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## Factors Affecting Volunteer Reluctance through Scoutmasters' Perspectives

Robert Michael Hoogerhyde  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Robert Michael Hoogerhyde Jr.

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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the review committee have been made.

## Review Committee

Dr. Gary Kelsey, Committee Chairperson, Public Policy and Administration Faculty  
Dr. Karel Kurst-Swanger, Committee Member, Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2024

Abstract

Factors Affecting Volunteer Reluctance through Scoutmasters' Perspectives

by

Robert Michael Hoogerhyde Jr.

MPA, Upper Iowa University, 2018

BS, Liberty University, 2021

BS, Upper Iowa University, 2016

AA, Central Texas College, 2013

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Public Administration

Walden University

May 2024

## Abstract

There is a scarcity of Boy Scouts of America (BSA) troop volunteers who are enthusiastic and prepared to assume the role of troop scoutmasters and facilitate programs for scouts. This qualitative study involved understanding why many troop volunteers hesitate to become scoutmasters. These factors inform district leadership's decision-making about organizational culture reforms to support troop scoutmaster recruitment. This research is guided by the self-determination theory (SDT). The SDT is used to address relatedness, competence, autonomy, and development in order to foster innate personal growth, development, and well-being. The research explored the contributing factors that deter many troop volunteers from becoming troop scoutmasters. This study involved using a basic qualitative research design and interviewing 10 current or former troop scoutmasters. Interview results and a comprehensive literature review were used to draw conclusions. Delve was used for thematic analysis. Through inductive coding, new data themes were discovered and analyzed. The study revealed troop scoutmasters faced challenges due to lack of communication and a fear of personal responsibility, impacting their motivation. These factors among others led to a reluctance of troop volunteers to become troop scoutmasters. Study findings on volunteer motivation and perceptions can inform decision-making among other youth serving and nonprofit organizations, potentially leading to positive social change by recruiting diverse groups of confident, competent, and motivated volunteers who are poised to serve U.S. communities.

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by

Robert Michael Hoogerhyde Jr.

MPA, Upper Iowa University, 2018

BS, Liberty University, 2021

BS, Upper Iowa University, 2016

AA, Central Texas College, 2013

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Doctor of Public Administration

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## Dedication

In loving memory of my late grandfather, Robert Hoogerhyde whose unwavering love, wisdom, and resilience continue to inspire me daily. Grandpa, you were a rock of strength, a source of encouragement, a guide through life's twisting roads, and my best friend. Your unwavering support fueled me to embark on this academic journey. Your faith in the power of education and the pursuit of knowledge became the beacon that guided me through the difficult terrain of doctoral research.

I am reminded of your commitment to family and Troop as I reflect on the countless memories we shared. Your stories of triumph over adversity and your boundless resolve inspired me to persevere in the face of adversity. The resilience you demonstrated in your own life has served as a beacon, guiding me through the most trying times of this academic journey.

This study is a testament to the values you instilled in me: diligence, integrity, and a firm belief that knowledge has the power to change people's lives. By dedicating this work to you, I honor your legacy and express my heartfelt gratitude for the profound influence you had on shaping the person I am today.

Though you may not be physically present to witness the culmination of this academic achievement, your memory lives on in every word written and every idea explored. Your spirit lives on in the intellectual pursuit you so zealously promoted.

Thank you for being my guiding light, Grandpa. This professional administrative study is dedicated to you with all my heart's love, respect, and gratitude. Always in my thoughts and prayers, and forever missed.

## Acknowledgments

Foremost, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His grace has been my constant companion, providing strength in moments of weakness and wisdom in times of uncertainty. Without you, none of this is possible.

To my beautiful wife, Kathy and our two children, Michael and Adalynn, your love and encouragement have reflected God's grace in my life. Your patience during the long hours of research and the countless sacrifices you made allowed me to pursue this academic endeavor. I am blessed to have a family that embodies the love and support of Christ.

To my parents, Robert Hoogerhyde, and Marcia Reames, I am profoundly grateful for both of you. Your example of hard work and perseverance has shaped my character and sustained me throughout this journey. The fulfillment of these academic journey is a tribute to your enduring influence.

I also want to extend my sincerest appreciation and gratitude to my Committee Chair, Dr. Gary Kelsey, and my second Committee Member, Dr. Karel Kurst-Swanger. Both of your mentorship, and academic guidance has been invaluable. Your commitment to excellence and helping me to be successful in this journey is second to none. Both of you have shaped my scholarly endeavors and personal growth, and for that I am forever grateful.

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## Section 1: Introduction to the Study

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) program empowers young individuals through outdoor adventures, skill-building, leadership development, and building a strong sense of community. Central to the success of this program is the troop scoutmaster, who plays a crucial part in educating scouts about self-discovery, responsible citizenship, and personal growth (Davis et al., 2021).

