character-based recreation programs as a potential factor in youth drug use. More specifically, the study sought to find evidence that the Boys Scouts of America (BSA) might help prepare youth to avoid drug use or delay drug use to later in life.

**Research Question**

Does the character-based youth recreation programming offered by the Boy Scouts of America shape perceptions of substance use for its participants and its leaders?

**Research Sub-Questions**

1. Do character-based youth recreation programs have any other effects on future substance use?

2. Are character-based youth recreation programs better at preventing youth substance use than youth recreation programs without a character element?

3. Do practitioners and professionals representing these programs earnestly work to prevent drug abuse among participants?
**Definition of Terms**

Character-based recreation is defined as the youth recreation programming with a clearly defined mission to shape such characteristics as morals, ideals, etc. in its participants. Although many youth recreation programs have positive outcomes for youth, character-based recreation has a stated goal or mission to affect change surrounding participant integrity.

Youth substance use and abuse refer to the use and overuse of alcohol and marijuana. It should also be noted that alcohol and marijuana will be used interchangeably with “substance”.

**Significance of the Study**

This study has significance in that the exploration of character-based youth recreation as a viable tool for drug prevention has the potential to serve communities on a National scale. Furthermore, scholars have long examined the benefits of recreation, and any insight shows value to academics and practitioners alike. “There appears to be an interest in youth at risk by leisure professionals, leisure scholars, and students majoring in leisure studies” (Langsner, 2003, p. 105).

In addition to character-based youth recreation specifically, this study aimed to highlight a need to consider any resource as a potential tool for youth substance prevention. In other words, the lay-person may not be aware that youth recreation could potentially be used to combat youth drug and alcohol use. “Community profiles and needs assessments that are community specific are needed to help communities reduce the risk behaviors of adolescents” (Hughes, 1998, p. 91). Whether the reader considers Washington to be a community, or geographic portions of the State to be a community, or cities, or even neighborhoods to be a community, resources such as BSA Troops are found readily across the Country and should be considered as a viable provider of Positive Youth Development.
Theoretical Framework

In order to better understand this study, a theoretical framework involving youth development was most appropriate. Positive youth development framework provided clarity and insight to the work. As described by Henderson, Powell, and Scanlin (2005), positive youth development framework is an amalgam of developmental theory from a variety of disciplines such as health, sociology, and psychology. Positive youth development theory suggests that a successful and healthy youth is” a consequence of mutually influential relationships between the developing person and aspects such as biology, psychological characteristic, family, community, and culture” (Henderson, Powell, & Scanlin, 2005, p. 60).

Rather than considering the study through the lens of “at-risk youth”, an asset-based approach was more appropriate. “At-risk youth” is a term that has fallen out of favor in recent years due to an opinion that all youth are at-risk in varying capacities (Witt, 2002).

Similar to community development literature, asset-based development (Green & Haines, 2012) and positive youth development share the common idea that strengths and resources can and should be utilized for positive growth. Positive Youth Development theory was used as the framework for this study.

Proposed Theory

This study examined a new proposed theory regarding character-based youth recreation and substance use. The proposed theory followed this progression: a youth is exposed to positive youth development via the Boy Scouts of America where they are exposed to various character-based recreation programming, during and after the exposure to BSA programming the youth experiences an increase of social capital in terms of community, school, family, peer, and faith-based resources, the combination of Positive Youth Development and an increase in social
capital gives the youth stronger decision making skills, finally influencing the youth’s decision to use or not use alcohol, marijuana, or other illicit substances. (See Figure 1.1)

This proposed theory expands on existing scholarship within youth development by adding a substance use component. Although character-based youth recreation has long touted decision making as an outcome for participation, the expansion of substance use behavior as a secondary outcome will contribute to the literature.
Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity is the researcher’s ability to adequately derive meaning from the data. This sensitivity is commonly found in his/her background, personal experience, professional experience, knowledge of the literature, and analytic ability.

The researcher’s personal experience includes time spent in the Boy Scouts of America as a participant where he learned the program and experienced it first-hand. He has also participated in numerous volunteer functions with the BSA as an adult.

The researcher worked as an executive for the Boy Scouts of America, Grand Columbia Council in Central Washington. He thoroughly understands the Scouting program, its training, curriculum, and the intended outcomes of its methods. Furthermore, the researcher spent time in Washington State as the Executive Director of a non-profit organization that worked towards community safety and drug prevention. Administering a Federal Drug Free Communities grant, the researcher understands community drug prevention models and methods.

In order to increase his theoretical sensitivity, the researcher has become well-versed in recreation, positive youth development, and drug prevention literature. Primarily drawing from scholarship in recreation and community health, the review of literature will show a solid understanding of the two fields.

With the qualitative nature of this study, the researcher has completed doctoral-level courses in qualitative research as well as advanced qualitative research.

Limitations and Delimitations

All responses during this study were self-reported and as such, the researcher cannot guarantee that study participants are accurately self-reporting.
The study sampled participants from Washington State only, and thus cannot be transferred to the entire United States population.

Qualitative methodology, case-study format, and a small sample size do not guarantee a transferable study.

This study was done entirely with participants from the State of Washington who were affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America. Washington was chosen due to its recent legalization of recreation marijuana.

The BSA was chosen as a delimiting factor due to its stated mission to instill character in its participants.

All participants interviewed were involved with the BSA. Whereas, a former Scout with no adult role could have potentially given different responses.

**Summary**

Chapter one included the introduction to the research including a background to character-based youth recreation as well as Positive Youth Development. Drug prevention as a discipline was also introduced including community-based models for drug prevention professionals. Theoretical frameworks of Positive Youth Development and Community Capital Theory were also introduced in chapter one. Finally, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the problem, limitation, delimitation, and terms were also presented.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter one presented an introduction to the dissertation. The introduction included a background into youth recreation, drug prevention, and community capital. Furthermore, chapter one included research questions, significance of the study, theoretical sensitivity, limitations, delimitations, and definition of terms. Chapter two will be the review of literature.
The review of literature will focus on: Positive Youth Development theory, community capital theory, the Boy Scouts of America, at-risk youth recreation programming, and youth drug prevention. Chapter three will feature the research design including: research questions, sampling technique, data collection, data analysis, interviews, and trustworthiness. Chapter four provides a presentation of the data which consists of themes and sub-themes. Chapter five details the results as well as conclusions and recommendations. Included in chapter five are also discussion of the research questions and analysis of theoretical frameworks.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Organization of the Chapter

The review of literature is organized as such: an introduction to the literature, followed next by theoretical frameworks, the Boy Scouts of America, at-risk youth programming, and ending with youth-focused drug prevention.

Positive Youth Development Theory

Positive Youth Development (PYD) Theory was the theoretical base for this study and as such, this is where the review of literature will begin. Described as an inter-disciplinary theory, PYD bridges work from a variety of research including: sociology, health, education, prevention, and others. This theory contends that through a myriad of constraints, strategies, and services youth grow (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2007). Benson et. al. describe PYD as a marriage of: ecology, opportunities, and outcomes as part of the youth’s growth.

During the formative years of PYD Theory, scholars examined youth behavior from both positive and negative viewpoints. Hawkins and Catalano (1999) described youth delinquency and drug use in terms of risk and protective factors. In other words, those factors that influence youth drug use. They argue that prevention can occur with the following protective factors: community, school, family, and peers (Hawkins & Catalano, 1996).

Park (2004) further explored the notion of Positive Youth Development theory with the addition of subjective well-being. Park defined subjective well-being as the personal evaluation of one’s quality of life, over the long term. Similar to happiness, although with sustained positive affect, subjective well-being was found to be an indicator of PYD. Park goes on to describe how PYD can and should be integrated into a youth’s growth by stating “The main
goals of youth programs are building cognitive, psychological, and social assets that prepare youth to navigate life’s pathways, to overcome obstacles along the way, and to achieve a successful life”. (Park, 2004, p. 34) Essentially supporting the multi-faceted nature of PYD theory.

Recreation programming, and specifically character-based recreation programming has a firm footing in protective factors. Protective factors can be found within any given community, and help shape the next theoretical framework, Community Capital Theory.

**Community Capital Theory**

Community development professionals often look toward the resources that lie within the boundaries of a given community. These resources not only help define the community, but can be leveraged and utilized. Known as Community Capitals, Green and Haines (2012) define seven distinct assets, or “Capitals”: physical, political, environmental, cultural, financial, human, and social. These capitals often manifest in the form of infrastructure, agriculture, buildings, money, workforce, and education. But unlike other forms of Community Capital, social capital is not tangible nor is it as easily quantifiable. Rather, social capital consists of the intricate web of relationships, norms, and interactions that allow a community to identify itself and engage in a common interest (Flora & Flora, 2008). These interactions allow for a community to realize, engage, and utilize resources more effectively. In other words, “social capital can be considered an asset that contributes to the development of other forms of community capital” (Green & Haines, 2012).

But how exactly does social capital contribute to community development? Most commonly the development of social capital is found in the processes of “bridging” and “bonding”. Bridging refers to connecting parties who do not have a previous relationship, and
bonding refers to strengthening the social ties that already exist within a community. These bridging and bonding activities allow for the exchange of assets both within and outside of a given community. Although social capital is not tangible and is difficult to qualify, it is present in any community. Commonly studied with qualitative methods, social capital research often relies on non-relational data such as interviews and observation (Ennis & West, 2010). Such is the case of a 2007 study by Autry and Anderson who explored youth development in a low-income community.

Autry and Anderson (2007) explored a low-resource neighborhood and the effects of youth recreation on the community. The authors utilized community capital theory as well as social ecology theory as frameworks. Utilizing a summer youth recreation program, the researchers interviewed key community stakeholders regarding their perception of the program and its effect on the community. The authors found that recreation was viable in building community capital, especially when the parents of youth were actively engaged in the programming itself. This engagement supported the bridging and bonding elements within the social capital silo of community capital theory.

To further give support to community capital theory, Youngblade, Thoekas, Schulenberg, Curry, Huang, & Novak. (2006) conducted a study using data from the National Survey of Children’s Health. This open sourced data provided the researchers with a large sample of n=42,305 youth with ages ranging from 11-17. Using regression modeling, the researchers explored family, school, and community for both risk and protective factors. The researchers found that “Youth who were involved in contexts that provided positive resources from important others (i.e., parents, schools, and communities) not only were less likely to exhibit negative outcomes, but also were more likely to show evidence of positive development”.
(Youngblade, et al., 2007, p. s48). The regression modeling found significance between a youth and his/her home life, school environment, and the opportunities for community involvement, in terms of risky/healthy behaviors. This study further supports the notion of community capital as well as PYD theory in the holistic development of youth.

The Boy Scouts of America

Made popular in England, the Boy Scouts were founded by a British Army Scout named Robert Baden-Powell. Opposed to treating youth like enlisted military men, Baden-Powell observed that “drills in observation would sharpen the wits of boys.” (Brower, 1989, p. 5) He believed that a true feeling of fun and adventure was appropriate for the development of young men. As the Scouting Movement grew in Europe, it was only a matter of time before it reached the United States. A popular story tells the tale of a prominent American businessman lost in England on a foggy night. In his search to discover his way he ran into a young man who offered to help him. Upon reaching his destination, the businessman offered to pay the boy for his services, but the boy said “No, thank you, sir. I am a Scout. I won’t take anything for helping.” (Boy Scouts of America, 2009, p. 27) This inspired the businessman, William Boyce, to return to the U.S. with all of the Scouting literature that he could fit into his luggage and promote the Scouts in America.

