

2013

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Recommended Citation

Polson, Edward C.; Kim, Young-Il; Jang, Sung Joon; Johnson, Byron R.; and Smith, Buster, "Being Prepared and Staying Connected: Scouting's Influence on Social Capital and Community Involvement" (2013). *Faculty Publications - Department of World Languages, Sociology & Cultural Studies*. 35.

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Being Prepared and Staying Connected: Scouting's Influence on Social Capital and Community Involvement*

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Objectives. In recent years, scholars have become concerned about the effects that declining levels of social capital are having on community life in the United States. Data suggest that Americans are less likely to interact with neighbors and less likely to participate in community groups than they were in the past. Nevertheless, researchers have found that participation in some types of organizations has a positive impact on social capital and civic involvement. Each year, millions of American youth participate in programs designed to promote positive youth development. Here, we examine the effect that participation in one of the largest youth organizations, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), has on adult social capital and community involvement. *Methods.* Utilizing a national survey of adult males, we compare measures of social capital and community involvement for former Scouts and non-Scouts. *Results.* Our findings suggest that level of involvement in the Boy Scouts is significantly related to measures of adult social capital and community engagement. *Conclusion.* Scouting tends to have a significant impact on the lives of its most committed members. Future research must continue to explore the long-term effects of participation in youth organizations.

In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville observed that “Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations” ([1840] 1969:513). He marveled at Americans’ propensity for coming together at the local level to accomplish tasks such as the founding of schools, libraries, and hospitals, and supporting various social and political causes. Over the

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years, other observers have also documented the unique penchant Americans have for collective action when faced with a need or a problem not adequately addressed by government or the private sector (Anheier, 2004; Hall, 2006; Hammack, 2002; Sampson et al., 2005; Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson, 2000). Today, there are many organizations in America (e.g., Boy Scouts) committed to impacting the character of youth in a manner that will enhance their individual physical and mental health and thus enable them to be leaders who contribute positively to their communities and the nation. Each year tens of millions of youth participate in programs seeking to promote positive youth development. This tendency toward assisting youth has long been a hallmark of civil society in the United States.

In recent years, however, some have become concerned that the unique spirit of local cooperation and civic engagement that has characterized community life for so long may be on the wane (Putnam, 2000; Skocpol and Fiorina, 1999). Americans may not be as quick to join with others in their communities and neighborhoods as they were in times past. Indeed, we have evidence that fewer men in their 20s and 30s report having been in the Boy Scouts than older men, suggesting that younger generations are not joining at the same rate as previous generations (Johnson and Clifton, 2010). In 2000, Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam published *Bowling Alone*, a study arguing that over time Americans have become less involved in their communities and that such a major shift in social life might eventually contribute to weaker and less stable communities (Putnam, 2000). Key to this argument is the notion that regular social interaction between community members, whether in religious organizations, bowling leagues, or civic clubs, contributes to the development of social capital, an important resource for strengthening the social fabric of society and increasing individual levels of civic engagement. Moreover, it is necessary for multiple sectors of society to be intentional in preparing youth to become civically engaged (Youniss et al., 2002).

Contemporary research suggests that social capital is a resource that is fostered in voluntary organizations (Putnam and Campbell, 2010; Skocpol and Fiorina, 1999; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). For instance, a growing literature on the connection between religion and community life reveals that one of the strongest predictors of civic and community involvement is participation in a local religious organization (Kellstedt et al., 1996; Legee, Wald, and Kellstedt, 1993; Wuthnow, 1999). Regular social interaction with others within a social context that promotes cooperation and the development of invaluable social skills appears to increase one's civic and political engagement.

This appears to be the case for school extracurricular clubs as well. For instance, analyzing data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, McFarland and Thomas (2006) conclude that participation in politically salient extracurricular activities (e.g., student council, service clubs) has a significant positive influence on adult political participation. These strong effects hold even when controlling for self-selection and a host of other important causal factors

known to be linked to political participation/engagement. It stands to reason, therefore, that nonschool youth organizations that bring individuals together in such a cooperative manner might also foster the development of valuable social capital and increase future community involvement as well.

