

TROOP MEMBERSHIP: GROWTH, RETENTION, & RESILIENCE

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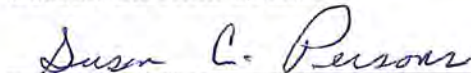
I am submitting herewith a Dissertation written by Everett F. Rollins IV, entitled *Troop Membership: Growth, Retention, & Resilience*. I have examined the final copy of this report for format and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Commissioner Science.


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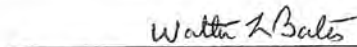
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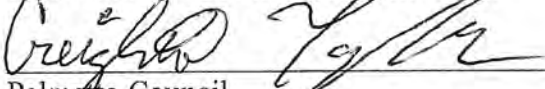

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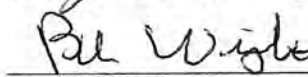

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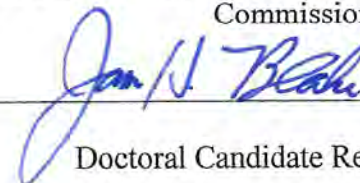

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an examination of the decline in membership within the Boy Scouts of America and how successful troops have continued to recruit and retain members despite national decline. A case study from a successful troop in Chapel Hill, NC is compared to the reports of other successful Scout troops to identify the common positive traits to overcome barriers to membership growth. Results of this research show that the main allurements of the Scouting program is quality outdoor activities. Another key finding is that the removal or mitigation of economic barriers is the cornerstone of a successful troop. Such interventions have a cascading effect on the motivation and availability of adult volunteers and ultimately lead to a more robust and rewarding program that retains and grows membership.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The question that this research project attempts to answer is: *how have Scout troops been able to remain successful in recruiting and retaining both youth and adults in the midst of significant obstacles, which have had a negative impact on national membership trends?* The goal of answering this question is to show how modern troops can be successful in membership growth, retention, and resilience.

The research conducted to answer this question includes the following: an ethnohistorical case study of one specific troop in Chapel Hill, NC during the 1970s, that is still running a successful program; a review of national Boy Scouts of America (BSA) membership trends; and a look at modern Scout troops and their unique features that have helped them to be successful. A significant portion of the research includes an examination of the effects of program changes that the National Council of the BSA made to the Boy Scout curriculum during the 1970s labeled as the “Improved Scouting Program.”

This research paper considers the context of societal changes and membership decline, a microhistory (which developed into a case study of a proclaimed “Wonder Troop”), and the opinions and insight of contemporary Scout leaders. Through this research, certain trends emerged identifying both common obstacles and common traits of successful troops that have been able to overcome those obstacles. The positive traits (and the obstacles) have shown to be the same today as they were 40-50 years ago. This finding may be considered an indication of the timeless appeal of Scouting.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Multiple methods have been utilized in gathering information for this research project, relying primarily on a synthesis of academic articles, interviews, recent survey results, and a variety of other sources. Three interviews relating to historic membership trends were utilized; historical resources were used to provide further context; other academic articles used as supplemental support towards the thesis; as well as a recent survey that was distributed to troop leaders in the United States. In addition, the information about the “Improved Scouting Program” was found in the Scout Handbook, 8th edition (1972).

Among the literary sources used for this project are two previous Doctor of Commissioner Science dissertations, a graduate school dissertation, and an ethnohistorical microhistory of Scouting in Chapel Hill in the midst of the implementation of the “Improved Scouting Program.” Each literary source contributed to the overall picture of what influences membership trends and what is necessary in resisting membership decline, most specifically at the unit level.

Additional resources used, include articles from New York Magazine, City Journal, a local newspaper from the 1970s, and two sociological books relating to societal changes covering a timespan from the 1950s up to the end of the 20th Century. One of these sources was the book entitled *Something Happened*, by E.D. Berkowitz, which describes cultural shifts that occurred in the 1970s in the context of historical events (2006). The second was the popular book, *Bowling Alone*, by Robert D. Putnam, which describes how a decline in social capital has

influenced America's participation in civic and social groups (2000). A third source related to societal changes was the article entitled "The Me Decade and the Third Awakening," by Tom Wolfe (1976). It served to illustrate the social changes that were taking place in the 1970s that helped create a backdrop in understanding the "Improved Scouting Program" from the 1970s.

There has been a decline in social capital in the United States since the 1950s as documented in Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000). Often referred to as the "norms of reciprocity," social capital is the collective value of our social connections and the extent those connections affect how much people are willing to engage with others and the likelihood of people doing things for each other. There has been a decline in voter turnout, civic meeting attendance, and bowling leagues. The number of people who bowl has increased since the 1950s; however, the number of people who bowl in leagues has declined. Although Putnam and his critics disagree on the cause of this decline in social capital, one thing that is clear is that the decline is a real phenomenon. Despite a decline in social capital that manifests as declining membership rates for the Boy Scouts of America, there are some troops which have remained successful. This paper will attempt to explain why.

Norman Rockwell once stated that the Scouts thrived "when America believed in itself" (MacDonald, 2000). BSA membership rates dropped in 1969 for the first time (Figure 1). This drop is often attributed to the 1960s counterculture that emphasized a worldview that did not align with Scouting's patriotic, service & family centered values (MacDonald). Scouting was not "in tune with the times." The changes in the culture did two things to the BSA directly: a decline

in social capital resulted in a lower membership rate, which in-turn created a perceived need to update the Scouting program, which was influenced by the changing culture.