The Boy Scouts of America were officially founded in February of 1910. Over the years, the Boy Scouts of America have evolved and shifted program offerings to accommodate a changing clientele and climate; however, they have stayed true to their core beliefs and values for over 100 years. As it is stated in the very first edition of the Boy Scout Handbook and is still consistent with the BSA today: “The boys of America should come under the influence of this
movement and be built up in all that goes to make character and good citizenship.” (Boy Scouts of America, 1911, p. 16)

The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is as follows: “The mission of the Boys 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, 1999, p. 1) The BSA offers a unique program that combines recreational activities with skill building while incorporating values-based education. As referenced by the mission, the BSA bases its goals on the Scout Oath and Law, equally as significant as the mission. The Scout Oath states: “On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and obey the Scout Law; To help other people at all times; To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.” (Boy Scouts of America, 2009, p. 22) The Scout Law states that “A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.” (Boy Scouts of America, 2009, p. 24) It is important to take special note of these beliefs, because they are truly the core of the Boy Scouts of America. It is very common to see posted at BSA recreational facilities a sign that says something similar to ‘The only rules of this camp are the Scout Oath and Law’.

Though originally only for boys aged 12-17, the Boy Scouts of America has greatly increased its program offerings over the years. Currently, there are four primary programs offered by the BSA: Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Venturing. As the four programs are considered, it is important to note several important similarities. First, all programming is done through the hands and efforts of volunteers. Paid BSA staff members are strictly meant to support the local administration and manage the volunteers of the individual Scouting Units. Seasonal staff are also used to offer camping experiences at resident camps.
Second, each individual Scouting Unit must have a partnership with another community entity such as a local church or service club. This entity agrees to help manage the Unit’s leadership as well as offer them a place to conduct meetings and events. Finally, each program offers a similar set of merit-based recognition. As a youth demonstrates a proficiency in a given skill, they are rewarded and recognized for their efforts.

The first program in which a boy can participate through the BSA is the Cub Scouts. For boys aged 6-10, Cub Scouts aims to strengthen the bonds between a young boy and his parents through a variety of activities. Cub Scouts are introduced to citizenship and good character through easy and fun activities such as games and crafts. Cub Scouts are also given the opportunity to participate in day camp activities, but not overnight camping.

When a boy turns eleven, he is eligible to join the Boy Scout Troop. Boy Scouts work to achieve rank advancements via requirements that span citizenship, outdoor skills, science, and personal fitness. Boy Scouts are given the opportunity to camp throughout the year as a troop and also attend summer resident camps.

Similar to Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts work on rank achievement and advancement, but under the theme of sports. Generally, the program of Varsity Scouts is reserved for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Recognizing that many young men drop out of the Boy Scouts around the age of 16, the BSA introduced their fourth program, Venturing, to combat ‘the fumes’: exhaust fumes and perfumes. Venturing is a program for young men and women who are aged 14-19. Venturing offers high-adventure activities under the umbrella of a values-based program in a co-educational setting.
Over the last five years, the BSA has seen a drop in membership among Boy Scouts and Varsity Scouts. From 910,668 in 2012, to 840,654 in 2015 this loss in membership among the 11-17 year old age bracket equates to a membership loss of over 8% (2012 Report to the Nation, 2014) (BSA Annual Report, 2014) (2015 Annual Report, 2015). Local BSA Councils do not publish membership information by community, so it is not possible to further examine membership data. Furthermore, the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey that measures, among other things, drug use in public schools was last implemented in 2014 before the Washington Marijuana structure was fully implemented. As more public health data are released, deeper and richer information will be made available to scholars and practitioners.

Although the BSA has been the subject of studies, the actual BSA programming is rarely the topic of scholarship. Polson, Kim, Jang, Johnson, and Smith (2013) examined the BSA’s influence on building community capital and community bonds. Utilizing a large sample of n=2512, Polson and friends surveyed men and inquired about past participation in the Boy Scouts as well as participant values, community, social, and other variables. The researchers found that participation in the BSA suggests stronger social capital, albeit more significantly among those former scouts who attained the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest rank a Boy Scout can achieve. In other words, “research suggests that young men who are highly involved with the Boy Scouts are more likely to stay connected to, and involved with, others in their community than are non-Scouts or those individuals who were less involved with the Boy Scouts”. (Polson, Kim, Jang, Johnson, & Smith, 2013, p. 771)

Rohm and Osula (2013) conducted a qualitative, content analysis study in which major Scouting organizations around the world were examined in regards to their mottos, credos, etc. in an attempt to establish driving forces in the leadership opportunities afforded to Scouts.
Comparing and contrasting four worldwide Scouting organizations, including the BSA, Rohm and Osula found that all Scouts were taught servant leadership under five domains: voluntary subordination (willing to serve others), authentic self (adherence to Oath and humility), responsible morality (follows code of ethics), transcendental spirituality (religiousness), and transforming influence (clear vision). (2013)

**Faith Based Positive Youth Development**

Although the Boy Scouts of America is not sponsored by a lone religious entity, the BSA has a clearly, faith-based component to it. According to the first line of the Boy Scout Oath “On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my Country”. The BSA requires that Scouts have some belief in a higher existence but does not stipulate a specific affiliation. With that in mind, an examination of faith-based recreation programming is necessary.

Using structural equation modeling, King and Furrow (2008) conducted a study in Los Angeles high schools that tested religious influences on morals. In other words, they sought to find how religious affiliation or participation might affect youths’ personal lives and decision-making. They utilized a three factor model to test morals, which included: social interaction, trust, and shared vision. With a sample of n=765 youth aged 13-19, their multivariate analysis of variance revealed some interesting findings. As is commonly reported in community capital theory, faith-based organizations can provide social capital to the individual and community. Unsurprisingly, the researchers report that religiousness in youth was significant in terms of social capital and moral behavior. Although the role of religion providing social capital should be expected, King and Furrow also found that “social capital as formulated in this study clearly illustrates that religious practices may not in themselves increase moral orientation toward altruism or empathy but that interaction with others in a context of supportive and trusting
relationships may do so” (King & Furrow, 2008, p. 43). In other words, the network of support provided by the religious organizations may be the influencing factor.

Karlis and Makrondimitris (2014) explored the recreational programming of a Greek Orthodox church youth group. Using semi-structured interviews of recreation program providers, they learned that the mission of the Church was vital to the programming. Furthermore, recreation programs were a method of recruitment and maintenance of members of the church. Finally, the recreation program helped strengthen a connection to Greek culture. The recreation providers also made the recommendation that youth participation and decision-making were key components to the success of the program. While faith-based recreation programming helps fulfill the mission of the church, recreation programming has also been used as an intervention to at-risk youth behavior.

**At Risk Youth Behavior**

Recreation programming, whether from municipal or non-profit organizations, can have intentional outcomes for the participant. Known as “Benefits Based Programming”, recreation programming with purposeful and positive consequences for the individual and community has gained popularity (Hurtes, Allen, Stevens, & Lee, 2000). Hurtes and colleagues conducted a study in which Benefits Based Programming was examined in regards to building resiliency in youth. Resiliency is a set of skills that includes anger mitigation, social interactions, responsibility, and ability to navigate adversity. In their study, the researchers partnered with the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) on-site at teen recreation programs. A total of five sites were tested using analysis of covariance and the scholars found that resiliency was built when recreation programs were consistent and staffed with low-turnover. In other words, youth did not show greater resiliency when they attended drop-in programs or when they had
different recreation leaders any given day. Although drop-in programs were not found to
develop resiliency, the authors suggest that they are still valuable because they provide youth
with certain protective factors such as safe locations and positive adult role modeling.

Hughes (1998) conducted a study in which high-risk youth in a Southern State were
evaluated on risk behavior and their choice of leisure activities. Using high school students
(n=114), analysis of variance was conducted to measure relationships between risk behaviors
such as drug/alcohol use, pregnancy, dropout, etc., and leisure activities. The study did not show
significance between leisure constraints and risk behavior, with the exception of high risk
outdoor activities correlating to risk behavior. The study also showed that affiliation with church
or gang was a predictor to risk behavior. However, not significant to risk behavior were
affiliations of school sports, clubs, or community recreation. The sense of group belonging was
a predictor for risk behavior in this study.

To further consider at-risk youth behavior, a 1996 study by Widmer, Ellis, and Trunnell
was examined. The researchers measured ethical behavior among youth using Aristotelian ethics
as a framework. By defining ethical leisure in terms of Aristotelian philosophy, the researchers
declared that leisure should be used to make the individual happy. However, happiness in the
times of Aristotle was a life of character, virtue, and prudence. By contrast, the modern
definition of happiness is simply a pleasant cognitive state. The researchers’ experiment tested
youth who followed Aristotelian ethics and their use of leisure time. A psychometrically-tested
instrument of ethics and leisure was given to 419 youth defined as high-risk and low-risk.
Results included findings that high-risk youth reported lower ethical use of leisure time and
reported higher boredom than low-risk youth. The authors contend that a “lack of leisure-related
competence may also lead to leisure boredom which, in-turn may lead to substance use and other
negative behaviors of high-risk adolescents” (Widmer, Ellis, & Trunnell, 1996, p. 407). While high-risk activities can include many things, the next literature to be considered will be substance use and abuse among youth.

**Youth Drug Prevention General**

Youth drug prevention research is primarily found in the academic domains of health and medicine. According to Guerra and Bradshaw (2008), youth prevention modeling should be grounded in five competencies. They recommend that youth risk prevention be grounded in: positive sense of self, self-control, decision making skills, moral system, and prosocial connectedness (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). With these factors in place, “research suggests that these five competencies play an important role in the promotion of positive youth development and prevention of risk” (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008, p. 13). To further examine this issue, the following studies were considered.

Durlak et. Al. (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of youth programs focusing on school, family, and community level work. They found that from a sample of youth programs (n=526), the majority of programs were physically held within the school, while only 17% of the programs actually were community-based, or outside the walls of the school system. In a call to increase programs that are more wide-reaching, the authors assert that:

Some drug prevention and physical health promotion initiatives have targeted community-level change through the development of community coalitions and task forces, as well as through policy change. These interventions involve such systemic targets as enactment and enforcement of new laws prohibiting the sales of alcohol and tobacco to minors. (Durlak, et al., 2007, p. 278)

Midford, Munro, McBride, Snow, and Ladzinski (2002) conducted a qualitative study of school-based drug prevention programming in Australia. Using a survey administered to 210 teachers as well as key informant interviews, the researchers explored the perceived success of
drug prevention programming. After data analysis, 22 themes emerged. Key findings and recommendations from the teachers included: a call for increased cultural competence, more support from societal influences, and above all else, an emphasis on evidence-based prevention models. In other words “Prevention benefits are much more likely to flow from coherent, conceptually sound programs, and clear specification of the necessary conceptual elements play an important part in understanding what constitutes a sound program” (Midford, Munro, McBride, Snow, & Ladzinski, 2002, p. 384).