One such organization that has not been adequately examined in the research up to this point is the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), one of the largest youth civic organizations in the nation (for research on 4-H, see Ladewig and Thomas, 1987). The mission of BSA is to develop character in young men. Furthermore, this organization's vision is associated with a fundamental approach to young people that has been labeled the positive youth development (PYD) perspective (e.g., Damon, 2004; Larson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2009; Lerner, 2005, 2009). Programs such as the Boy Scouts constitute key community resources—termed “developmental assets” (Benson, Scales, and Syvertsen, 2011) that promote positive youth development (Mahoney et al., 2009; Mueller, Lewin-Bizan, and Urban, 2011).

Richard Lerner and colleagues have operationalized positive youth development (PYD) by “Five Cs:” competence, confidence, connection, caring, and character (Lerner et al., 2005, 2011). When youth develop high levels of PYD, a “sixth C”—contribution (i.e., generosity to family, community, and civil society)—becomes apparent (Jelicic et al., 2007; Lerner, 2004). The Boy Scout Oath¹ and Scout Law² provide guidelines aimed at enhancing character development in youth, as well as promoting the features of all six Cs. Indeed, BSA for more than 100 years has had a tradition of encouraging trustworthiness, service, loyalty, courtesy, thrift, and community involvement.

There is very little extant research, unfortunately, examining the relationship between the involvement in a youth civic organization like the BSA and outcomes like adult community involvement (an important exception to this neglect is McFarland and Thomas, 2006). Therefore, in the current study we examine the relationship between involvement in Boy Scouts as a youth and adult measures of social capital and community involvement. We seek to answer the question: “Does Scouting impact community involvement and social capital as an adult?” Before we address this issue directly, however, we first briefly review what the research literature has to say about social capital and community involvement.

Social Capital

Social capital is a concept that has garnered much attention in social scientific research over the last several decades (see Portes, 1998). Yet, like so

¹On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

²A Scout is: trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, reverent.

many other sociological concepts, it has often proven difficult for scholars and theorists alike to precisely define and operationalize social capital. Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone* (2000) and chief proponent of the view that social capital is in decline, suggests that it is an important private and public good comprised of the social networks, norms of reciprocity, and bonds of trust that develop between individuals and groups. In other words, it is made up of the tangible relationships that exist between people in a society as well as the more intangible goods that such relationships bring. Social capital inheres in the connections that exist between friends, neighbors, and acquaintances, and contributes to social cohesion and social interaction in communities (Putnam, 2000, 2007). When people interact with one another on a regular basis and develop bonds of trust, they may be more likely to work together to accomplish common goals and solve community problems.

Different forms of social capital tend to have differential benefit, though (Fiorina, 1999; Paxton, 1999, 2007; Portes, 1998; Portes and Landolt, 1996). Putnam has developed the terms “bridging” and “bonding” to distinguish between dimensions of social capital that affect social life differently (2000:22–24). Bonding social capital is comprised of the dense social networks that exist within relatively homogeneous groups. The existence of this type of social capital contributes to a strong sense of group identity and social cohesion. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, is comprised of social ties connecting individuals across group boundaries. It is this form of social capital that is theorized to be particularly valuable to communities because it not only connects individuals but also leads them to work together for their community. And, it is this form of social capital that we might expect an organization dedicated to positive youth development and civic responsibility, like the BSA, to foster among participants, increasing the probability of community involvement in adulthood as well as in youth.