The main changes made in the 1970s with the “Improved Scouting Program” included the elimination of traditional Scouting skills such as hiking, camping, and cooking (Hines, 1972). This included a shift in the focus from those traditional Scouting skills to “urban life and a concentration on civic duty” (Hubbard, 2016, p. 73). “A boy could now reach Eagle rank without ever venturing beyond the city limits” (MacDonald, 2000). Scoutmasters were now considered “managers of learning.” This was seen as a promotion of emotional support over the more traditional methods of adult leadership in Scouting. Many resisted this change, and membership continued to decline (Hubbard). Alongside these internal changes to programing by the BSA, other youth programs also saw a decline in membership. This included Girl Scouts of the USA and 4-H. As a whole, the United States saw a reduction in involvement in community and civic programs during the 1970s and into the 1980s. However, the BSA saw a more significant drop in membership compared to other youth programs at the same time. The programing changes were so unpopular that by 1978, most of the changes had been abandoned (Hubbard).

The eventual return to more traditional programing with a focus on outdoor skills coincided with “the Reagan counterreformation” in the 1980s and membership rates temporarily improved (MacDonald, 2010). Hubbard agrees that the increase in membership seen in the 1980s can be attributed to new nationalism associated with the Reagan Administration as well as more discretionary income in American families that came from a stronger economy (2016). Social capital had temporarily increased.

The 1970s has been called “The Me Decade,” and for good reasons (Berkowitz, 2006). The divorce rates grew to unprecedented levels in the US. Many people were disengaging from public affairs. Group conflicts led away from solidarity. It was during the ‘70s in the United States that Americans were faced with a recession, a huge political scandal, and an oil crisis, and many citizens were questioning “commonly held assumptions of the postwar era” (Berkowitz, 2006). Tom Wolfe, a journalist for New York Magazine during the 1970s, coined the term “me decade” in an article he wrote in 1976. In the article, Wolfe describes a society that has retreated from community and human reciprocity. He describes Americans as becoming more self-obsessed and only passively involved. These were the national trends during the 1970s as described by Wolfe, yet as this paper will show, the trend in Chapel Hill among the Boy Scouts was different.

MacDonald speculates that “the elites in the press, the universities, and the chattering professions,” have helped maintain the adversarial values from the 1960s counterculture movement that have kept the Boy Scouts “from regaining their place in the American imagination.” Scouting may be the only source in modern society of patriotic education that a child receives. Just as a temporary resurgence of patriotism saw a rise in membership in the 1980s, the BSA saw a rise of patriotic attitudes following the events of September 11, 2001. They saw a 2.6% gain in membership after several years of decline (Hubbard, 2016). This temporary rise in social capital unfortunately diminished again over time. The BSA is a patriotic organization and has struggled to maintain relevancy as it “competes with a waning sense of

community in American society” (Hubbard, p. 95). This dwindling sense of community is a significant obstacle moving forward, as the programs rely on adult volunteers to function.

The positive economic impact during the 1980s on membership trends, mentioned above, raises an interesting comparison to membership rates since the Great Recession that began in 2007. Does a poor economy negatively impact membership rates of civic organizations? There is no clear answer, but as this paper will show, when financial barriers are removed membership rates improve.

According to Hubbard, the corollary has been shown to be true as well; financial struggles are a clear obstacle for families to engage in the Scouting program (2016). For example, many families now rely on two incomes, limiting the time and energy of parents to support a Scouting program. The same can be seen for single parent homes, which has seen an increase over time as well. The stay-at-home mothers from previous generations served a vital role in supporting the Scouting program; this valuable resource is simply not as common anymore and many parents feel that their children’s schedules are already too hectic without the addition of Scouting (Hubbard, 2016). Without adult engagement, Scouting programs do not succeed. “Volunteering is essential to the success of the BSA and with diminishing membership, the organization will suffer” (Hubbard, p. 97).

Lord Baden-Powell wanted Scouting to be a program where “boys from different economic levels would get along.” He stated, “Our desire to help the boy – and mainly the poorer boy – to get a fair chance, which in the past has too often been denied him, of becoming a

self-respecting, happy and successful citizen, imbued with an ideal of service for others”

(Beckner, p. 4, 2013). Beckner states:

It is commonly stated that money should never prevent a boy from being able to experience Scouting. However, this is often the case. As it relates to the disparity in programs and activities available, often the quantity and the quality of the specific program activities become limited due to the financial realities. (p. 26)

Beckner also states that financial hardships for families and communities are a substantial obstacle in recruiting and retaining members. Many programs that struggle economically have challenges keeping two-deep leadership. Additionally, the lack of parental involvement leads to a non-existent troop committee and poor relationship with the charter organization. Some units rely on donations, scholarships, and hand-me-down uniforms. A limit on financial resources “restrains the ability of leaders to provide an optimal program” (Beckner, p. 21). The “big-trips” and long-term camping (an important part of the Scouting program, as indicated by the survey results) is often out of reach for Scouts due to financial reasons.

The cost of transportation can also be a significant barrier to the program, (something revealed in this paper that some troops are able to overcome by obtaining a troop bus). Beckner states that because of these financial barriers, “fundraising by Scout leaders and Scouts is therefore mandatory” (p. 23). There is a necessary balance, because too much fundraising “could replace the provision of the Scout program itself” (Beckner, p. 23).

A main attribute of the BSA’s troop program is to expose youth to the outdoors and having a robust outdoor program has been shown to help in recruitment and retention. This is

true not only for youth but also adults as well. Dr. Knickerbocker was able to document in his 2014 report that adult volunteers would often stay in the program because they “want to participate in outdoor activities such as camping and hiking” and that they have “enjoyed having fun” (p. 10).

It is not uncommon for a troop to form and be relatively active for a few years, but then fail to renew their charter “after the original Scoutmaster’s son . . . was done with the program” (Hubbard, p. 78). Successful troops are ones that can survive this transition by having reliable adult volunteers.

These sources helped to paint an overall picture of society, including obstacles that stand in the way of successful troop programs including the decline in social capital. This paper contrasts this information with how BSA programming changed over time, and how despite national decline in membership numbers, certain troops have remained successful.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

With context provided from the literature review, this research paper used three methods for gathering information that helped answer the question: *How have Scout troops been able to remain successful in recruiting and retaining both youth and adults in the midst of significant obstacles which have had a negative impact on national membership trends?* Those three methods are as follows:

- 1.) One-on-one interviews with three volunteers.
- 2.) A survey developed and distributed online to a hundred Scout leaders.
- 3.) An open discussion at a monthly district roundtable with Scout leaders sharing how their units have been successful.