The troop scoutmaster is responsible for guiding, mentoring, and facilitating the growth of scout troops under their purview. This role involves overseeing activities and fostering environments of trust, camaraderie, and personal development (Harkins, 2021). The troop scoutmaster embodies the principles and values that scouting represents and is a role model for scouts to emulate.

This role extends beyond that of a leader; troop scoutmasters are educators, mentors, role models, and moral guides. Through their commitment, scoutmasters empower scouts to become capable, compassionate, and responsible individuals who contribute positively to their communities and the world. As the program continues to shape young individual lives, the troop scoutmaster's significance remains essential.

However, in one scouting organization in a southeastern state called SOSS (pseudonym), organizational leadership, specifically commissioners, have struggled to retain current troop scoutmasters or recruit new ones. SOSS has roughly 100,000 adult volunteers who are actively registered within the district as of 2022, so they can attract adult volunteers, but need help getting leaders currently serving in the program to move up and agree to become troop scoutmasters, according to SOSS. Presently, the

organization lacks substantive information regarding why this phenomenon occurs. This study involved explaining why this phenomenon is taking place. Social change implications of this study are not limited to SOSS. On a larger scale, study results will reveal valuable information about motivations to volunteer within any youth service organization. As it pertains to willingness of current volunteers, study findings regarding perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatability to others within the organization can inform decision-making processes of other organizations that are also experiencing difficulties with volunteer recruitment and are seeking to reform their procedures.

In Section 1, I introduce and share relevant information about SOSS. I highlight the purpose and significance of the study. I emphasize the study's different data sources and methods of organizing and interpreting data.

### **Background and Problem Statement**

With more volunteers willing to become troop scoutmasters, new troops can be created to meet the needs of the rising number of new youth members following the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, SOSS experienced a 5% increase nationally in youth membership, totaling approximately 77,000 new youth members (Croce, 2023). As of December 2022, there were 1,025,000 actively registered youth in SOSS, a significant increase from the year prior (Derr, 2023). To account for these new youth members and create opportunities for them to actively participate in the program, thereby ensuring the future success of SOSS, additional troop scoutmasters need to be recruited.

The increasing number of youths enrolled in SOSS following the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the need for more troop volunteers who are willing and

motivated to become troop scoutmasters and facilitate programs has created an administrative problem for the organization. According to M. French (private communication, May 2, 2023), previous attempts by SOSS to consistently recruit new troop scoutmasters have failed. As a result of unsuccessful troop scoutmaster recruitment efforts, SOSS has experienced an approximate 52% decrease in actively chartered troops since 2021, from 60 active troops to 29. This phenomenon can be attributed to the unwillingness of troop volunteers to become troop scoutmasters, consequently forcing the troop's dissolution (M. French, private communication, May 2, 2023). Volunteer recruitment has been a problem for SOSS since 2024, indicative of the continual decline in troop volunteers. Thus, this problem cannot be solely attributed to the social impact on nonprofit organizations (NPOs) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The intention of this study is to increase situational awareness of volunteer managers at SOSS by determining the origin of the problem.

Based on results of this study, I will present SOSS with a summary report of the study outlining the problem, data-driven results, and conclusions from data. During the history of SOSS, a study of this intensity and magnitude has not been conducted.

### **Purpose**

This qualitative study involved identifying what factors exist within SOSS for troop scoutmasters that contribute to the reluctance of many troop volunteers to become scoutmasters. Analyzing these characteristics will help district leadership make decisions about reformation to build an organizational culture that will support troop scoutmaster recruitment efforts. Volunteering is a vital aspect of any NPO (Arnon et al., 2022).

Volunteer managers must foster a sense of community, and in doing so, practice active volunteer engagement (Matos et al., 2021). I used the following research question for this study:

RQ: What factors do current and former troop scoutmasters believe exist that may lead to the unwillingness of other troop volunteers to become scoutmasters?

After this study, executive leadership at SOSS will be given a summary report of the study and subsequent findings. Volunteer managers and board members participated in a presentation of study results, where recommendations for change were emphasized. The need to recruit and retain competent volunteers is at the heart of SOSS' administrative problem as well as many other NPOs. Volunteer motivations to begin and continue to volunteer in an organization are directly connected with their relationship with volunteer managers (Fernandes & Matos, 2023). I highlighted volunteer manager relationships with volunteers as they related to their promotion of positive volunteer engagement. Having healthy engagement with volunteer managers significantly improved motivations to volunteer with organizations (Fernandes & Matos, 2023).

### **Summary of Data Sources and Analysis**

A basic qualitative study design was used to address the research question. Troop scoutmasters' impact on scouts is often unquantifiable (Walk et al., 2019). This makes it critical that any study methodology that is employed to address the research question does not involve using measurable data. The qualitative study design involves emphasizing qualities or essences of a phenomenon without quantifiable data (Aten & Denney, 2023).

I conducted individual interviews with both current and former troop scoutmasters to gain original data. All participants resigned from their positions as troop scoutmasters since March 2023. I performed 10 interviews, so enough original data were collected to draw comparisons. After completing interviews, I compared results with an extensive literature review to draw conclusions and address the research question.