We seek to examine how the level of a young man’s involvement in the BSA is related to his level of bridging social capital as an adult. Theories of motivation suggest that interest and intrinsic motivation are linked to positive achievement (Wigfield et al., 2006). Stated differently, the value of an activity is a critical factor in youth maintaining an ongoing sense of identity with the program (Barber et al., 2005). Consequently, we will explore the impact of Scouting on a commonly utilized measure of social capital: associational or group memberships. In previous social scientific research, social capital has most often been approximated by counting the number of voluntary associations or groups in which one regularly participates (Putnam, 2000). Individuals who are members of more local groups and associations such as the Kiwanis and Lions Club are theorized to possess higher levels of social capital because their social networks are likely to be denser. Because one of the values of social capital is theorized to be its ability to link individuals in ways that strengthen the local community, we also seek to explore the effect of Scouting on community involvement by using a proxy for bridging social capital. We examine whether levels of Scouting involvement affect

the likelihood of respondents reporting that they have cooperated with their neighbors to improve their communities during the past year.

Voluntary Associations and Community Involvement

There appears to be a robust link between participation in voluntary groups/associations and individual levels of community involvement. This connection is especially pronounced for participation in religious groups (Kellstedt et al., 1996; Legee et al., 1993; Wuthnow, 1999). Research reveals that attendance at religious services and increased involvement with local congregations is correlated with measures of civic engagement and social capital (Beyerlein and Hipp, 2006; Cassel, 1999; Greeley, 1997; Legee et al., 1993; Park and Smith, 2000; Peterson, 1992; Putnam, 2000; Verba and Nie, 1972). But, what is it about religious participation that influences community involvement? And does this relationship suggest anything that might help us predict how youth participation in the BSA is likely to impact levels of social capital?

Verba et al. (1995) suggest that congregations serve as civic training grounds where individuals are regularly given the opportunity to develop skills that they can use in other social contexts. People who attend congregations frequently are given such opportunities more often and, therefore, may be better equipped to participate in wider community life. Others suggest that frequent participation in a congregation exposes one to religious messages that encourage civic responsibility (Brewer, Kersh, and Peterson, 2003; Guth et al., 1997; Welch et al., 1993). Here, we suggest that involvement in the BSA during youth similarly provides young men with the opportunity to develop civic and social skills that may remain with them throughout their lives and are likely to influence their community involvement as adults. Furthermore, messages of civic and community responsibility comprise a central component of the Boy Scout experience. The Scout Oath, which every Boy Scout must learn and recite at weekly meetings, explicitly states that Boy Scouts have a responsibility to the community and to others in the community.

Furthermore, research documents that high-quality and structured out-of-school-time (OST) programs promote a host of positive outcomes. One of these outcomes or assets is the development of initiative skills (Hansen, Larson, and Dworkin, 2003; Larson and Rusk, 2011). Initiative skills refers to “the ability to be motivated from within to direct attention and effort toward a challenging goal” (Larson, 2000:170). Participation in OST activities has also been linked to time management, setting goals, leadership, developing agency, and personal responsibility (Dworkin, Larson, and Hansen, 2003). Moreover, beyond positive initiative, OST participation has also been linked to positive and prosocial peer relations (Barber et al., 2005; Mahoney et al., 2009) and civic engagement (Sherrod and Lauckhardt, 2009; Stoneman, 2002).

Clearly, not every young male who participates in the Boy Scouts will grow up to be a civically engaged adult. However, like the effects of religious participation and participation in OST programs, we anticipate that the more involved a young person is with Scouting, the more opportunities he will have to (1) develop important social and civic skills; and (2) adopt and internalize the civic and community values of Scouting and put them to use in his life. We propose, therefore, to test two research hypotheses.

First, we expect that increased involvement in the BSA, as evidenced by the number of years one participated in Scouting and whether or not one reached the rank of Eagle Scout, will be related to a classic measure of adult social capital: associational memberships. Stated differently, the development of character is based on the notion that youth who participate in BSA for a sufficient duration will be more likely to exhibit character and facets of positive youth development as adults. Therefore, we expect that males who participated in Scouting longer and who reached the rank of Eagle Scout will belong to more local clubs and associations than individuals who were never a Boy Scout or who were only involved in Scouting for a short period of time. We hypothesize that:

H1: Higher levels of youth participation in the BSA as a youth will increase the number of community groups and clubs to which one belongs as an adult.