The three one-on-one interviews were with experienced Scouters who saw firsthand the effects of the “Improved Scouting Program” from the 1970s. Two were adult volunteers at the time, and one was a youth participant. The interviews revealed how they believe certain troops were able to overcome a national decline in membership rates to maintain successful troop programs.

This information has been tied together with input from contemporary troop leaders who are currently overseeing successful troop programs. This information came from the other two sources: an online survey created specifically for this paper and an open discussion during a monthly district roundtable.

The one-on-one interviews were scheduled at each narrator's convenience and took place in his own home. Each interview was recorded on a handheld digital recorder. Each interview was saved in an mp3 formatted file for later review.

The first interview was with John Humber at his home in Chapel Hill, NC. He was a Boy Scout during the 1940s and had been a Scout leader since 1969. The information that Mr. Humber provided was valuable in developing an understanding of the social changes that took place in the 1970s and the influences they had on Scouting. He also provided information on how Troop 39 of Chapel Hill was able to resist national trends.

The second oral history interview was with James Mackorell and took place at his home in Chapel Hill, NC. He became involved with Scouting in the 1960s and served as the Scoutmaster of Troop 39 from 1964 until 2005. Mr. Mackorell provided additional information complimentary to the information provided by Mr. Humber. Mr. Mackorell also provided more detail on the reasons why Troop 39 was able to resist national trends.

The third oral history interview was with Mr. Malcolm Reynolds. Mr. Reynolds was a youth during the 1970s who lived in Washington State and later Rhode Island. He served on and off as an adult volunteer, including as a Scoutmaster in the late 1980s. Mr. Reynolds was able to provide a youth's perspective on the curriculum changes to the Scouting program as well as other social issues that were taking place on a national level during the 1970s. His information is unique because it included his experiences on both the west coast and the east coast of the United States. Information gathered from this interview provided further context to the culture at the time from a youth's perspective.

A ten question survey was developed to gather information from current, present-day troop leaders. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A. It consists of six yes/no questions, three multiple choice questions, and one open ended question. Each question related to how the troop of each leader who responded had been successful or unsuccessful when it comes to the implementation of their troop program.

The website Survey Monkey was used to create and distribute the survey as well as to compile the information. The survey was limited to responses from no more than 100 participants despite the fact that 104 people responded before the survey closed. The data from the last four responses are not available without a premium subscription to the Survey Monkey website, so for the purposes of this study, only the first 100 responses are used. The survey was open on December 23, 2018 and closed on December 25. It was distributed on two Facebook groups, each with several thousand members. Those two groups are as follows: *Talk About Scouting!* and *Eagle Scouts – Once an Eagle, Always an Eagle*. A web link to the survey was posted in each group with the following text: “Troop leaders! Please help me with this short 10 question survey about what makes a successful troop program. This is for my DCS thesis for commissioner college. Thanks!”

The respondents self-selected within these large Facebook groups. However, it was specifically framed as a survey for troop leaders who may have insight into successful troop programs.

Finally, additional anecdotal information was collected from current troop leaders and other experienced Scouters during a district roundtable meeting held on January 3, 2019 in

Cataloochee District of the Daniel Boone Council. The information gathered from this discussion is detailed in the Results and Discussion section of this paper.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

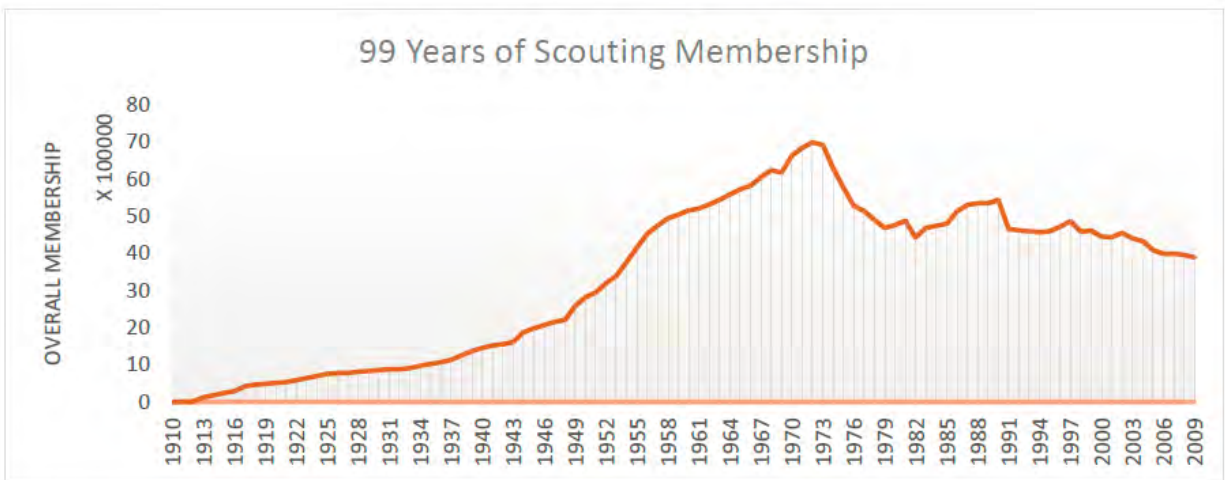
While some of the information used in this paper comes from scholarly sources, a portion of the information used is anecdotal. This may be seen as a drawback as to the veracity of the claims made herein. However, the anecdotal information gathered and interpreted here, from over 100 different individuals, from a variety of locations, shows clear trends and can be linked back to established societal changes that have affected the Boy Scouts of America.