Considering drug prevention models on a larger-scale, Porath-Waller, Beasley, and Beirness (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of youth drug prevention programs and their effectiveness. Using 15 English studies for comparison, the researchers analyzed program length and effectiveness using a Cohen d test for significance. The researchers considered 15 drug prevention programs that served over 15,000 youth. The study was specifically focused on youth marijuana use. Porath-Waller et. al. (2010) found that “these programs have a positive effect in reducing the use of cannabis among youth ranging in age from 12 to 19 years” (p. 719). When compared to control groups, youth who received drug prevention in schools saw 27.9% reduction in marijuana use, which was considered a significant finding. The average time spent in drug prevention coursework among the 15 programs was 13 hours among 15 individual sessions (Porath-Walker, Beasley, & Beirness, 2010). These findings support the effectiveness of drug prevention programs for youth. The authors suggest that “because prevention programs are a relatively inexpensive policy option compared to the social, health, and judicial costs associated with cannabis (and other drug) use, even small reductions in cannabis use can be highly cost-effective” (Porath-Walker, Beasley, & Beirness, 2010, p. 721).
A far cry from traditional empirical literature, Shimon, Gibson, & Spear (2009) described a drug prevention model called “Stop the Tears”. This program involves a visual wall display of youths’ reflections of drug and alcohol abuse. Furthermore, the program assesses the individual youth’s knowledge of personal and societal effects of drug and alcohol abuse. As there are many reasons for an individual to use drugs and alcohol, there are also many ways to prevent their use.

As drug prevention intersects with Positive Youth Development theory, the literature suggests that, in general terms, a youth with more protective factors and less risk factors in their life is less likely to engage in drug and alcohol use at a young age. Park suggests that the “association between life satisfaction and drug use/abuse was especially robust for children younger than 13 years of age” (Park, 2004, p. 28).

As Positive Youth Development is integrated into drug and alcohol prevention, the holistic treatment of the individual and the community must be emphasized. When considering a holistic model for prevention within the school systems, Flay (2002) asserted that “Comprehensive, long-term, schoolwide interventions that involve families and communities, but are not too difficult to implement, can successfully reduce multiple problem/risky, unhealthy, and antisocial behaviors, and increase multiple positive, healthy, and prosocial behaviors, improve mental health and self-concept, and enhance academic performance” (p. 418). This notion can be expanded beyond the school to all facets of youth programming.

**Youth Drug Prevention and Recreation Programming**

Drug prevention programming takes many forms and can be found in many locations within many organizations. Included in these organizations are youth-serving organizations. St. Pierre and Lynne (1997) explored drug prevention programming among high-risk youth in a local Boys and Girls Club. A three year longitudinal study was used for this study that examined
the effects of parental involvement as a component of drug prevention programming. Three groups of youth were used in this study: treatment, partial treatment, and control. Although youth drug use was not tracked, methods for successfully placing a quality parent volunteer were suggested. These recommended methods include: a relationship of mutual respect between the parent and the organization, parent ownership and group bonding, easy access and incentives, and a persistent yet flexible professional to monitor the volunteers (St. Pierre & Lynne, 1997).

Recreation programming could be a viable key to drug prevention due to the idea that “potentially health-compromising behaviors, whether alcohol, drugs or sex…occur during adolescents’ leisure time” (Cato, 1992, p. 293). Cato conducted a study examining youth drug use and the behaviors associated with it. Using 200 students from urban and rural Florida, the study implemented Likert-type questionnaires regarding reasons behind drug and alcohol use. The researcher produced four significant findings: youth reported that the pleasures associated with drug use were significantly correlated with enhancing popularity, a means of rebellion, not a means for self-discovery, and not a way to reach a personal goal (Cato, 1992). The author contends that it is the duty of recreation professionals to empower youth to consider “drug use and leisure behaviors based on knowledge consequences and the instrumentality of an act of decision” (Cato, 1992, p. 301). This notion supports the ideals of character-based recreation as a viable vehicle for drug prevention models.

Testing the theory that drug prevention has a valid place in a recreation programming setting were Tebes, Feinn, Vanderploeg, Chinman, Shepard, Brabham, Genovese, and Connell (2007) who conducted an experiment with 304 youth in an urban after-school program. With 155 youth in a control group and 149 in the treatment group a year-long after-school program was administered to the treatment group. The treatment group received 18 lessons of substance
prevention and cultural heritage. Pre and post tests were given to all participants measuring decision making, general knowledge regarding tobacco, drugs and alcohol, and healthy living. Furthermore, youth were asked to evaluate their 30-day drug use. Researchers found that the youth who participated in the activity were significantly more likely to perceive drugs as harmful, and also showed a lower 30-day drug use; both immediately following the program as well as one year after the program had ended (Tebes, et al., 2007). The authors credit both Positive Youth Development and Community Capital Theory as guiding forces for the program’s success. “The study involved collaboration among several community agencies committed to promoting Positive Youth Development” (Tebes, et al., 2007, p. 246).

Implications of Marijuana Policy

Youth drug use can be influenced by many factors: social, peer, and community laws and norms just to name a few. With the concept of community laws and norms in mind, literature involving the evolution of drug laws, specifically marijuana, will be considered. As marijuana use rose during the 1960s and 1970s, community leaders and politicians were pressed to enact strong legislation in drug prevention and combat any efforts to decriminalize it. For example, in 1972, marijuana reform activists from the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) petitioned the United States Drug Enforcement Administration to reclassify marijuana from a “Schedule 1” drug to a “Schedule 2” drug. (Daniel & Levine, 2001) While the rescheduling does nothing to change the legality of a drug, “Schedule 1” drugs are not recognized as having medicinal qualities while “Schedule 2” drugs are. “After substantial legal maneuvering by the drug culture, the DEA carefully documented the case against the rescheduling of marijuana and denied the petition.” (Daniel & Levine, 2001, p. 303) Although this was a setback for marijuana proponents, it did not stop efforts. Rather, marijuana reform
activists began a nationwide campaign to legalize marijuana for “Medical Uses”. During the 1980s, amid the AIDS crisis, marijuana activists described effects of marijuana as soothing to sick and dying AIDS patients. Paired with traditional remedies for chemotherapy and glaucoma, “Medical Marijuana” was poised for a public perception of legitimacy.

It should be noted that “Medical Marijuana” is truly a misnomer. No state in the Union requires that “Medical Marijuana” be tested, regulated, or dispensed through pharmacies. Marijuana is dispersed through private dispensaries and co-ops. Another common misconception is that physicians prescribe marijuana; this is false. In reality, physicians “recommend” the personal use and present the patient with proof of this recommendation; this document is commonly called a “Green Card”. The Green Card’s only real value is found in a valid defense against criminal prosecution.

In 1996, California became the first state to allow for the individual use of marijuana for medical uses, with the passage of Initiative 215. In years since California I-215, the United States has seen a shift in the public perception of marijuana; specifically norms, perceived harm, and perceived benefit. According to a study by Beaudoin and Hong (2012), “People are unlikely to use marijuana if they view it to pose a risk, either to themselves or to society” (Beaudoin & Hong, 2012, p. 141). The study used a .001 significance level, a sample size of 750 young adults ranging in age from 18-24.

Perceived risk has been shown to be a strong indicator surrounding drug use. Hemmelstein (1995) conducted a study not only exploring youth and perceived risk around marijuana, but also what types of risk were more prevalent. Hemmelstein found that adolescents perceived risk with marijuana use regarding: health, disciplinary issues, loss of friends, and poor
school performance (Hemmelstein, 1995). With a sample size of n=1153 and a significance level of .01, these were his correlation findings:

Perceived risk towards health: 0.63

Perceived risk toward discipline: 0.81

Perceived risk toward loss of friends: 0.83

Perceived risk towards poor school performance: 0.82

This study shows clear evidence that perception of risk impacts a youth’s decision to use marijuana.

According to a study completed by Lynne-Landsman (2013) who tested annual youth marijuana use rates before and after a state enacted medical marijuana laws, the results suggested that 18 of the 20 states did not show a significant rise in marijuana use. The study did, however, show evidence that youth daily use rates significantly increased after medical marijuana laws were adopted (Lynne-Landsman, Livingston, & Wagenaar, Effects of State Medical Marijuana Laws on Adolescent Marijuana Use, 2013). This increase could be linked to an increase in access of marijuana to youth via medical marijuana dispensaries. The study claims that “74% of adolescent patients in a substance abuse treatment program reported having used diverted medical marijuana” (Lynne-Landsman, Livingston, & Wagenaar, 2013, p. 1505)

Stolzenberg, D’Alessio, and Dariano (2016) conducted a longitudinal study of 50 states on the passage of medical marijuana laws and youth use. They found that although medical marijuana laws have no effect on other illicit drug use, medical marijuana laws amplify youth marijuana use. They attribute this increase to social norming and the deterioration of social
stigma marijuana use as policies are changed. The literature also suggests that perception of risk is a strong indicator of youth marijuana use and the literature also suggests that adoption of medical marijuana legislation lowers perception of risk. Miech, Johnston, O’Malley, Bachman, Schulenberg, & Patrick (2015) considered California youth and their perception of marijuana as the state decriminalized the drug. Using data from 2007-2013, they found that marijuana decriminalization lowered the perception of risk, and increased acceptance of the drug.

Medical scholars have theorized that both environment and social norms can have an influence on a youth’s decision to use drugs, specifically marijuana (Friese & Grube, 2013). Additionally, Shrier, Rhodes, Fredette, & Burke (2014) suggest that peer relationships are critical to youth marijuana use. Specifically, “the rise in marijuana use among adolescents may be a consequence of a decline in peer norms against use, as suggested by declines in perceived risk and in disapproval of marijuana use” (Shrier, Rhodes, Fredette, & Burke, 2014, p. 134).

Aside from environmental factors such as social norms and ease of access, youth behaviorists suggest that positive parental influencing is a protective factor in marijuana use. King, Vidourek, and Merianos (2015) found that youth were at highest risk for marijuana use when they experienced few-to-no positive parenting experiences. In other words, those youth with holistic development, complete with positive parental involvement, were less likely to use marijuana.

**Youth Recreation and Community Development**

Autry and Anderson (2007) studied the community of Glenview Neighborhood: a low-resource community with high youth delinquency and low resident engagement. This Housing and Urban Development (HUD) community features 18 buildings with 16 apartments each. There is but one road in and out of the complex, which is “surrounded by an eight-foot-high
fence of black iron-rod stakes, which is then surrounded by an eight-foot-high cement block wall” (Autry & Anderson, 2007, p. 272). The study involved a four-week series of youth recreation programs examined through the lens of social ecology and social capital theories. The data used in this study were gleaned from interviews and observations of 21 residents and service providers who included: residents, parks and recreation workers, educators, faith leaders, city government, and police. After the data were collected several themes emerged from the community. First, the residents felt strong distrust of most people outside of the neighborhood. Second, recreation could be used as a means to build social capital. And lastly, parental involvement was key to addressing both the distrust and building future social capital, provided the appropriate amount of technical assistance was given to the neighborhood.