Second, because the BSA is a civic organization that educates young males on the values of civic participation, the importance of caring for one's community, and the necessity of cooperating with others, we expect that increased involvement in Scouting as a youth will have a significant positive effect on cooperative behavior. In particular, we anticipate that one's level of involvement in Scouting will be related to the likelihood that one will cooperate with neighbors in a way that is beneficial to the community. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H2: Higher levels of youth participation in the BSA increases the likelihood that an adult will report cooperating with neighbors to solve a problem or strengthen the community.

Data and Methods

To test our research hypotheses, we analyze data drawn from a nationally representative survey of adult males developed by the Program on Prosocial Behavior, a unit within the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University and conducted by the Gallup Organization during 2010. In addition to being one of the largest surveys of former Boy Scouts and Eagle Scouts ever conducted in the United States, this survey provides an unprecedented opportunity to compare the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of former Scouts and non-Scouts.

Between October 12, 2010 and November 20, 2010 a total of 2,512 adult males were surveyed in a telephone survey by the Gallup Organization as a follow-up to their participation in previous Gallup daily tracking polls. This nationally representative sample included 134 Eagle Scouts, 863 males who had participated in the BSA but who had not ever reached the rank of Eagle Scout, and 1,515 men who reported that they had never been a part of the Boy Scouts. The overall response rate for the survey was 42 percent. The response rate for Eagle Scouts was 38 percent, and the response rate for former Boy Scouts was 43 percent. The survey included a broad selection of questions related to participants' values, morals, religious beliefs, political attitudes, family life, and everyday activities. In addition, the survey gathered important sociodemographic data from all respondents. All the variables are weighted based on the number of adults in the household, number of phone lines, and the reliance on cell phones. In addition, weighting is based on age, region of the country, gender, education, ethnicity, and race to assure that the sample is representative of American adult males.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables under analysis in the current study include one measure of a respondent's social capital and one measure of community involvement. First, to measure the associational involvement of the adult males in our sample, we asked respondents: "How many formal or informal groups or clubs do you belong to, in your area, that meet at least monthly? These could be groups such as social clubs, support groups, religious or civic groups or committees, fraternal or veteran's organizations, or even a group of friends who meet on a routine basis for a particular purpose or activity." The average number of groups reported by respondents in our sample is 1.35 ($SD = 1.45$). This type of question has become the standard measure of social capital in most social scientific research (see Putnam, 2000; Portes, 1998). Next, we asked respondents: "In the past year, have you worked with others in your neighborhood to address a problem or improve something?" (0 = no; 1 = yes). Half of the sample indicated that they had, in fact, worked with their fellow citizens to improve something in their neighborhoods (mean = 0.50, $SD = 0.50$). This measure is particularly important as it addresses one of the major concerns of civic engagement research—whether or not individuals cooperate with their fellow citizens to strengthen communities.

Independent Variables

In order to examine the effects that involvement with Scouting has on the two measures discussed above, we constructed four dichotomous variables indicating respondents' level of youth involvement with the BSA. First, we

asked: “Were you ever a member of the Boys Scouts of America?” We created a dichotomous variable indicating those who had never been a Scout. Sixty percent of survey respondents indicated that they had not ever participated in Scouting as a young person. Next, those respondents who said that they had participated in Scouting were asked two additional questions. We asked: “How many years were you a member of the Boy Scouts before the age of 18?” Because the youngest age at which a boy can join the Cub Scouts is seven, we top coded answers to this item at 11 years.³ Therefore, responses ranged from one to 11 years. The average length of time for former Scouts was 4.13 years ($SD = 2.42$).

We also asked: “During that time, did you ever achieve the Eagle Scout rank?” Eagle Scout is the highest rank that a Boy Scout can earn. To attain this rank, a Scout must demonstrate high commitment to the values and principles of Scouting. Scouts do so by earning merit badges, participating regularly in Scouting events, holding leadership positions, and completing a major community service project. Becoming an Eagle Scout requires a significant investment of time and energy. Using responses to the last two survey items, we created three dichotomous variables to approximate levels of involvement. Former Scouts who indicated participating for two years or less were grouped together (4 percent) as were those who had participated for longer than two years but had never attained the rank of Eagle Scout (30 percent). Finally, those individuals who had attained the rank of Eagle Scout were grouped into a dichotomous category of their own (5 percent). Creating these categories allows us to analyze whether length and level of involvement in Scouting is related to adult behavior.⁴ For all analyses, the comparison group is those individuals who were “never a Scout.”