This project was able to establish a case study of a successful troop program that weathered the storm of the ill-fated “Improved Scouting Program” of the 1970s. This is the case of Troop 39 of Chapel Hill, NC and was documented in the first two one-on-one interviews from Scouters who helped navigate their troop through the decade’s poorly received program. The results of this case study, when compared to the recent survey results from current troop leaders, further emphasize specific trends seen in successful troops.

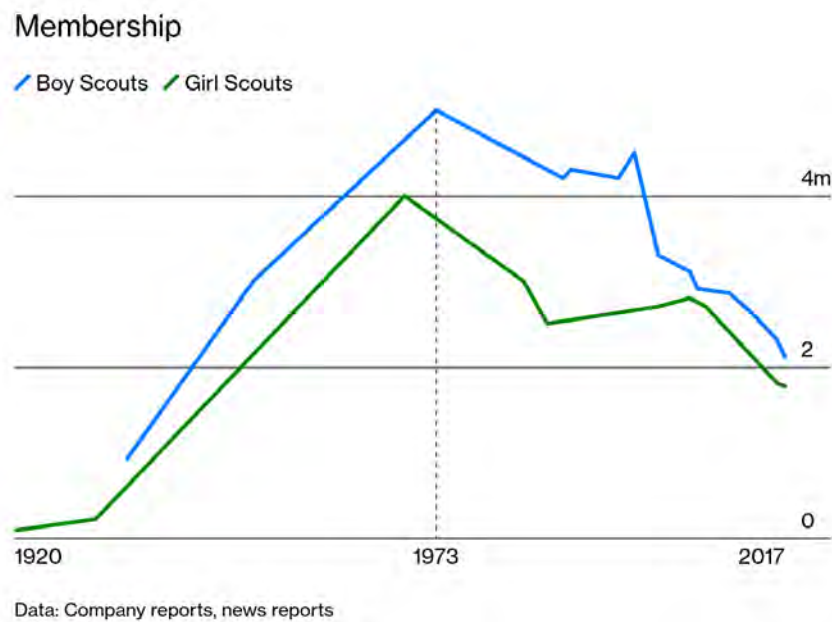
The interviews that provided details for the Troop 39 case study were conducted with Mr. John Humber and Mr. James Mackorell. Humber speculates that the program changes probably occurred as an attempt to be appealing to a broader audience in a rapidly changing American society. In other words, it was an attempt to reach out to inner-city kids. These changes are thought to have influenced the national membership rates of the Boy Scouts of America (Troop 97, 2009). Although there is no direct evidence to support this, the data collected from the interviews suggest that the emphasis on things like camping was essential in resisting the national trend of membership decline during the 1970s.

According to Mr. Humber and Mr. Mackorell, the Scouting program in Chapel Hill, especially Troop 39, was able to resist the national trend of membership decline (Figures 1 and 2). The testimony of Humber and Mackorell is corroborated by the published history of Troop 39 (Sullivan, 1995). Membership was growing so fast that “It got to the point where I had to start a waiting list,” Mackorell explains, “it just got too big and I had to do away with that. . . We averaged 50 to 60 boys a week that we got it down to. We never lacked boys.”

Figure 1. 99 years of Scouting Membership



(Hubbard, p. 98)

Figure 2. Scouting Membership 1920s to 2017

(Suddath, 2019)

Mackorell and Humber agree that a major allure for Scouting was the camping and outdoor program. Mackorell explains that “[they] went camping every month; rain, sleet, snow or shine, we went camping. . .[Camping] just really helped the program.” Mackorell continues, “Boys like to go camping and being with their friends . . . that is just a normal kind of thing I think. We never had much problem getting boys to come in and get involved with the program, as long as you have camping, an outing every month . . . the quality of the program is what keeps them in there.” “It does not succeed unless you have camping,” states Humber.

The Scout leaders in Chapel Hill during the 1970s put an emphasis on camping, despite the national curriculum change. Mr. Mackorell’s troop always went camping every month and

went to summer camp every summer. He reports that they were also able to provide other high adventure opportunities for the troop around the country. At a time when the national trend in the Boy Scout program was to de-emphasize camping, Troop 39 was camping more than ever. This may have played a role in the strong membership rates that Troop 39 saw in the 1970s that were contrary to national rates. A newspaper article from 1930 described the troop in Chapel Hill as “a model for the state” (Orange County, 1979). Apparently, this single troop in Chapel Hill in 1930 had set so many national records in membership and rank advancement it was known as the “wonder troop” (1979).

The town of Chapel Hill provides and has provided a unique atmosphere for the Boy Scout troops (and now Scouts BSA troops) to develop quality programs. Humber explains that the location of Chapel Hill provides a unique blend of different communities that have all been involved with Scouting. These include military families, those who were in industrial Durham, those involved with UNC Hospitals or the faculty, and local farmers. Some of these groups shift with people moving in and out, but the diversity of people that have been involved with Scouting in Chapel Hill is one of its strengths. Being located in a university town provided a solid foundation early on for the Scout program of the 1970s and later, to build upon. During the 1920s and 1930s the university was partnered with the Scout program and provided many of its adult leadership (Orange County, 1979). Humber reports that during the 1970s up through today, the university has been a source of fundraising through concessions at sports games. This is even recalled by the author of this research paper from time spent as a student at UNC Chapel Hill.

Mr. Humber reports that during the Vietnam War in the 1970s, there was a national backlash against uniforms. The Boy Scout uniform was an unpopular thing to wear during the 1970s. “I never would have worn my Scout uniform in public” says Malcolm Reynolds. Boys would join Scouting but would not want to wear the uniform. But interestingly, Mr. Humber is of the opinion that the uniform served as a signifier for experiences that boys in Chapel Hill respected and served as a symbol of belonging.