The Glenview Neighborhood participated in a summer youth program, which was facilitated by a coalition of service providers. The 4-week program did yield some positive results. For example, a local youth pastor commented that in terms of crime and drug trafficking “it has had an immediate impact of the neighborhood” (Autry & Anderson, 2007, p. 275). This comment has several implications. First of all the community has benefited from the recreation program (and the social capital that was built therein) in terms of a decrease in crime and drug trafficking. These are both certainly positive things for the community to celebrate. But when this observation is considered through the individual’s eyes, one can see the many benefits that are realized regarding personal well-being. A decrease in crime results in a safer place to call home for the individual, it may also mean that a child living in the home is not at odds with the law. A reduction in drug trafficking also has individual benefits. It could mean a more positive outlet for children, as opposed to substance use. Less drug trafficking also has the implications of a safer community at-large. When this seemingly simple statement is examined more deeply,
support for Green and Haines’ theory of social capital being affected by both the community and the individual is certainly supported. Of course, this was observed after a single 4-week recreation program. This was a bright spot in an otherwise dark story, however, Green and Haines would argue that social capital is slow building and sustainability is certainly at risk in Glenview Neighborhood. A mother of one of the program participants reported that “I don’t think that the kids trusted the program to the point where they thought it was going to be around any longer” (Autry & Anderson, 2007, p. 276).

Gestsdottir and Lerner (2007) studied youth engaged in 4-H programs and considered their involvement in the youth program with Positive Youth Development as a framework. A longitudinal study, the researchers studied a total of n=1659 5th graders in a multi-year model for the following PYD characteristics: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. Furthermore, they looked at the youths’ problem and risk behaviors. The youth were given a psychometrically reliable and valid instrument over several years and they found that “all correlations were significant and in the predicted direction, suggesting that even if processes of self-regulation still may be developing during this early portion of adolescence, intentional self-regulation plays a role in multiple aspects of healthy functioning in early adolescence” (Gestsdottir & Lerner, 2007, p. 517). In other words, the youth who participated in the 4-H program reported high indicators of Positive Youth Development.

Anderson-Butcher, Stetler, & Midle. (2006) conducted a project in which school staff were surveyed regarding youth and participation in out-of-school activities. With a cohort in the Midwest, a total of n=389 school staff were asked about the importance of out-of-school programming for the development of youth. This research was of special interest because “few real linkages between schools and youth development organizations actually exist in schools
where school-based or linked out of school time youth development programs are already offered” (Anderson-Butcher, Stetler, & Midle, p. 160). In other words, in communities with robust school-based programming, few youth engage outside of the school walls. This is not preferable, because for social capital to fully develop, the bridging of social networks must occur. Anderson-Butcher and friends reported that school staff encouraged youth to participate in out-of-school programming, as such programming was seen as positive to the school staff. However, the school staff agreed that more strategic links to community organizations must be in place for the youth.

Further research concerning youth and out-of-school programming was conducted by Morrissey and Werner-Wilson (2005) in which youth were asked to consider their attitudes about community and their social behavior. With a sample of n=304 Midwestern youth in grades 5-12 at 14 after-school sites, youth were given a psychometrically reliable and valid instrument which measured: demographics, community opportunities, attitude towards community, family influence, out-of-school influence, and pro-social behavior. Almost all variables were found to be significant with one exception: family. “This study found that family does not have a direct effect on pro-social behavior. While families are clearly important in many aspects of adolescents’ lives, it was found here that participation in structured activities had the most significant influence on pro-social behavior” (Morrissey & Werner-Wilson, 2005, p. 82). This interesting finding might suggest that the opportunities held within a community, such as recreational activities, are key components in developing social skills and vitally important social capital among youth participants.
Summary

The review of literature highlights several important factors pertaining to this study. First to consider is the importance of Positive Youth Development (PYD) and its place in character-based youth recreation. As a multi-discipline vein of scholarship, PYD relies heavily on the assumption that children are best prepared for success throughout life when they are given support and growth opportunities from many sources. This theory supports community capital theory; with a belief that all communities have strength and resources.

As a large provider of character-based youth recreation, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) serve millions of youth annually, however are not heavily researched from a programmatic viewpoint. Rather, the majority of scholarship involving the BSA revolves around membership practices and legal issues. Without a wide swath of academic work surrounding the BSA, other youth-serving organizations were considered.

Finally, drug prevention as a discipline was reviewed. A field in itself, drug prevention primarily has roots in community health education, however, many community-serving organizations are active in some form of drug prevention work. With that in mind, literature was considered that focused on merit of drug prevention work, and methodology.

The review of literature provided a sound background for this study, as well as highlighted potential gaps in the arena of scholarship.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

Character-based youth recreation programming and drug prevention as a study presented opportunities and challenges. The opportunities included a chance to study programming as an intervention tool for drug prevention and character building for future academics and practitioners to incorporate into programmatic offerings. However, drug use and character development among youth and adults are complex issues with many potential variables; both direct and latent.

Due to the exceedingly complex issues this study took a qualitative approach research design. The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) programming within one Pacific Northwest State was the primary focus of this study.

With a clear and focused approach to one character-based youth recreation program within one state, this study provided insight into leader and participant experiences and opinions. The qualitative methodology of the study provided deep and rich data to tell the story of character-based youth recreation as a viable intervention of future substance use.

Research Question

Does the character-based youth recreation programming offered by the Boy Scouts of America shape perceptions of substance use for its participants and its leaders?

Research Sub-Questions

1. Do character-based youth recreation programs have effects on future substance use?

2. Are character-based youth recreation programs better at preventing youth substance use than youth recreation programs without a character element?
3. Do practitioners and professionals representing these programs earnestly work to prevent drug abuse among participants?

**Research Design and Timeline**

The study consisted of semi-structured interviews of youth-serving recreation practitioners and adults who were youth participants in the Boy Scouts of America. Six practitioners and/or volunteer leaders were interviewed representing a Pacific Northwest State with liberal drug laws. Also representing the same state, six adults who participated in the BSA as youth for at least two years were interviewed. Finally, additional data such as youth recreation program curriculum pertaining to drug prevention were considered. Data were collected between February 2016-March 2016.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore the drug-prevention components of character-based youth recreation programs; specifically the Boy Scouts of America. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed for themes. This brought to light the perceptions of drug-prevention elements from a youth recreation practitioner’s viewpoint, as well as compared and contrasted the different drug-prevention methodologies offered by the various troops within the same organization.

**Sample Selection**

A total of 12 participants were selected for the qualitative portion of the study: all practitioners/leaders and former Boy Scouts. These adults were all sampled from Washington State. Washington has seen a rapid evolution of drug law within the last 20 years and has two distinctly separate realms of political affiliation: Western Washington tends to vote more liberal
while Eastern Washington tends to vote more conservative. The researcher has a strong network of contacts for the sampling process due to his prior work in the State.

Participants

Participants for this study were selected purposively using a snowball method. The participants were professional and volunteer leaders representing the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). Additional participants were adults who participated in the BSA as youth. (Table 4.1)

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Participant Location</th>
<th>Current Role with BSA</th>
<th>BSA Rank Earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Western Wash.</td>
<td>Scoutmaster</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Central Wash.</td>
<td>Climbing Instructor</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Western Wash.</td>
<td>Scoutmaster</td>
<td>Second Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Western Wash.</td>
<td>Troop Committee Chairman</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>Eastern Wash.</td>
<td>Scoutmaster</td>
<td>Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>Western Wash.</td>
<td>Not Registered</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Eastern Wash.</td>
<td>Scoutmaster</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Central Wash.</td>
<td>Assistant Scoutmaster</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Eastern Wash.</td>
<td>Troop Committee Chairman</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Western Wash.</td>
<td>Scoutmaster</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
</tr>
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<td>R</td>
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<td>BSA Professional</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Central Wash.</td>
<td>Scoutmaster</td>
<td>Cub Scout</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of six practitioners/leaders were selected. These participants were evenly selected as follows: five from Western Washington, four from Central Washington, and three from Eastern Washington. (Figure 2.1) The participants were selected from different geographic locations in Washington for greater political diversity. The researcher used his contacts from previous BSA work for snowball referrals. Participants were asked for potential participants who were either active in the BSA, or were former Scouts themselves. Participants selected did not have a prior relationship with the researcher.
Practitioners and participants had first-hand knowledge of the content and potential power of any drug prevention curriculum offered by BSA.

**Depth vs. Breadth**

The data collected provided adequate depth and breadth for this study. With a large sample of 12 participants representing both participant and practitioner, and representing both political sides of the state, a strong breadth was shown. The depth of the data emerged from multiple participants and other supporting data such as BSA materials. Prolonged engagement further added to the depth of the data.
Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used and digitally recorded. Questions included such items as: character building elements of Scouting, perceived effectiveness of drug prevention curriculum in recreation programs, youth’s engagement level during drug lessons, and how much time was spent on drug curriculum. All responses were transcribed verbatim. Open and axial codes were hand analyzed and meaning was derived.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using qualitative methodology. Data were captured, transcribed verbatim, and then considered. Because this study used a proposed theory, Grounded Theory was not an appropriate method. Grounded Theory considers all data without preconceived ideas and allows the themes to emerge. This study was more conducive to Thematic Analysis. In Thematic Analysis “generating themes from data is a common feature of qualitative methods and a widely used analytical method. Thematic Analysis is an interpretive process in which data are systematically searched for patterns to provide an illuminating description of the phenomenon” (Smith & Firth, 2011, p. 54). This methodology allowed for the clear consideration of themes from the data.
The actual analysis of the data used a coding process. “Despite the diversity of qualitative methods, the subsequent analysis is based on a common set of principles and for interview data included: transcribing the interviews; immersing the researcher in the data to gain detailed insights into the phenomena being explored; developing a data coding system; and linking codes or units of data to form overarching themes/concepts” (Noble & Smith, 2014, p. 3). Open codes were generated from commonly-occurring phrases and words. These commonalities were grouped and named. Axial codes were then used to connect larger groups of Open Codes together, like a common bond between Open Codes. All coding was done by hand, without software, by the researcher because “another concern is that use of software may cause distancing between researchers and data” (Beck, 2003, p. 232). The researcher read, and re-read all data and carefully considered all data points in the analysis.

**Interviews.**

Interviews consisted of semi-structured questions given to participants. Questions were asked via phone. All responses were digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim for later analysis. The core set of questions asked to each leaders/practitioner participant were:

- What is your role with the BSA?
- In what ways does the BSA fulfil its mission to build character in youth?
- What specific things do you remember doing with your troop to build character and how often did you do them.
- Do you believe that drug-prevention is a necessary component to character building?
- Does your organization have a drug-prevention curriculum/program? What is it?
- Do you feel like the curriculum/program is effective? Why or why not.
• How do other practitioners within your organization feel about the curriculum/program?
• In what ways could the curriculum/program be used more effectively?
• How long did you participate in Scouts?
• What rank did you achieve?
• Do you believe that the Boy Scouts helped shape your character? How?
• If you have ever used alcohol, can you please tell about your first experience with Alcohol?
• If you have ever used marijuana, can you please tell me about your first experience with marijuana?
• Can you please tell me if/when you first tried any other illicit drugs?
• How would you describe your use of alcohol, marijuana, or illicit drugs currently as an adult?
• While you were active in the Scouts, do you remember participating in a drug-prevention curriculum/program? What is it?
• Do you feel like the curriculum/program was effective? Why or why not.
• In what ways could the BSA be more effective in engaging Scouts in drug prevention?