Control Variables

Many researchers have examined correlates of social capital and community involvement in the past, and there are a number of control variables that must be included in any new analyses. Therefore, we include controls for respondents' age (actual number in years), education (1 = less than high school, 2 = high school, 3 = some college or vocational training, 4 = college graduate,

³Eighteen respondents indicated participation in Scouting longer than 11 years. We top coded these responses at 11 years because we felt it likely that a response higher than 11 years indicated a high level of commitment to Scouting.

⁴After running extensive bivariate and multivariate analyses using several different categorization schemes we determined the current categories of involvement to be most salient. Analyses revealed a clear distinction on various attitudinal and behavioral questions between respondents who had been involved in Scouting for two years or less and those who had been involved longer. This break point was more distinct than other break points we examined. Further, we believe this categorization scheme makes sense theoretically. Individuals committed to the organization for a substantial period of time should exhibit different behaviors and attitudes than less committed individuals.

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variables	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean/Proportion	<i>SD</i>
Dependent variables					
Group membership	2,500	0	7	1.35	1.45
Cooperate with neighbors	2,510	0	1	0.50	0.50
Independent variables					
Never a Scout ^a	2,512	0	1	0.60	0.50
Two years or less	2,482	0	1	0.04	0.18
More than two years	2,483	0	1	0.30	0.46
Eagle Scout	2,511	0	1	0.05	0.23
Control variables					
Age	2,502	18	94	47.67	17.41
Education	2,500	1	5	2.99	1.21
Income	2,329	1	8	5.02	2.39
Married	2,509	0	1	0.59	0.49
White	2,464	0	1	0.78	0.41
South	2,512	0	1	0.32	0.47
Religious attendance	2,475	0	5	2.27	1.72

^aThe omitted category for all analyses is Never a Scout.

5 = postgraduate education), household income (1 = less than \$15,000, 2 = \$15,000–less than 25,000, 3 = \$25,000–less than 35,000, 4 = \$35,000–less than 45,000, 5 = \$45,000–less than 55,000, 6 = \$55,000–less than 75,000, 7 = \$75,000–less than \$100,000, 8 = greater than \$100,000), marital status (0 = not married, 1 = married), race (0 = nonwhite, 1 = white), and region (0 = non-South, 1 = South).⁵ We also control for frequency of religious service attendance (5 = more than once a week, 4 = once a week, 3 = once a month, 2 = major religious holidays, 1 = other, 0 = atheist/agnostic/nonreligious) because previous research has shown that religious participation is one of the strongest predictors of social capital and community involvement. Furthermore, because many Scout troops are sponsored by religious organizations, it will be helpful to examine whether participation in Scouting has an independent effect on social capital and community involvement. Descriptive information for all variables can be found in Table 1.

Modeling Strategy

The first dependent variable represents a count of the number of local groups and clubs to which a respondent belongs. Because a count variable is not a truly linear variable and is not typically characterized by a normal

⁵The Gallup Organization assigned each respondent to one of four major geographical regions (i.e., East, Midwest, South, and West) based on telephone files.

distribution, it violates the assumptions of ordinary least squares estimation. For this reason, the current standard among social researchers is to use either a Poisson or negative binomial model when the dependent variable represents a count (see Land, McCall, and Nagin, 1996; Lee, 2008; Lee and Bartkowski, 2004). Furthermore, because a negative binomial model is appropriate for dealing with overdispersion, a situation occurring when the variance of the dependent variable exceeds its mean (see Berk and MacDonald, 2008), we use a negative binomial regression model to estimate the effects that youth involvement in Scouting has on the number of local groups to which adult respondents belong. Our second dependent variable is a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not an individual has cooperated with neighbors during the past year. We develop logistic regression models to examine the effects that involvement in Scouting has on community cooperation.