Another issue that was brought up was the economic hardships of the 1970s (Berkowitz, 2006). There was a fuel crisis during the 1970s that may have also influenced membership rates. Reynolds stated, “I stopped going to Scout meetings because my parents stopped driving me there, we could not afford it.” The fuel crisis was something that affected the nation as a whole. Mackorell states, “parents, they, they just got tired of taking them all the time.” So, Mackorell found a bus that the troop could buy that would help alleviate the financial pressure placed on parents in driving their sons to camping trips. With the bus, “we could go camping anywhere,” states Mackorell. Humber reports that another Scout troop in Chapel Hill sold peanuts at collegiate sports games at the University of North Carolina to raise funds to buy their own bus.

A changing national society that became more self-absorbed may have been the cause of national membership decline, but these national issues played an insignificant role in Chapel Hill during the 1970s. Mackorell explains that service, responsibility to others and community were important parts of keeping boys involved. Certain duties were divided up among the patrols of Troop 39 and each boy had a responsibility and a commitment to put in his fair share of the patrol’s work. These are virtues that were instilled in the Scouts of Chapel Hill to help them

grow into productive adults, but it also helped contribute to their continued involvement in Scouting.

A surprising revelation came from Mr. Humber, which was corroborated during the interview with Mr. Mackorell and also published in the troop history: The recycling program in Chapel Hill was started in the 1970s by the Boy Scouts (Sullivan, 1995). Humber attributed their recycling program as a significant fundraising operation that helped during the economic hardships of the 1970s. Troop 39 was able to recycle 285,000 tons of paper and 28,000 tons of aluminum, reports Mackorell. The amount of effort that was needed to maintain such a colossal project could only be achieved through a strong commitment from the Troop. This project required a strong sense of responsibility and work ethic “when you work, when you earn something, you appreciate it a lot more . . . with work ethic you’re teaching the boy,” states Mackorell. Similar to how the virtues of responsibility and commitment kept boys involved, a strong work ethic was a key factor for the Scouts of Chapel Hill that helped maintain strong membership rates.

Modern membership rates continue to decline (Hubbard, 2016). Many attribute this to changes made by the National Council of the BSA in regards to membership policy. This may or may not have played a role, but it is true that just as national trends have been in decline for other similar organizations, the same is true in recent years. Just like Troop 39 of Chapel Hill (the “wonder troop”), many other troops have also been able to defy the national trends and continue to thrive.

The ten question survey was created and distributed for this study to help show how troops have been able to thrive. The survey had over 100 respondents, all troop leaders, and many of them from successful troop programs. 84% of respondents had troops that were able to maintain membership above the national average for a troop. An average troop size has been determined to be 15 Scouts (Scouting Magazine, 2015). Only 59% of respondents reported to have programs specifically for older Scouts, however 90% or more of respondents reported a series of similar traits and attributes in their troop programs.

Over 90% of respondents report that their troops utilize the patrol method and include rank advancement as part of their program. This helps create an atmosphere in the troop where Scouts feel a sense of belonging and a sense of personal accomplishment, similar to how Troop 39 used its program to increase solidarity amongst the Scouts.

This is further emphasized by consistency in adult leadership. 87% of troops had Scoutmasters remain in that position for at least three years, with 53% of troops having Scoutmasters remain in the position for five or more years. 91% of respondents reported to have a reliable troop committee supporting the program. This support and continuity helps create a more lasting reputation in the community, clearer expectations among participating families, and consistency in the quality of the troop's program.

Beckner reports that key external assets of a successful troop program include “family support, positive family communication, parental involvement . . . and caring relationships with other adults” (pg. 9). Parents have certain expectations when it comes to a program, regardless of their background (cultural, economic, etc.). They expect a constructive use of time, a safe place

for their children to grow and learn, and a reinforcement of good social values. The youth want fun activities. MacDonald reiterates the value and importance of the Scoutmaster as a key component of a successful program stating, “The Scoutmaster may be the only stable adult in a child’s life” (2000, para. 30).

Returning to the issue of financial barriers mentioned earlier in this paper, 93% of troops participated in fundraisers to help support their program and decrease financial obstacles. This was further divided into troops which only participated in council-wide fundraisers (i.e. Trails End Popcorn &/or Camp Cards), troops that only participated in their own unit specific recurring fundraisers (e.g. annual spaghetti dinner, etc.), and troops that participated in both council-wide and recurring troop-specific fundraisers. A majority of respondents indicated that their troops participated in both (53%). 12% only participated in council-wide fundraisers, and 29% only participated in troop-specific fundraisers. Results show that 82% of troops have their own annual fundraisers, just as Chapel Hill’s Troop 39 had their own unique fundraising opportunities that helped alleviate financial burden among participating families and instilling a sense of responsibility among the boys.

Outdoor activities, especially camping seem to be an important part of the Scouting program. This was true for Troop 39 of Chapel Hill and showed true in the recent survey results as well. 91% of respondents reported that their troops hold activities monthly (at least during the school year); with nine respondents indicating that their troops have activities even more frequently than every month. This continuity of outdoor programming through the summer is important for retention.

Outdoor activities are not only important during the school year, but also during the summer. The only question for which 100% answered the same way was whether the troop participated in long term camping (summer camp). Summer camp seems to be an essential component to the troop program, bridging it through the summer, into the start of the next school year.

Out of all the respondents, 69 chose to leave a short answer as to why their troops have been successful and what challenges they have faced. This provided further anecdotal information about successful troop programs. These responses can be found in Appendix C.

The most common challenges mentioned in the short answer portion were competing activities (sports & video games), and lack of parental support (including financial & transportation), and not having an associated Cub Scout Pack from which to recruit. Likewise, a very common feature of successful troops is that they are able to recruit effectively from a pack. Many emphasized the importance of having a good relationship with their “feeder pack.” Several responses also mentioned the value of having Den Chiefs from the troop to assist with the pack. Den Chiefs are able to give the Cub Scouts a glimpse of what it means to be a Scout in a troop.