Managing and Recording Data

Sound files were stored on password-protected computers for data security. All sound files were transcribed verbatim onto documents for data analysis. Interviews took place over the phone.
Trustworthiness

Sharing similar goals of quantitative research’s reliability and validity, qualitative trustworthiness strives to ensure academic rigor in methodology. Levels of trustworthiness for this study included: prolonged engagement, persistent engagement, data triangulation, and member checks.

**Prolonged Engagement.**

Each semi-structured interview was open-ended and as such was not subject to a time limit. The goal was that each interview would have sufficient time to extract data for the study.

**Persistent Engagement.**

Persistent engagement will be achieved through a large sample size of twelve participants: Six leaders/practitioners and six former participants.

**Data Triangulation.**

All data received during the interview sessions were triangulated with written drug-prevention curricula and programmatic elements from the youth-serving organizations as well as through current law and social norming data. For example, participants referred to rank advancement requirements, which were considered. Furthermore, participants mentioned additional literature produced by the BSA, which was obtained and read for clarity and insight.

**Member Checks.**

Each participant was given an opportunity to review a written copy of the interview to verify it for accuracies. They were then given the opportunity to clarify or modify their responses prior to publication.
Summary

Research design consisted of a purely qualitative methodology. Research questions were used to direct the study. Purposive, snowball sampling methods were utilized during participant selection. Data collection in the form of interviews and interviewing methods were explained. Data analysis was presented as Thematic Analysis. Finally, chapter three concluded with a description of the layers of trustworthiness employed during the research design.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

The presentation of the data consists of a description of the transcribed interview, followed by presentation of the themes, and finally the summary. Analysis of the data revealed a total of five major themes and seventeen sub-themes.

Transcribed Interviews

A total of 12 participants were interviewed over the phone with a semi-structured set of questions. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Presentation of Themes and Sub-themes

Table 4.1

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Findings and Major Themes

Theme: Program Delivery

Participants described their experiences as both adult volunteers and as former Scouts with the BSA. When asked about the BSA, many responses revolved around the programmatic elements of the BSA. Emerging Axial Codes of Program Delivery included: Adult Mentorship, Ethics, The Boy Scout Oath and Law, Leadership Opportunities, Boy-Led Troops, Service, and Training.

Sub-theme: Adult Mentorship

The role of positive adult role models emerged as a theme during the interviews. Participants felt as though the adult volunteers within the BSA were in a position to model behavior to the youth. For example, one participant felt that simply by the nature of his role as Scoutmaster, he was inherently a mentor. “As a Scoutmaster, I attempt to mentor the youth leaders” (A1). Furthermore, the participants held high esteem for the adult leaders within the BSA. They felt as though Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters were generally thought of as being positive, moral men. “You tend to see not only your Scoutmasters, but lots of others and the general character of the Scoutmasters…they’re strong-willed, patient, pretty honorable” (A2).

Finally, one participant expressly described the role of BSA leaders from the male perspective. Although women are welcome to be registered as leaders within the BSA, men are most commonly found in the leadership roles. “(In a) single parent family the father might not be the best role model, and so Scouting provides for those boys some positive adult role models” (R).
Sub-theme: Ethics

The participants felt as though the BSA had strong programmatic elements in character-building. In other words, ethics and ethical decision-making were common themes during the interviews. Although one participant described the BSA as a secondary contributor to his character, he felt as though it still had an effect on him. “(Scouting) didn’t shape my character more than my parents shaped my character, so it secondary to the environment I was raised in, but it gave me many, um, recreational outlets, at which I was taught, you know, hard work, perseverance” (A1). This respondent felt as though his experience in the BSA helped contribute to a strong work ethic. Although underscored by his home life, he felt as though he gained ethical lessons from the BSA program.

Participants described how their individual troops worked to build character and ethics. For example, one participant described an annual fundraiser in which the Scoutmaster found opportunities to pass along life lessons. “One things we say (in our troop) is when you’re working on something, do the best job you can whether anybody’s watching or not” (D). Another participant described the opportunities for lifelong growth which he believed could be attained through participation in the BSA. “I think if the kids stay through the program, it teaches them a lot of life values, but it also shows them where they fit into a group of kids” (A2).

A participant described his career in youth social work and compared it to the youth he encounters with the BSA. He was quick to describe the differences between youth in volatile home situations to youth in a more nurturing environment. “I worked with youth in Washington and one of the things I have discovered is that a lot of the kids that I have worked with do not have a code that they live by. They don’t have a code of ethics” (B4). This respondent felt as
though his code of ethics, the BSA Oath and Law were paramount to his development, whereas the youth he serves professionally do not have a similar code of ethics.

**Sub-theme: Scout Oath and Law**

Through participant interviews, the theme of the Scout Oath and Law emerged. A cornerstone of the BSA program, the Oath and Law are guiding principles to Scouts and leaders alike. As such, participants described using them within their troops. “We stress the ideals of the Boy Scout(s) which is, you know the Boy Scout Oath and the Boy Scout Law, which um, basically…duty to…country, duty to God, and duty to yourself” (S). Another participant reflected a similar sentiment. “We’re referring all the time not only to be prepared, but you know, what does it mean to be trustworthy and helpful, and uh, courteous and loyal and everything” (D).

In order to bridge the gap between words and action, a participant described how his troop used the Oath and Law to engage youth in proactive character-building. “One of the things we frequently do when we have these one-on-one talks with boys is, you know, we ask them “How are you living the Scout Oath and Law in your everyday life outside of Scouts”?” (S).

Finally, a participant described the connection that he saw between the Scout Oath and Law and the leadership opportunities offered by the BSA. “It all starts with the fundamentals of things like the Scout Oath, the Scout Law, and then it builds on those, um, by offering kids hands-on ways to learn skills, and then a hands-on opportunity to be in a leadership role” (B1). Built into the BSA Oath and Law are virtues and ethics. Moreover, the Oath and Law provide a roadmap by which youth should live; at least according to the BSA program.
Sub-theme: Leadership Opportunities

The Axial Code of Leadership Opportunities emerged from the interviews. Participants described the BSA as being an organization that offers youth various leadership roles throughout their entire Scouting experience. “We really press for, um, leadership. We encourage the boys to, um, to take a…a big leadership role and step out of their comfort zone and, um, and try something new and to challenge themselves” (S). A participant described using leadership as a retention tool for youth who were considering leaving the troop. “When I hear that a Scout is thinking about quitting or if they’re not planning to go into Boy Scouts from Cub Scouts and I…and I have a chance to talk to the parents, I typically highlight the leadership experience” (E).

Participants recounted their opportunities for leadership during their youth. They described serving as Patrol Leaders, Senior Patrol Leaders, etc. This leadership experience was seen as a positive part of their personal youth development. “I think I accomplished a lot of things before I even graduated from high school that a lot of people never accomplished in their lifetime” (C). This participant felt as though his experience camping, volunteering, and leading other boys was something that is not offered by schools, sports, or other youth organizations. This participant felt as though his participation as a Scout was unique. “You learn the techniques of leadership, uh, in Scouting…learn the different personalities of the people that you’re working with” (B2).

One participant expanded the concept of leadership to describe his personal leadership philosophy; a philosophy passed down from his father. “My father was our Scoutmaster, okay. My father absolutely firmly believed in what he called shadow leadership…you first taught
somebody how to do it and then they taught, and then you…you make sure that it was done right” (B4).

**Sub-theme: Boy-Led Troops**

Participants were asked about the unique character-building components of the troops they served. Interestingly, the leaders described the concept of Boy-Led Troops as being unique to their individual troop. The term Boy-Led Troop refers to a troop wherein the youth run the meetings and outings, while the adults provide mentorship and guidance. The idea being that Boy-Led troops give youth the chance to gain stronger leadership, planning, and delegation skills. “We’re a boy-run troop…I think that’s the real key, because when you’re boy-run you give the kids, you know, the opportunity and the responsibility to, uh you know, I mean, run things and actually own it” (B1). Other participants echoed this sentiment. “We’re huge on boy-led. We’re willing to let them fail as long as it’s not going to…you don’t cause any harm” (E). Again, this notion was supported by another participant. “We’ve been noted and often talked about for our boy-led troops…It can be frustrating, but it can be also rewarding” (M).

**Sub-theme: Service**

The theme of Service emerged during the interviews. Participants described the BSA as being an organization that serves the community through various outreach projects. Participants believed that philanthropy was an important component to the programmatic offerings of the BSA. “Community service is one aspect of it. You know, giving of yourself” (B2). Participants described what service meant and who the BSA serves. The participants used terms such as “community” and “neighborhoods” to describe their service. “When you’re in that position you are able to help other people in whatever way they need, so that’s a big part of it; helping the community, helping the people” (B2). The sense of service and duty to community
was present during the interviews. Furthermore, participants described the importance of service to both the community and to the individual. “End up with someone that turns out to be involved in community, looks out for the best interest of their families, their neighbors” (B3).

**Sub-theme: Training**

Training was a theme that emerged from the interviews, however, this theme relates specifically to adult leaders within the BSA. The BSA offers adult leaders a wide range of training opportunities, both in-person and online. Some training modules are mandatory of all registered leaders, while some are optional. Interestingly, participants had mixed feelings about training. Some leaders felt as though training was an integral part of successful troops. “I personally believe that the Boy Scouts can…have a huge success…if the organization is run the right way with trained leaders who are organized volunteers and they require young men and parents to be involved” (A1). This participant echoed a consistent thought that parents and volunteers affiliated with the BSA should have some level of training. The BSA provides many different modules of training, thus providing all volunteers ample opportunities to be considered “trained” by the BSA. “I think it can fail if it’s not sufficiently staffed and supported by parents and there’s not enough boys” (A1). A word of caution, this participant felt as though the Scouting program will not be successful without ample support by parents. Implicit to the statement was the notion that parental support must include parents who are trained by BSA standards.

Another participant felt as though training has become too much of a priority in the BSA. He felt as though an emphasis on training shifted focus from youth to adult recognition and achievement. “I see certain people at the council level that are constantly pushing adult training, adult training, adult recognition. And you know…and it’s…it’s like, well, okay that’s good, but
you know, it…it doesn’t come at the expense of the boys” (B1). This participant described a potential issue within the BSA in terms of training and recognition. He believed that adults were becoming the focus in lieu of the youth. This sentiment was also similar to other respondents. “I think that sometimes the training programs, um they kinda become, you know, so important to some people that… that the… the people lose sight of the fact that the organization is for the boys” (B1). He went on to describe the recognition of youth and adults within the BSA. “This isn’t about dads getting awards for Boy Scouts. This is about Boy Scouts, you know, getting awarded for being good leaders” (B1).

Only one participant described the training available to the Scouts themselves, however, the participant spoke very highly of the quality of the youth training. “I think the Boy Scout NYLT (National Youth Leadership Training) is outstanding, and every boy that I have sent through NYLT has come out a changed individual” (M).