Results

Table 2 shows the results of two negative binomial regression models developed to examine the effects that Boy Scouting has on the local group membership of adult males. Negative binomial regression coefficients are given in the first column of each model while the antilog of each coefficient, given in the second column, can be interpreted similar to an odds ratio. These represent the percent increase in the dependent variable affected by a one unit increase in the independent variable. For instance, the parameter estimate for religious service attendance in Model 1 indicates that for each unit increase in the frequency of religious service attendance it is predicted that there will be a corresponding 39 percent increase in the number of local groups to which a respondent belongs. So, our model predicts that adult males who report weekly religious service attendance will belong to 39 percent more local groups or clubs than adult males who attend religious services only once a month. Model 1 includes only control variables and reveals that education, income, and religious service attendance all have a significant positive effect on the number of local groups to which a respondent belongs. In contrast, being married has a negative effect on the dependent variable. Being married results in a 27.9 percent decrease in the number of local groups to which an adult male belongs.

In Model 2, we include three dichotomous variables representing levels of involvement in the Boy Scouts. The excluded category, respondents who have never participated in Scouting, serves as the comparison group. The negative binomial regression coefficients reveal that the control variables continue to operate as they did in the first model. More importantly, coefficients reveal that a high level of involvement in Scouting does tend to have a significant impact on the number of community groups and clubs to which respondents belong as adults. We estimate that being an Eagle Scout results in a 161.8 percent increase in the number of community groups to which one

TABLE 2
**Negative Binomial Results for Effects of Scouting Involvement on
 Local Group Membership**

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Unstandardized Beta	b ^e	Unstandardized Beta	b ^e
Control variables				
Age	0.000	1.000	0.000	1.000
Education	0.158	1.439***	0.161	1.449***
Household income	0.061	1.151***	0.059	1.146***
Married	-0.142	0.721*	-0.143	0.719*
White	0.066	1.164	0.060	1.148
South	-0.073	0.845	-0.078	0.836
Religious service attendance	0.143	1.390***	0.147	1.403***
Scouting involvement ^a				
Two years or less			0.095	1.245
More than two years			0.098	1.253
Eagle Scout			0.418	2.618**
Intercept	-0.829		-0.869	
Reduction in error term	0.770		0.767	
N	2,227		2,227	

^aThe omitted reference category for all analyses is Never a Scout.
 * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

belongs. In contrast, simply having been a part of the Scouts does not appear to have an impact on associational membership. The positive impact of Scouting appears to operate only for those individuals who are the most committed to the organization. Respondents who said that they were in the Scouts but were involved for two years or less and those who were involved for longer than two years but never achieved the rank of Eagle Scout do not report being in any more or any fewer community groups than those individuals who never participated in Scouting. This finding provides some support for our first research hypothesis that high levels of involvement in Scouting as a youth contributes to higher levels of involvement in community groups and associations as an adult. However, it is only the most demanding forms of involvement that translate into increased social capital for adults. Moreover, this finding is consistent with other research confirming that when the level of participation in youth development programs is of sufficient intensity and duration, key features of positive youth development will emerge (Benson, 2006; Mahoney et al., 2009).

TABLE 3

Odds Ratios for Analyses of Scouting Involvement on Cooperation with Neighbors

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Control variables			
Age	1.006*	1.006*	1.006*
Education	1.101*	1.092*	1.090*
Household income	1.014	1.015	1.016
Married	1.279*	1.279*	1.276*
White	0.779*	0.776*	0.781*
South	0.942	0.940	0.920
Religious service attendance	1.100***	1.101***	1.094***
Scouting involvement ^a			
Two years or less		1.033	1.038
More than two years		1.021	1.022
Eagle Scout		1.695**	1.691**
Social capital			
Group memberships			1.024*
Intercept	0.458	0.452	0.449
-2 Log likelihood	3061.50	3054.05	3045.51
R ² (Nagelkerke)	0.034	0.038	0.043
N	2,250	2,250	2,250

^aThe omitted reference category of all analyses is Never a Scout.