The significant number of respondents stated that programing was critical, as well as reputation and community support. Good programing will keep Scouts involved and positive word-of-mouth and community presence contributes to a positive reputation. Another key part to maintaining a good reputation in the community is consistent/long term adult leadership. This requires active adults, which is a common obstacle in many communities, often times related to economic struggles.

Many parents are hesitant to participate due to an overloaded schedule of activities and the various costs of Scouting being seen as too expensive. Successful troops will often mitigate the financial burden by participating in fundraisers. Unit leaders from Cub Scout Pack and Scouts BSA Troop 370 in Lake Junaluska, NC reported during the open discussion, that they participate in several fundraisers, both council-wide and annual unit-specific fundraisers. They have a successful barbeque dinner fundraiser that allows them to cover the cost of adult membership fees, eliminating a barrier to adult involvement. Troop 370 was not the only unit to cover the cost of adult volunteers for their annual registration. A handful of other leaders reported that their units try to do the same thing every year through effective fundraising.

Troop 370 is another prime example of a successful troop, similar to Troop 39 of Chapel Hill. They both utilize fundraising to reduce barriers, have well planned fun and consistent outdoor programming, long-term adult leadership, strong committees and a good reputation and community presence. These seem to be the key components of successful troop programming. The fundraising helps overcome the obstacle of financial barriers and increase adult involvement. The adult leadership helps to provide consistency, which in turn helps with both programming and community reputation, both key elements in recruiting and retaining members.

Other Scouters from the open discussion at a district roundtable meeting had a variety of tips and suggestions on how to improve a troop's membership rates. Multiple people mentioned the value of engaging adults/parents with a personal invitation. One troop has an annual family campout in August to kick-off the year, which has shown to be very successful in recruitment and retention. Another event that has been shown to be helpful is having a parent meeting before

the annual crossover ceremony from a pack to a troop. This sets up good communication and lays out clear expectations from the troop as well as clearing up any misunderstanding and answering any questions from parents.

A clear trend in the information provided by unit leaders from the survey and the district roundtable meeting was having clear and personal communication with parents has helped to increase parental involvement. This in turn then helps create a more stable and consistent unit program.

A significant finding from this study can be summed up as follows. In order to retain youth from economically struggling families, the program must be:

- 1.) Worth their time
- 2.) Not cost prohibitive

Without funding, a troop is likely to struggle on multiple levels. They are less likely to provide the necessary adult leadership, which results in difficulty providing fun and quality activities, and they are less likely to be able to purchase necessary advancements earned by the youth in a timely manner, if at all. If a troop program is well-funded through one or more successful annual fundraisers, they are more likely to keep adult volunteers, provide a program that is fun and of good quality, effectively recognize youth who advance, keep the interest of participants, and build a positive reputation in the community.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

This study considered why the national membership rate of the Boy Scouts of America has been in decline since the late 1960s, and how a changing culture and decline in social capital played a role. This study also suggests that national episodes of increased patriotism helped mitigate the decline, only to then return to a decline again later. National membership rates continue to decline today, however certain troops have been able to succeed despite a changing culture and a national decline in social capital.

This study examined a proclaimed “wonder troop” from Chapel Hill, NC, as a unique case study. The results of the case study are surprising because the amazing effect Scouting had in the town of Chapel Hill during the 1970s is completely contrary to what was seen throughout the nation at the time. Troop 39 maintained positive membership rates in Scouting through a robust outdoor program that was stabilized with consistent adult leadership, a sense of unity amongst the members, and successful fundraising efforts to mitigate financial barriers, which all in turn helped the troop develop a positive reputation in the community. This case study was then compared to present day troops from across the country that have been successful in recruiting and retaining members despite the national decline in membership.

One of the main findings shows that an often underrated part of a troop’s program is the importance of effective fundraising. Fundraising done right has multiple impacts: it reduces the barrier of financial difficulties many families have, increases adult participation, increases the accountability, sense of responsibility and overall unity each youth member has with the troop.

The increased commitment seen from parents and youth often translates into the following: consistent volunteer leadership, high-quality outdoor programming, and a positive reputation in the community. Each of these elements in turn helps create an attractive program that both recruits and retains members. There tends to be a snowball effect with the efforts to create a successful troop. The more a troop is able to reduce financial barriers and recruit adult volunteers, the better the program, and the more likely they will be to continue successful fundraisers and implementing a robust, high-quality outdoor program.

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APPENDIX A

Successful Troop Program Survey

1. Has your Troop been able to maintain an above average number of youth members (>15 boys)?
 - Yes/No
2. Do you utilize the patrol method?
 - Yes/No
3. Are youth advancing in rank/is rank advance part of the troop program?
 - Yes/No
4. Does your troop participate in recurring annual fundraisers?
 - a. Yes, council fundraisers only
 - b. Yes, troop specific fundraisers only
 - c. Yes, both troop and council fundraisers
 - d. No
5. How long (on average) does a Scoutmaster serve before a change to a new Scoutmaster?
 - a. Less than 1 year.
 - b. 1-3 years
 - c. 3-5 years
 - d. Over 5 years
6. How often does your troop go camping or have other outdoor activities during the school year (Septembers to May?)
 - a. Monthly
 - b. More than monthly
 - c. Less than monthly
7. Would you say your troop has a reliable Troop Committee?
 - Yes/No
8. Does your Troop participate in long term camping (summer camp)?
 - Yes/No
9. Does your troop have unique activities for older scouts?
 - Yes/No
10. What makes your troop successful in recruiting and retaining members and what challenges have you faced?
 - *Open response.*

APPENDIX B

Survey Results

Survey results from ten question survey. See Appendix A for corresponding questions.

| Question# | Yes | No | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 | 84 | 16 | | |
| 2 | 96 | 4 | | |
| 3 | 99 | 1 | | |
| 4 | yes, Council only | Yes Unit Only | Yes both | No |
| | 12 | 29 | 52 | 7 |
| 5 | less than 1 year | 1-3 years | 3-5 years | over 5 years |
| | 0 | 13 | 34 | 53 |
| 6 | Less than monthly | Monthly | More than monthly | |
| | 9 | 82 | 9 | |
| 7 | 91 | 9 | | |
| 8 | 100 | 0 | | |
| 9 | 59 | 41 | | |
| 10 | <i>See Appendix C</i> | | | |

APPENDIX C

Short Answer Results from Survey

Question 10. What makes your Troop successful in recruiting and retaining members and what challenges have you faced?