**Theme: Drugs and the Boy Scouts of America**

As interviews progressed, a theme of Drugs and the Boy Scouts of America emerged. The participants expressed opposition to drugs, with specific opposition to youth involvement in drugs and alcohol. They also felt as though character plays a part in drug use. “Drug use compromises character” (D). Another participant expressed a similar, yet more open opinion on drug use. He demonstrated a more inclusive viewpoint. “Whether it’s dealing with meth, cocaine, um, so I mean, potentially when someone’s 21 they could be smoking marijuana and I don’t think that’s necessarily a judgement of their character. That’s their personal life choice…even though I disagree with it. So, but I think character does help youth, teens avoid drug use” (A1).
Only light alcohol use as adults was self-reported by participants. Youth alcohol use was minimal, with some responses indicating that alcohol was provided to the participant by his parents when they were underage. No participant reported current marijuana use, and very few reported marijuana use as a younger man. Respondents suggested that their circle of friends, religious affiliation, and parental influences were major contributing factors in their alcohol and drug use choices.

**Sub-theme: Low Perception of Risk for Participants**

Participants described risks of drug use and discussed an opposition to youth involvement with drugs and alcohol, however, as the data was analyzed, a theme of Low Perception of Risk for Participants emerged. Participants believed that although youth drug and alcohol use was a high risk activity, the youth with whom they worked were perceived as being in a low-risk group. “Drug prevention is not a thing that we’ve emphasized…I don’t know if we have any drug issues among our members” (D). He went on to describe the reasons for his troop’s lack of attention to drug prevention. “I don’t recall any…any significant, deliberate effort to do that (drug prevention), largely because we’ve never perceived it as a…a real local, immediate problem” (D). Another participant discussed his troop and why they did not spend much time with drug and alcohol prevention. “That’s probably why we didn’t cover the drug and alcohol stuff as much as most troops would, because they just assumed that none of the kids were thinking about it to begin with” (A2).

Factors such as Socio-economic status and family stability were discussed. “I believe because of my troop’s location and the families that are…that belong to the troop, they have boys in the troop, we have a slight advantage of over many other troops” (B3). The participant
held the belief that the high socio-economic status of the troop members served as a protective factor to drug and alcohol use.

Factors such as rural versus urban as well as high versus low income were themes contributing to a low perception of risk. “We are in an area of town where drug use really isn’t, uh, a big concern for us. Not like other parts of town” (B3). A common theme, this volunteer believed that his geographic location was somewhat insulated to youth drug use. This sentiment was also echoed by another respondent. “I’m not saying that there weren’t drugs or alcohol out there available to them (Scouts), but it was less likely because it was very rural settings” (B4).

**Sub-theme: Socio-Economic Status**

Taking a low perception of risk even further, a Scoutmaster described his troop’s income level. “The average income(s), I think, of the families in my troop are slightly above normal, above average…so money, for most of my families, is not a…it’s not a problem” (B3). He went on to assert that income and geographic locations were strong indicators for future drug use. “If you look at drug use in most areas of cities, you’re going to find that it is comprised primarily of people that have very low incomes. Now, there are obviously exceptions to that, but for the most part, people that have very low incomes, that have very little training or education, um, I think are more susceptible to the influence of drugs” (B3).

**Sub-theme: Legal Marijuana**

Although the majority of participants, when asked, responded that they had never used marijuana, a theme of Legal Marijuana still emerged in the interviews. Participants were aware of marijuana laws and discussed the legality of the drug within the State. Participants also reported that Scouts rarely asked questions about marijuana to Scoutmasters. “I have never (used marijuana), and it’s legal here in Washington State” (E). The awareness of legal
marijuana was prevalent with many respondents. “In the State of Washington we’re unique in the fact that cannabis is legal” (A1).

While the set of questions did not ask the participants about their views on the legality of marijuana, some participants voiced their opinions about the policy. “The State of Washington thinks recreational use (of marijuana) is okay” (C). Another respondent took this idea and inserted his personal marijuana choices into his response. “Marijuana is legal here in Washington State. I choose not to use it because I don’t…I find life itself exciting enough. I don’t feel the need to go down that path” (B2).

**Theme: Current Prevention Techniques**

Participants were asked to describe how the BSA and their individual troops each approached drug prevention. Responses were generally focused on the programmatic aspects of the BSA. Axial codes emerging under the Open Code of Current Prevention Techniques included: Social Support, Advancement, Consequences, Scouting as an Alternative to Drugs and Alcohol, and Religious Influence.

**Sub-theme: Social Support**

Participants described a strong sense of Social Support provided by the BSA to its participants. They described both their personal youth development as well as the support that they provide to the youth whom they currently serve. Participants felt as though strong support of positive peers was a benefit to drug prevention. “I hung out with a crowd of pretty straight-laced people, so it (drug use) was never really a temptation for me” (A2). This clean-cut social group was a common theme in responses. “There were some Scouts in school that I knew from this troop that I would hang out with and they were always really good kids, you know, so I think that was positive” (B1).
Participants went on to describe the support made available to current Scouts. Responses highlighted the positive youth associated with being affiliated with a BSA troop. “I think having that group of friends in Scouting that, you know, is not partaking in that (drug use) give them, um, the confidence to...to maybe say no to the ...to the temptation of drug use that they might be getting elsewhere” (E). This strong social group could potentially serve as a protective factor. “You kind of become like the five or six people you surround yourself with, and if those other people are, you know, also in the Scouting program, I think that you have a better chance of...of making better choices” (E).

Finally, one participant expanded the idea of Social Support. He believed that the BSA was positive for youth, however, it was only one part of a more complex milieu of youth development. “Character building cannot be done just by the Boy Scouts of America. Um. It requires again communities, families, adult, uh, leaders or role models” (A1).

Sub-theme: Advancement

Participants discussed what they currently do within their troops regarding drug prevention. A common theme that emerged was Advancement. A method in the BSA program, Advancement involves moving up in rank or earning a new merit badge. Many of the leaders discussed how certain rank advancements had drug prevention requirements. “I know one of the requirements for, um, advancement is to take part in a drug, um...I think it’s for Tenderfoot or Second Class...how to resist peer pressure when it comes to drugs and alcohol” (S). Another participant described the rank advancement in more detail. “At every rank, um, there’s a Scoutmaster conference where they sit down with the Scoutmaster and they try to go over what they’ve done...they recite the Scout Oath and Law...that kind of gives us the opportunity to, um, talk to them about that and say ...drug use is counter to what your oath says” (E).
In addition to rank advancements, participants also discussed how drug prevention is woven into merit badge requirements. “One of my favorite merit badges is the family merit badge, and because in the family merit badge, one of the requirements is the kid has to call a family meeting, and they have sit down and they have to talk about budgets and about drugs and about jobs” (B1).

Although the participants discussed the advancement requirements, they were critical of the ways in which the BSA implemented them. “The trail to First Class requirement for it in Tenderfoot, you’re essentially…do what it says in the handbook, which is essentially don’t drink at all and don’t do any drugs, but it doesn’t clearly cover why” (A2). Other participants discussed how drug prevention was part of the advancement regimen, however, it was a minor component in their program. In other words, they did not view it as a vitally important part of their troop’s curriculum. “There is one requirement but we don’t hammer on it over and over and over again, like, don’t do drugs, don’t do drugs…There’s lots of addictive substances in the world and we need to avoid them and be good, wholesome citizens who are engaging in our community” (A1). This minimalistic nature of drug prevention through the BSA program was supported by other participants. “There are requirements for the boys to have, uh, a tidbit of drug prevention” (B3).

Finally, a participant discussed his displeasure at BSA advancement in general terms. He felt as though advancement requirements have become too complicated and have overshadowed the real reasons for being a Boy Scout. “Maybe simplify their advancement process to be more aimed at…at leadership and service and less at particular merit badges” (A1).
Sub-theme: Consequences

As participants discussed drug use, the notion of consequences came to light. Both in terms of potential consequences and risks to youth, and in terms of the consequences of a Boy Scout being caught with drugs while participating in a BSA troop activity. Scoutmasters were quick to describe how they discussed drug use and the potential consequences or risks associated. “I think boys would be interested to know…if you’re a user of drugs, this…this is what your life will be like. This is expected income…maybe a history of broken families…there’s certainly, statistically, there’s a direct association between abuse of those things and all kinds of social behavioral problems” (D). Another volunteer agreed with this idea, but did not cite specific indicators. “There needs to be a very clear understanding that, yes, you can choose to do drugs, but there are consequences for every choice” (B4).

Several Scoutmasters spoke directly about drug use consequences with a career outlook viewpoint. “I’ve used some specific examples of people in my work environment that have gotten in trouble with drugs and how it’s impacted their…their careers, as an example to Scouts about how serious it is” (C). The career-focus of drug prevention was commonly reported by the participants. It is understandable within a program serving boys aged 11-17 who may be beginning to consider careers that their mentors would begin to relate career advice, “I think we do stress the consequences of…of drug use and its impact on career options” (C).

A Scoutmaster discussed his troop’s policy regarding drug use within the troop. His troop does not allow for drug use within its members. “They’re (the Scouts) made clear that, you know, if you’re caught using drugs on a…on a troop activity, you’re expelled from the troop. We make them understand that is part of our policy, uh, and it’s just unacceptable” (B2).
Another Scoutmaster discussed a similar situation with a different result. Moving away from expulsion to perhaps a more compassionate approach to a Scout who was caught using drugs on a BSA outing. “I had the choice of, uh, kicking him out of Scouting because we have a zero tolerance for drug abuse, but you know, kids that age make bad decisions...I was able to find an article on the secondary consequences of drug convictions” (C). The Scoutmaster insisted the boy read the article and discuss it when him once it had been read.

**Sub-theme: Scouting as an alternative to Drugs and Alcohol**

With a focus on youth outdoor recreation, the BSA provides its participants with the opportunity to engage in activities not readily offered by schools and most families. As such, participants felt as though the BSA program is a useful alternative for drug or alcohol use. “I think Scouting really does provide is…is really a positive activity that just is an alternative. If you’re camping and hiking and doing service projects and with planning meetings and everything, and um, some of these other vices like drugs and alcohol abuse…lots of kids go do that just because they’re bored and it’s something to do” (D). These outdoor opportunities were also reported by other participants. “We provide them with a challenging environment to learn new skills. We provide them an outdoor experience. We provide, uh, alternatives to whatever they may do on the street” (C).

Participants mirrored this theme with recollections from their personal Scouting experiences. They felt as though Scouting was a way for them to experience positive youth development without drugs or alcohol. “Scouting, uh, was a part of my not getting into that culture…My troop had very positive, uh, structure that provided support” (R). Not only did the BSA provide social support of positive peers, but it also provided a positive alternative in terms of leisure time. “We were so accustomed to being in the outdoors without alcohol that it wasn’t
like we were experimenting…It established in my recreational pursuits that could be enjoyed without the use of alcohol or drugs” (A1).

**Sub-theme: Religious Influence**

BSA-sponsored organizations are commonly affiliated with faith-based groups. Although this is not a requirement, some tenant of faith is required of all BSA members. As such, participants discussed the Religious Influence to their troops. “Not all Boy Scout organizations are tied to a church…I’ve been teaching the religious perspective for so long” (A1).