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Note that the coefficient for the religious attendance control remains virtually unchanged in model 2. We believe that this is an important finding. Despite the fact that many Boy Scout troops are sponsored by religious organizations and involve young men who are themselves religious, the effect that Scouting has on the dependent variable is independent of the effects of religious participation. This indicates that the large significant Eagle Scout effect on social capital is unlikely to be the result of religious participation or involvement. Rather, Eagle Scouts appear to develop more social capital throughout their lives whether or not they are religious.

Table 3 reveals the odds ratios from three logistic regression models estimating the effects that involvement in Scouting has on the likelihood that an individual will have cooperated with his neighbors during the past year to solve a problem in the community. This is an important measure of community involvement (Putnam, 2000; Putnam and Campbell, 2010). Model 1 includes only control variables and reveals that age, education, marital status, race, and religious service attendance are all significantly related to the likelihood that an adult male will cooperate with neighbors to solve a problem. Given the findings of previous research, the direction of these relationships is not surprising. In particular, much previous research has demonstrated the robust relationship between religious service attendance and civic engagement.

Model 2 illustrates, once more, that high levels of participation in youth civic organizations such as the BSA are likely to translate into higher levels of adult community involvement. The odds ratios indicate that Eagle Scouts are 1.70 times more likely than non-Scouts to cooperate with others in their neighborhood to solve problems and strengthen their communities. While the odds ratios are also positive for individuals who report any involvement with Scouting, they are not statistically significant. It appears that only the highest levels of involvement in Scouting affect this additional measure of adult social capital. This finding provides some support for our second research hypothesis that a young male's level of involvement in Scouting as a youth is related to the likelihood that he will cooperate with neighbors as an adult to make their community a better place.

Finally, in model 3 we incorporated our first dependent variable, number of group memberships, as a control for individual respondents' level of social capital. We wanted to determine whether or not Eagle Scouts were more involved in their communities simply because they possessed higher stores of social capital. As the coefficients in model 3 reveal, the number of associational memberships a respondent reported is significantly and positively related to whether or not he indicated cooperating with others in their community over the past year to solve some type of problem. Individuals who were members of more voluntary groups and associations were more likely to have contributed to their communities in this way. This is not particularly surprising as community involvement is often conceived of as a product of individual social capital. More importantly, however, the inclusion of this additional control had no significant or substantive effect on the relationship between being an Eagle Scout and cooperating with one's neighbors to solve a problem. In other words, Eagle Scouts are not more involved in solving problems in their communities simply because they are also members of more groups or associations than others. There is likely to be something unique about their status as an Eagle Scout that increases the odds that they will contribute to the community in this way. Overall, these results from our analyses support the long held notion that youth participation in the Boy Scouts fosters a sense of civic responsibility that continues into one's adult life.

Discussion

Recent research suggests that Americans may be less engaged in their communities than in times past. They are less likely to socialize informally, less likely to spend time with their neighbors, and less likely to participate in community athletic leagues (see Putnam, 2000). However, the research presented here supports a growing body of work that has emerged over the last decade suggesting that participation in certain types of local organizations such as civic groups, religious congregations, and youth development programs may increase individual citizens' civic engagement and social capital, a resource

that many argue is vital to maintain healthy and vibrant communities. The BSA is one of the largest national youth civic organizations in the United States and seeks to instill in its members a sense of civic responsibility. Our findings indicate that this particular youth civic organization is playing an important role in facilitating lifelong commitments to civic and community involvement.