69 responses:

Using the methods of scouting, including uniform and patrol method.

SM is OA Vice-Chief Advisor so many of our older Scouts are active in the district or lodge leadership roles. They lessen their troop activities, but are still on the books and camp a couple of times a year with the troop.

Challenge of recruiting this year. Retaining we are unique with our scout population. Mostly outcast kids who just seem to belong together and become close like family

Recruiting in our area depends on large part on the charisma of the unit leader. It shouldn't be that way.

Challenges faced - High level of academic achievement (missed activities for home work) . Sports (missed weekend activities due to games or practice)

Small Town

A good relationship with local packs. High adventure activities and monthly camping.

It wasn't successful. The Troop had been very insular for years. I was asked to be COR two years ago. My presence resulted in a resignation of the Scoutmaster a year later. Following that I have set the Committee on a new path promoting family Scouting, encouraging participation in District events and service to the Charter and the local community as well as welcoming Arrows from Packs to participate as much as is practical. The new Scoutmaster has taken the reigns and is turning the Troop around. Leaders are receiving advanced training and a linked Troop is starting. We are in transition and it looks promising for growth and retention.

Pro -Longevity reputation offering robust program. Con- no official feeder pack

Den Chiefs and inviting Pack to join the troop for family campouts.

The wide diversity of our members. We run on a central theme and try to help each scout find their place in that theme

Work with all packs in the area, and keep map pin info current. Also respond right away to online registration applications. And we have 2 New Member Coordinators registered and trained.

We provide high adventure opportunities for older scouts and don't get on their case when they miss meetings.

Camping

Youth makes all program decisions. Adults only step in when necessary.

Outdoor program makes it fun. Good opportunities for learning and demonstrating skills needed for rank requirements. Good opportunities for merit badges. High adult participation.

Rural troop... lack adult volunteers. Compete with other activities. Cost is a big problem.

We recruit from two cub packs. Most membership growth is from scouts friends.

We are pro-active with our surrounding Packs and in reaching out to youth in late elementary and middle school grades. We find that it is very hard to recruit past that point, though we certainly try with movie nights, bonfires and high adventure offerings. We also team up with our sister Crew and dual register as many youth as possible. We biggest hurdle we face these days is keeping both youth and parent attention amidst so many other after school activities.

Two biggest challenges are lazy boys who rather play video games, and parents who say they(personally) are tired of Scouting & need a break. They don't seem to realize we're not Webelos 3.

Na

Volunteers, which are the parents, dedicating time and effort to make the program fun and exciting.

They have an active Cub Pack that feeds them. That's about the only "recruitment" I've seen.

We maintain a close relationship with a pack, and have a youth led program. The challenge is getting the scouts to step up and lead.

Lots of activities at different levels. Strong Scout leaders. Great core adult leaders that is constantly growing. The adults have as much, if not more fun camping.

Most of the scouts in our troop began in Cub Scouts as Tigers and earned their Arrow of Light. There is a strong connection between the Cub Scout Pack and the Boy Scout Troop, with parents serving in leadership positions in both groups. Our troop is very active and boy led. Word of mouth is the best form of advertisement as far as recruiting scouts. The scouts who have left our troop did so due to relocation of families and the scouts transitioned well to their new troops. Very few scouts withdraw membership; those who do withdraw have usually chosen sports over scouting.

Reputation helps in recruiting and retaining members. Most significant challenge took place when our troop had to find a new Chartered Organization toward the end of 2013.

Caving, but we started before BSA had any guides or rules about wild caves. Took the families with us, before there was a 'family outing' option.

We have fun. 25% of new scouts are brought by friends and are not Cub Crossover. Keep it fun, go camping outdoors and you will not have a challenge. While camping the scouts run stuff

Changes year to year but right now it looks like the value is in being boy led vs not being boy led (like the other local troop). Some are taking note of the difference in finished product between the two. Recruiting: We offer a new years eve lock-in and invite prospective webelos. We also invite them to Klondike. When they visit us, I talk to the parents while the boys go with ours to a separate floor with no adults. I then note the benefits of boy led troop. Also the differences between cubs and boy scouts. Challenges can be when there is pressure (peer, etc) placed on parents and boys to go to a specific troop (the other troop). I never say go to us/not them. I only say to go anywhere. But others seem to think recruiting is a competition. Retaining: Attendance mandates from sports and band are preventing scouts from keeping plugged in. Our scouts are heavily involved in sports but out of 16-20 you may get 4-6 attending at times. I have a few that don't show up at all due to sports or band conflicts. It is too easy for them to drop out eventually. The lack of parental responsibility makes it too often that scouts don't show up to meetings/outings because parents don't make them show up or worse, parents refuse to transport them because they are absent parenting.

Recruiting is only successful if you REALLY work for it. You need to be running a successful program.

Scout leadership

Dedicated leadership is important to maintaining a troop, as is balancing advancement opportunities with involvement in other activities (sports, band, etc.). Challenges include competition with those other activities, living in a rural area, etc.

The success of recruiting has been knowing the troop has an active program. The problem is retention in scouts leaving when they don't see advancements happening when others are by doing the same things.

Program and parental support

We have a Cub Scout Pack that meets at the same place as us but on a different night.