With high concentrations of Mormon (LDS) followers in Washington State, especially in Eastern Washington, it is not surprising that participants discussed their faith. It should also be noted that the LDS Church has strict guidelines for its members restricting alcohol and drug use. “(Only) two of the guys were not LDS (Latter Day Saints) in the troop” (A2). Another participant discussed his involvement in the LDS church. “I am LDS (Latter Day Saints) and I, uh, was very active (in Scouts) through being a missionary” (B4).

**Theme: Future Prevention Techniques**

Participants expressed an interest to support youth drug prevention through Scouting. The theme of Future Prevention Techniques produced two axial codes: Honest Communication and Health Promotion.

**Sub-theme: Honest Communication**

Participants felt as though an effective method of drug prevention to youth involved in the BSA began with open and honest communication. The theme of Honest Communication highlighted the Scoutmaster’s desire to provide mentorship while being a trustworthy adult, in terms of information. “Any kind of proactive program to combat drugs, um, I think a…a…a
preaching approach may have less impact than maybe just a simple fact-based approach” (D). This fact-based approach was mirrored by other participants. “I think that you need to have a certain amount of honesty” (E). And one participant asserted that adults were naive to the amount of drug information that today’s youth know. “These people, this head is in the sand and they don’t realize that…the…that their kids probably know more about drugs than they do” (R). With the idea that youth may have some level of drug and alcohol knowledge, one participant believed that a youth should teach others in order to grow. “It’s not preaching…preaching to ‘em. It’s something that they have to give a presentation on…The Scout has to talk and do the teaching” (B1).

The participants went on to encourage such honest and frank discussion about drugs and alcohol that included such things as pleasure derived from substance use as well as over-exaggerated portrayal of risk. “You have to be honest with them and say, “you know, uh, there’s a bit of fun in using alcohol…marijuana isn’t that horrible stuff that, uh, we were made to think it was back in the 70s”. ” (B2). This overstatement of consequences was also reported by other respondents. “Parents will often mislead, saying that much worse things can happen” (B4).

A participant also described the idea that youth may find it hypocritical when adults who use alcohol or drugs expressly prohibit youth from doing the same. “You don’t want to lie to the youth, and, uh, you know, when you tell them that drugs are bad and yet parents and adults are doing it; it’s not effective…I think that you need to, uh, make sure that the, uh, drug brochures…take that into account” (B2).
**Sub-theme: Health Promotion**

The theme of Health Promotion emerged as a potential future method for engaging Scouts in drug prevention. Scoutmasters believed that effectively communicating the health benefits of resisting drugs and alcohol would be appealing to Scouts. “If their own character is important to them, I think that they can start to perceive how getting involved with drug use could be counter to that” (E).

Other participants described their personal philosophies regarding health and drug use. Participants discussed their history and how health information both shaped and potentially could have shaped their development. “The first time you have, like, alcohol or marijuana or any, like, other illicit drugs, that it actually changes your brain chemistry and it makes it harder for your brain to grow. Like, if I had known that…I probably would have waited until I was 21 or maybe not even drunk until I was older at all” (A2). A consistent theme in the data showed that the respondents were light-to-zero alcohol users, and none reported current marijuana use. There were varying reasons for these decisions. “I have not used marijuana or any other types of drugs. I just …I kinda…I’ve always been kind of a health nut through my years. I believe in exercise and fitness and improving your strength and your abilities, things like that. I’ve always been like that, so if you’re serious about that kind of…those activities, then, you know, drugs would be something that I…for me anyway, it would be just common sense to stay away from” (B3).

**Selective Code: Awareness and Appreciation of Drug Prevention through Character Building**

A consistently occurring theme emerged throughout the interviews: the theme of Awareness and Appreciation of Drug Prevention through Character Building. All participants felt as though character was a predictor for drug prevention. Furthermore, they believed that
character building from programs such as the Scouts have the potential to be an effective part of a comprehensive drug and alcohol prevention program.

*Theme: Lack of Technical Skill*

Although the interviewees believed that character is a good indicator for preventing drug use, and that Scouting provides an ideal environment to build character in its participants, the interviews revealed a selective code of Lack of Technical Skill. In other words, the Scoutmasters believed that character building was important to drug prevention, but did not know how to engage youth in drug prevention. The technical skills of prevention were missing from their skills. Consistently, they reported that they had never really thought about how to engage youth in prevention measures. “You know, I don’t know. I’ve never thought about that” (B1). And similarly, another participant stated. “I don’t know. I haven’t given that much thought” (B3).

**Eastern and Western Washington**

In a somewhat surprising twist, the data revealed no distinct differences in the responses from leaders on either side of Washington State. Washington has clearly divided political differences, and it was expected that respondents from Western Washington would perhaps answer questions more “liberally” and respondents from Eastern Washington would answer questions more “conservatively”, however, this was simply not the case. Participant answers had similar talking points that included the BSA, drugs, and character development; however, political leanings did not emerge during the discussion. It could be argued that organizationally, the BSA attracts leaders who would be perceived as more conservative. The BSA has strong connection to traditionally conservative faith organizations such as the Mormon and Catholic Churches as well as the United States Armed Forces. However, no participant reported their
political preference, nor did the responses illicit any reason to believe that Western Washington Scout leaders were different from Eastern Washington Scout leaders.

**Summary**

The presentation of the data revealed a total of five themes and sixteen sub-themes. The first theme was program delivery. Under this theme was the following sub-themes: adult mentorship, ethics, Scout Oath and law, leadership opportunities, boy-led troops, service, and training. The second theme was drugs and the Boy Scouts of America. Under this theme were the following sub-themes: low perception of risk for participants, socio-economic status, and legal marijuana. The third theme presented was current prevention techniques with the following sub-themes: social support, advancement, consequences, and religious influence. The fourth theme was future prevention techniques. This theme contained two sub-themes: honest communication and health promotion. Finally, the last theme was lack of technical skill.

The data revealed a strong sense of character-based programming consistent with the stated mission of the Boy Scouts of America. Furthermore, participants felt as though the BSA was a positive influence in their lives as well as the lives of the youth they serve. Data involving drugs and drug use were consistent with Positive Youth Development Theory as well as community capital theory in that respondents felt the BSA was a protective factor in drug use among youth participants.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The study examined perceptions of character building programming and drug prevention strategies in the Boy Scouts of America within the State of Washington. Themes and subthemes were identified. Chapter five will examine the data within the context of the research questions outlined in the research methodology. Furthermore, it will also discuss theory, recommendations, and future research.

Research Question

*Does the character-based youth recreation programming offered by the Boy Scouts of America shape perceptions of substance use for its participants and its leaders?*

The data received throughout this study directly address the Research Question. As demonstrated by the Open Codes “Program Delivery” and “Drugs and the Boy Scouts of America”, the respondents described a perception of the importance of drug prevention as shaped by the BSA and its mission. In other words, when asked if character building is important to the prevention of drug use, every single participant responded in the affirmative. As BSA leaders and former Scouts, the participants felt as though BSA mission and aims via the Boy Scout Oath and Law were clear in their focus of what would be considered healthy youth development; a childhood free from drug use. The idea of positive youth development programming is supported by scholars and practitioners alike. “Adolescent development practitioners have typically considered programmed activities and environments as its primary tools in developing youth” (Ward & Zabrinskie, 2011, p. 38). To further expand on this idea, participants described the outdoors and nature as a positive alternative to substance use among youth. The BSA is a
natural fit and provider for this form of youth recreation. This notion is also supported by scholars. “Outdoor-based play and reconnection to nature are critical if we wish to achieve positive youth development” (Mainelle, Agate, & Brianna, 2011, p. 100). In the case of this study, the BSA leader’s perception of youth substance abuse prevention was influenced by the BSA program.

**Research Sub-Question 1**

*Do practitioners and professionals representing these programs earnestly work to prevent drug abuse among participants?*

Although the sole exploration of the study was to learn about the BSA and how its program potentially shapes drug prevention efforts, was it possible that BSA leaders were truly working on drug prevention with youth? The BSA leaders emphatically responded that character based youth recreation is a key component to drug prevention, however, the interviews revealed that drug prevention was not necessarily something that was a focus within BSA programs at the troop level. This is demonstrated by axial code “Low Perception of Risk of Participants”. The interview data showed that BSA leaders felt as though their Scouts were not generally considered to be high risk for drug or alcohol use. Such factors as religious influence, socio-economic status, and social support were sub themes that the leaders felt decreased Scouts’ risk for drug use.

As the BSA leaders consistently described the positive role of character based recreation in drug prevention, they also consistently reported a lack of technical skill involving drug prevention. When asked, the respondents did not know how to engage youth in drug prevention discussion. They reported that most, if not all, formal drug prevention programming within the BSA is found in rank advancement. This finding is not surprising in that drug prevention is truly
its own discipline with education and skills; most of which are not common to the everyday
volunteer youth recreation leader. Research question two has mixed results at best. Although
BSA leaders follow rank advancement requirements in the arena of drug prevention and believe
that character building recreation is important to the prevention of drug use, the data suggest that
drug prevention is not a focus of BSA leaders in their normal Scouting programming.

**Research Sub-Question 2**

*Do character-based youth recreation programs have any other effects on future
substance use?*

As respondents were asked about drug (specifically marijuana) and alcohol use, most
self-reported that they did not use alcohol until they were out of college and most also reported
that they had never used marijuana in their lifetime. Although there were respondents who
described earlier alcohol use, it was described as being given by parents within the household.
Several of the participants were of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) religion, which has strict
guidelines prohibiting drug and alcohol use among its membership.

No adult use of marijuana was reported, and adult alcohol use was light. The self-
reporting would indicate that most participants both went through character-based youth
recreation programs and have a delayed use of alcohol and marijuana. Although the qualitative
methodology of the study does not show statistical support for the BSA delaying or preventing
drug and alcohol use, the interviews suggest that participants who are active in the BSA have a
strong connection to social support, a code of ethics, healthy alternative activities, a connection
to faith, in other words, the BSA facilitates strong Positive Youth Development. Combine this
with very low drug and alcohol use, initial evidence suggests that the BSA is a viable tool to
Research Sub-Question 3

Are character-based youth recreation programs better at preventing youth substance use than youth recreation programs without a character element?

The participant responses yielded data that suggested that character-based youth recreation programs are perceived to be an effective tool in the prevention of drugs and alcohol. But did the data address this question?

One participant who worked, professionally, in youth development described the benefits of the BSA program versus non-character-based programs. He lauded the means in which the Boy Scouts prepare young men for later success. However, there was only one participant who shared non-BSA youth programming experience. This was hardly a prevalent theme. The very nature of qualitative research exists in the stories of its participants. These stories help create theories that can later be tested quantitatively. Much like research sub-question two, this question was not answered adequately.