Our research suggests that young men who were 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. It is important to note that only those individuals reporting the highest levels of involvement (i.e., those who earned the rank of Eagle Scout) exhibited more associational memberships as an adult. The majority of individuals who participated in Scouting did not exhibit higher levels of social capital. Additionally, those men who remained involved in Scouting long enough to earn its highest rank were also more likely to have cooperated with neighbors to improve their communities in the last year. Taken together, these findings provide evidence that Scouting can make a lasting difference in individuals' lives. Scouting appears to foster behaviors that promote social capital and civic engagement throughout one's life, but primarily amongst those who are highly committed to the organization. This suggests that demanding forms of youth civic participation may be necessary to affect adult social capital and civic engagement.

Two additional findings that are particularly significant for future research on the relationship between youth development programs and civic engagement are (1) that the link between Scouting and social capital is not a function of religious participation, and (2) that the link between Scouting and community involvement is not attributable completely to the number of one's group memberships, which we use as a measure of social capital. These findings indicate that future research should consider other explanations of the Scouting experience that contribute to increased social capital as an adult and that improves the odds that one will cooperate with neighbors to benefit community life. For example, given that the BSA strives to develop responsible, caring, and civically committed young men, it would be worth investigating whether civic and social skills or "initiative skills" learned from Scouting contributed to Scouts', especially Eagle Scouts', higher levels of group membership and community involvement.

While the data utilized in our analyses are the first ever collected for scientific study of the social influence of Scouting, they have several limitations. Because the survey was completed as a telephone interview, the number of questions that could be asked about any one topic was limited. Ideally, we would like to have included an entire battery of questions dealing specifically with social capital and social networks. Our survey items also rely solely on respondent recall for information about their Scouting experience. For some respondents, the Scouting experience was many decades prior to the interview. In addition,

our dependent variable asking respondents to report how many community groups or clubs they belong to is not as specific as it might have been. It would be helpful to have more detailed information about the types of associations and organizations to which respondents belonged.

An additional limitation that should be noted is the possibility that confounding factors exist that would account for the relationship between the dependent variables and independent variables. In a 1999 study, Jenifer Glanville investigates whether participation in school-based extracurricular activities facilitates political participation in early adulthood. Using panel data from the senior cohort of high school students, she finds that students who participate in instrumental extracurricular activities (e.g., youth organizations in the community) are more likely to participate in nonvoting political activities (e.g., working for a political campaign) six years later, even after taking into account the selection effects (i.e., personality traits, political attitudes/interest, and leadership attitudes). For voting, however, the inclusion of mediating variables renders the relationship nonsignificant (Glanville, 1999). Likewise, we recognize that additional unmeasured variables such as parents' socioeconomic status, education level, or level of civic engagement could have an impact on the relationship between Scouting and adult social capital and civic engagement. This is a significant limitation that should be addressed in future studies dealing with the effects of youth civic participation on adult civic engagement. Nevertheless, we believe our findings suggest that there is something about the Scouting experience that aids young men in developing behaviors and values that contribute to the formation of social capital and the development of stronger communities throughout their lives.

Our research findings also suggest that the strength of one's commitment to the Boy Scouts or similar youth organizations makes a significant difference in one's adult civic engagement and social capital. A young man who simply passes through an organization like the Boy Scouts, participating for a short period of time before dropping out, is not likely to be affected in the same way as a youth who is highly involved with and committed to the organization (e.g., Eagle Scouts). Just as previous research shows that increased religious participation is linked to higher levels of social capital and civic involvement, these findings suggest that increased participation in youth civic organizations and youth development programs also leads to higher levels of social capital and community involvement.

Finally, based on our conclusions, some may wonder if declines in Scouting in recent years are likely to lead to decreasing levels of social capital or civic engagement amongst the adult population in the future (Johnson and Clifton, 2010). While our data do reveal that a smaller percentage of younger men participated in Scouting at some point in their youth than older cohorts (30 percent of today's 18–29 year olds vs. 46 percent of males 60 and above), the percentage of males attaining the rank of Eagle Scout in the United States has actually remained fairly stable across age cohorts (around 5 percent). Because we find that the highest levels of commitment to Scouting are what

tend to increase adult social capital and civic engagement, we suggest that declining numbers of less committed Scouts is likely to have, at most, limited impact on overall levels of adult civic engagement and social capital.

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