We get lots of boys that cross over but they tend to be scouts that are heavy into other activities and quit with in a year, or do not go on camp outs because other activities take presidency over scouts

Feeder pack. Interesting program - fun activities Scout led troop.

Two parts. First, a more-than-monthly camp, with long-term summer camp and a four-day winter camp 26-29 Dec. We vary the outings (no repeats for two years, and at least two new locations every year) to mix it up and keep it interesting. Second, a robust program for our older boys (14+ and Star). We have at least three activities for them on top of our usual outdoors activities. Mostly backpacking, but we've done whitewater rafting, overnight kayaking on a lake, etc. We take them out of state for a seven-day trip in the summer, to AR, NM, or CO. It's a huge help with retention.

Facebook posts and attempting to keep fun activities.

Organized Trail to First Class program so young scouts have a clear path through the early ranks: This reassures new scouts and their parents and give the boys a feeling of accomplishment. We don't do a lot of advancement work for older scouts at a troop level; maybe a couple of merit badges per year at troop meetings and on campouts. We do have plenty of merit badge counselors available within the troop. An annual high adventure outing (Philmont, etc.) helps retain older scouts. Also, recruit adults as well as scouts. Maintain a high profile at district and council events like Roundtable and leader training.

The Cub leaders who attend those events are the ones you want bringing their dens to visit your troop, and if you have a good program (which we do) they will join.

SUCCESS - USE OF DEN CHIEF AND OTHER SCOUTS LEADING CUB SCOUTS AT EVENTS.
CHALLENGES - LARGE TROOPS IN THE AREA TAKE THE MAJORITY BASED ON FRIENDS, BROTHERS, ETC...

1st, it was my troop from 1986-1988. I was an asst until 1996. We had 1 campout each month, but also other activities. I was also Chapter Advisor from 90-96. We had strong relationships with 2 Cub Scout packs. That included having Den Chiefs and helping with some projects. Near the time of our crossover, we hosted an open house, which was the focal point of our recruiting effort. Non-Cubs were invited to that event as well. It included our annual slide show, activities for the youth, and a review for the parents of our (very) complete membership packet. We included ALL the forms, detailed how we did things, and expectations. It included a glossary, which included the term "I'd be happy to" as the correct answer to "Can you drive this weekend?" or "Can you help at the rib booth?" Though we had inactive parents, I think it was fewer than many troops face. Our troop floated between 26-40. I, and really all the SMs, were hyperfocused on the PLC as the planning group for most troop activities. If we had ideas, we tried to have a Scout introduce the idea. We tried to have more program than we expected Scouts to do. We tried to have PLC add program to whatever we were doing. Our Troop Operations Workshop included too much training, but we were not going to not provide tools. ;) Even when we had nearly no older youth (we started in '85, out of 2 webelos' dens), we tried to have at least 1 50-miler each year in addition to summer camp. Program was our primary recruiting tool.

Our community has a strong relationship for the local boy scouting program, the support is a large reason as to how our unit can function

We do things. If only a few show up, we still do something. It gets all the others to get active. We have over 80% participation and advancement rate each year. The youth run the program with a lot of adult support.

Have 3 Cub Scout Packs feeding into Troop. Some - not most parents think BSA stands for "Babysitters of America"

While they do the patrol method in some, but not all. Scoutmasters give a lot of choices for the scouts but still very involved in the planning. Cub Scout pack is at the same CO and do an AOL camping weekend to recruit members.

We have a Senior Patrol that is in charge of program. The Seniors 15+yo have "less rules" than the regular patrol in exchange for running a successful program

Strong relationship with local packs, bringing in friends of new scouts We had a lapse in recruiting so in a year or so we will lack older leadership as our current older scouts age out

Our Scouts are very welcoming of new Scouts. Getting Webelos leaders to respond to Requests for Den visits.

Poor Webelos classes have hurt the most. Cubs start out big but dwindle to a few by the time they're ready to bridge. Families tell us they're burned out by the time they're 11 because they've been at it since kindergarten.

Word of mouth from current Scouts on level of troop activities

Active and challenging outdoor adventures

We invite Webelos to activities many times each year.

Active adults of scouts and long term leadership

We have a few campouts and activities that we invite Webelos in our town to attend. One of our newest Scouts invited his best friend to a meeting, and they both are having a fun time six months later! The challenge now is to maintain interest in the current program, and then promote ourselves to the community at large.

good relationship with feeder packs

Good feeder pack. Good community reputation. Good support through Eagle. Got too large (over 80) once and lost good adult/youth balance.

We try to make our troop into what the boys want it to be while still being educational. New guys really like this idea. You have to keep boys coming. We usually start each meeting with a fun 10min activity.

We have an active program with at least 2 events per month and run through the summer.

When we have trained and active Den Chiefs and recruiting numbers are above average for our Council. We work hard to have every new Scout achieve 1st Class within the first 12 to 15 month of joining.

Dedicated adult leaders. Several are Eagle Scouts. Several wood badge. Quality program. We meet year round. No breaks.

We have a Pack with the same charter. A very healthy high adventure program. An active outdoor program. Trained youth and adult leaders. Don't focus only on advancement, need to use all 8 methods of scouting. Biggest challenge is conflicting activities, youth are over-committed today.

Great scouts creating friendships with peer scouts; great Den Chiefs getting Webelos/AOLs excited about the troop and our activities. Biggest Challenge is helping our Pack grow.

Activities and fun that are PLANNED.

We work with local Cub Packs helping them as well as presenting at middle schools. We advertise our activities and our community service projects.

Our troop meets at the same time / place as our cub pack. Both are small units, but work together. The challenge is keeping middle school boys. It's not that they lost interest in scouting, but the pull of year round sports.

We run a successful year round outdoor program. We do not allow cliques. We are intentionally diverse (religious, economic, racial, behavioral). However, we do not compromise the program, rather we prepare the Scouts to work the program.

Recruit year round, not just in September.