Discussion of Community Capital Theory

As described by Green and Haines (2012), Community Capital Theory suggests that within every community, there is inherent value and resources that can be utilized for the positive advancement of said community. One of the specific capitals is Social Capital. Social Capital consists of the relationships both within the community and the relationships between the community and non-community members. A BSA Unit could be considered a community, and the data from the study supports Community Capital Theory.
Under the Open Code “Current Prevention Techniques” can be found two Axial Codes that lend support to Community Capital Theory: “Social Support” and “Religious Influence”. The data from participants suggested that a BSA Troop provides a strong network of support between peers (youth, bonding) and mentors (adults, bridging). Within the BSA, youth are surrounded by positive peers and are programmatically exposed to situations that strengthen, or bond, their relationships. Similarly, youth work with adult leadership in their troops as well as within the community through service projects and religious commitments, thus bridging their social networks. In this way, the notion of “bridging” and “bonding” are both supported.

Bridging refers to creating connections outside of the community network, and bonding refers to the strengthening of relationships within the community.

**Discussion of Positive Youth Development Theory**

Positive Youth Development (PYD) Theory is a relatively new theoretical framework consisting of an amalgam of disciplines. Henderson, Powell, and Scanlin (2005) describe an interconnected network of biology, education, health, recreation, faith, family, and other factors contributing to an overall development of young people.

As participants in the study shared their responses, it became clear that the BSA leaders were practicing PYD even if they were not aware of it. They described mentorship, health, fitness, faith support, recreation, and other positively influencing factors to their Scouts. The study and its data supported PYD Theory.

**Discussion of Proposed Theory**

The proposed theory consisted of a combination of Positive Youth Development and Community Capital Theory as part of a larger system contributing ultimately to a youth’s decision to use or not use drugs or alcohol. (Figure 1.1)
As the data from the interviews were analyzed, both Community Capital Theory and Positive Youth Development Theory were supported. Primarily, Community Capital Theory was supported by the Sub-themes “Adult Mentorship”, “Boy-Led Troops”, and “Social Support”. Whereas Positive Youth Development Theory was supported by Sub-themes “Ethics”, “Scout Oath and Law”, “Service”, “Advancement” and “Religious Influence”. The support of these two theories was the first step in considering the researcher’s proposed theory. It appears from the data that these two elements in the theory existed and that the drug use among the participants was low or non-existent thus indicating the theory was shown to work.
Summary of Findings

Table 5.1

Open and Axial Codes

Recommendations to the Field

Recreation management as an academic study is closely connected to the practical field, and in the case of this study, the findings have significant implications. The study highlights several takeaways for youth-serving practitioners: importance of character-based programming, the need to thoughtfully support community structure, the value of calls to actions and similar slogans, and perhaps less importantly, the need to increase technical skills in drug prevention to adults who work with at-risk youth.
The findings in this study suggest that character-based youth recreation, such as that offered by the BSA, has special meaning to both participants and volunteers. The participants shared positive memories of their time with the Scouts, as well as the meaningful experience of working with youth. The BSA has long carried the tradition of such programmatic elements as the Scout Oath and Law in their program delivery. These elements were found to be especially poignant to the leaders as teaching tools and a basis of Positive Youth Development. In other words, the items held within the Scout Oath and Law lend themselves to an amalgam of nurturing childhood experiences, or Positive Youth Development.

Although the participants reported a low usage of alcohol and a very low usage of marijuana, they did not necessarily report that their participation in the BSA was a primary cause of these actions. Rather, they reported how their social environments were less conducive to drug and alcohol use. However, it can be argued that their experiences in the Boy Scouts provided them with a positive and nurturing social environment, which ultimately led to resisting drugs and alcohol. Practitioners must continue to strengthen the social bonds, both internal and external, of youth-serving organizations. This provides a protective barrier to youth substance abuse.

Other youth programs should develop a code of ethics or call to action for which the children are reminded daily. And programs should discuss them when issues arise or decision-making occurs. The Scout Oath and Law seem to have made a difference to the scouts in their response to the world around them. Perhaps other programs should emulate this through adoption of similar positive creeds.

Data in the study suggested that participants in the BSA were not considered high-risk for substance use. Respondents suggested that youth were aware of drug prevention through school
and other venues. Furthermore, the adult leaders reported no adult marijuana use and low alcohol use. This suggests that although BSA leadership has a low technical knowledge about drug prevention, this technical knowledge may not be a hindrance to a scout’s decision to not use drugs or alcohol. With that in mind, the final recommendation to youth-serving practitioners is a call to actively engage in drug prevention training. “Prevention programs need to be implemented with a consistent message in multiple settings simultaneously, which may include: schools, churches, services organizations, and youth organizations, such as Boy Scouts and girl Scouts” (Sabet, 2013, p. 150). Participants commonly reported that drug prevention was important, but either did not know how to engage youth in drug prevention, or had never considered the question. The BSA as a national organization should promote the need for adult leaders to become trained and offer training opportunities to their cadre of training modules already in existence. By increasing adult leadership knowledge regarding substance use and abuse, leaders will be better equipped to handle mentoring youth with substance questions should they arise. This is a simple step towards creating a better informed and prepared contingent of volunteers. In other words, “once all stakeholders understand the importance of such policies to positive youth development, it would be the right time for a policy window to open and allow change to take place” (Alshanbri, 2014, p. 80).

Recommendations for Future Research

As a preliminary study with qualitative methodology, there are many opportunities for future research involving character-based youth recreation and drug prevention. The first recommendation is to consider the BSA and drug prevention in another geographic location, thus providing more insight into the same organization. Other character-based youth recreation organizations should also be considered and studied surrounding their approaches and
perceptions of drug prevention. Finally, a quantitative instrument should be created and tested that would provide statistical evidence into the long-term drug prevention effectiveness of these programs.

**Contributions and Conclusions**

This study contributes to the body of literature by beginning to bridge the gap between character-based youth recreation to drug prevention. Recreation is beneficial to both the community and to the individual, however, the benefits are truly difficult to measure. This is due to two main issues. First, the benefits of recreation are felt in conjunction with other community resources. These resources include: police, health, education, faith-based organizations, etc. Recreation programming is one portion of a successful and positive community and youth development regimen, and as such, it is difficult to pinpoint the sole benefits from recreation alone. The second issue when measuring the benefits of recreation is found in the longitudinal nature of community development. Community change is not fast, and positive benefits to the individual often take months and years to bear fruit. This study, however, began the conversation of character-based youth recreation and drug prevention by asking adults to consider their current roles as youth-serving volunteers, as well as, recount their experiences and lives as former Boy Scouts. This study is the first step of many that could ultimately show evidence that youth recreation programming can have positive and measureable effects on drug use.

The study also demonstrated a strong connection of Boy Scouts of America mission to its actual program delivery. In other words, the mission and goals of the organization were in line with the data from the interviews. Respondent data revealed that the BSA programming was consistent with the character development mission of the BSA.
In an interesting juxtaposition, the respondents unanimously agreed that character-based youth programs are important to drug prevention, yet they were unsure about how to actually engage youth in drug prevention as youth recreation volunteers. But as the data revealed, the participants used little-to-no drugs or alcohol, and they did not feel as though the youth in their troops were lacking drug information. Recreation volunteers are committed to the success and development of youth and believe that youth drug use is not conducive to healthy growth, yet they either do not know how to prevent drug use, or it simply has not occurred to them to think about it. This highlights a clear lack of technical skill by the BSA volunteers. Although well-intentioned, they are not adequately prepared to help youth resist drug use. However, this may not be an issue. The BSA program with a rigorous adherence to character and the development of meaningful relationships creates a positive youth development environment with many protective factors against substance use. If the Boy Scouts of America wants to further promote a comprehensive positive youth development program, then the next step would be to engage their leadership in evidence-based drug and alcohol prevention training.

The Boy Scouts of America, and most youth-serving organizations, believe that their proprietary program is the best way to provide character-based youth recreation. Although the qualitative, case study nature of this dissertation did not allow for comparisons, one could conclude that the BSA program is consistent with Positive Youth Development, community capital theory, and the new proposed theory. The participant data suggested that although a youth’s participation in the BSA may not be the only reason he does not engage in drugs and alcohol, they reported a low alcohol use and a very low marijuana use. Participants reported that they did not use marijuana or alcohol because of social and family factors. One could deduce that the BSA provided them with positive social networks and protective factors. These findings
should be of special interest to other recreation programmers with an interest in positive youth development and drug prevention. The data suggested that mottos, creeds, and calls to action along with strong community connectedness are key protective factors to drug prevention. Other youth-serving organizations could utilize these tools with potentially similar outcomes.

While the data in this study were rich and meaningful, there are still opportunities for growth and expansion of this line of research. More youth-serving organizations should be considered and eventually, both quantitative and longitudinal instruments should be used to measure the success of drug prevention at the hands of character-based youth recreation. Recreation programs foster healthier and happier youth. Healthier and happier youth grow into healthier and happier adults. Healthier and happier adults create and foster healthier, happier, and safer communities. And at the end of the day, that is why we must continue to provide nothing but the best character-based youth recreation programming we possibly can.
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CHAPTER SIX References

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January 29, 2016

Dear BSA Representative,

You are being asked to be involved in a study the Boy Scouts of America and its possible effect on drug use. I will be asking you to participate in personal interviews that will be recorded and transcribed. The information will be used for a doctoral dissertation regarding positive youth development, recreation programming, and drug prevention. Additionally, I will be asking you about your personal history with drug use. The interview should take approximately 30 minutes.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusing to participate will not adversely affect any other relationship with the University or researchers and/or and the Boy Scouts of America. You may stop participation at any time during the interview. The interview will be audio recorded, and you will have the opportunity to read the transcript of your interview so that you can request removal of information or a change to better reflect your intent. After this, any identifying information will be stripped and the original audio recording will be deleted, making your participation completely anonymous. You have the option to change your mind and withdraw your participation at any point until your responses have been de-identified.

The nature of this study is, in part, case study. Your name, title, and BSA Council will remain confidential as far as the law will allow, but general geographic locations will potentially be included in the content of this study unless you expressly request us not to include a piece of information, which of course will be respected. The study will refer to your geographic location as specifically as Eastern or Western Washington.

This important subject has the potential to serve as future reference for youth-serving agencies across the Nation, all of which face a rapidly evolving political arena of drug policy. Your participation will help better understand, define and craft the role of youth recreation and its community role in character building and drug policy.

Because all interviews will be conducted via phone or video-chat, informed consent will be obtained. In other words, you will be asked verbally to consent to the interview after you have received and read this letter.

Thank you for your participation.

David Rolfe

If you have questions or concerns about this study, you may contact David Rolfe at (479) 575-2976 or by e-mail at drolfe@uark.edu or Merry Moiseichik (advisor) merry@uark.edu. For questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ro Windwalker, the University’s IRB Coordinator, at (479) 575-2208 or by e-mail at irb@uark.edu.

IRB #16-02-538
Approved: 03/21/2016
Expires: 03/07/2017
MEMORANDUM

TO: David Rolfe
    Merry Moiseichik

FROM: Windwalker

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 16-02-538
Protocol Title: Character-Based Programs as a Potential Factor in Youths’ Drug Use
Review Type: ☐ EXEMPT ☐ EXPEDITED ☑ FULL IRB
Approved Project Period: Start Date: 03/21/2016 Expiration Date: 03/07/2017

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request using the form Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (https://vpred.uark.edu/units/resc/index.php). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 14 participants. If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

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