### **Definitions**

*Charter:* Formal agreement allowing an organization to use BSA intellectual property to serve youths in communities. Charters are required to be renewed annually to continue using the program. The annual renewal is called a recharter (BSA, n.d.a).

*Troop Scoutmaster:* The most senior adult volunteer in the troop responsible for working directly with scouts, providing direction, coaching, and support. Troop scoutmasters have three primary responsibilities: providing junior leaders with tools and skills so they can run troops, making sure rules of scouting and the charter, and being a good mentor and positive role model (BSA, n.d.-b).

*Volunteer Engagement:* The extent to which volunteers psychologically rather than physically engage with their volunteer work (Matos et al., 2021).

*Volunteer Manager:* An individual responsible for managing daily operations of volunteer programs, including recruitment, training, and scheduling of individual and group volunteers (Philanthropy Massachusetts, 2019).

### **Significance**

This study is significant because results directly contribute to the future and continued existence of the scouting program. Since the inception of the scouting program

in the U.S. in 1910 by Lord Robert Baden Powell, the role of the troop scoutmaster has been the nucleus of every scouting troop. They are tasked with serving as senior advisors for youths in creating and facilitating troop yearly camping program (Walk et al., 2019). With a declining number of troop scoutmasters guiding troops without sufficient intervention, the scouting program may only exist in the future if competent leaders volunteer to lead.

Results of the study have the potential to lead to valuable information about volunteer motivation within NPOs. Determining causal links between autonomy, competence, and relatability as it pertains to propensity to volunteer within an organization, either episodically or ongoing, as well as desire to take on additional responsibilities can inform decision-making processes within organizations that are struggling to recruit and retain competent volunteers.

Results of this study will lead to positive social change implications for SOSS and the communities they serve. Historically, the BSA has lacked diversity in terms of its volunteer base, which has hindered necessary social change (Harkins, 2021). Positive social change is precipitated by an increase in diversity among the volunteer base. This study involved determining what factors within SOSS are preventing augmentation of competent volunteers from become troop scoutmasters. By recruiting more diverse group of troop scoutmasters, positive social change within the BSA and communities they serve will result.



## Summary

Section 1 includes information about the transformative nature of the scouting program and underscores the crucial role of troop scoutmasters in terms of guiding scouts towards self-discovery and personal growth. Despite a sizable pool of adult volunteers in SOSS, there is a pressing need for additional support for retaining or recruiting troop scoutmasters. The study involved addressing this issue by exploring volunteers' motivations and perceptions within the organization, particularly focusing on universal challenges like autonomy, competence, and relatability in volunteer recruitment.

The urgency of the matter is due to the significant increase in youth membership post-COVID-19 alongside a drastic decline in troop scoutmasters, posing a threat to the organization's future. I sought to address origins of this problem and provide actionable insights to address it. I used the qualitative methodology to identify factors which contribute to the reluctance of troop volunteers to become scoutmasters and informing leadership about necessary reforms in creating an organizational culture that is conducive to troop scoutmaster recruitment.

I used a basic qualitative study design to holistically explore barriers and reasons for low troop scoutmaster uptake. This study is significant in terms of its potential to inform reforms not only within SOSS but also organizations facing similar volunteer recruitment challenges. Additionally, I aimed to contribute insights regarding volunteer motivation across NPOs, addressing relationships between volunteers and managers. Ultimately, I aspired to safeguard the future of the scouting program by enhancing diversity and promoting positive social change within SOSS and related communities.

Section 2 includes a literature review regarding the history and development of the conceptual framework. Section 2 also includes a review and synthesis of studies related to volunteer motivation based on peer-reviewed and practice-focused research.

## Section 2: Conceptual Framework and Relevant Literature

SOSS has voiced the growing need for additional troop scoutmasters due to a 5% increase in youth membership leading to 77,000 new members nationally in 2023, which was primarily attributed to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. By highlighting the need for recruiting more troop scoutmasters, the organization recognizes the need to accommodate these new members and ensure their active participation. Increased demand for volunteers poses an administrative challenge for SOSS, emphasizing the importance of addressing this issue to sustain the organization's success in the future.

This qualitative study involved focusing on understanding factors within SOSS that discourage troop volunteers from taking on the role of troop scoutmasters. The aim is to identify these factors, and district leadership will use this analysis to make informed decisions in order to reform aspects of the organization. The goal is to create a more supportive organizational culture that enhances efforts to recruit troop scoutmasters.

In Section 2, I introduce and share relevant information about literature search strategies and the history and development of the SDT. In Section 2, I also include a review and synthesis of current volunteer motivation theory studies based on peer-reviewed and practice-focused research.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

In this study, I used the following databases: SAGE Journals, Emerald Insight, EBSCOHost, Science Direct, and Google Scholar. Within those databases, I used the following keywords: *volunteer*, *volunteering*, *volunteerism*, *nonprofit*, *self-determination theory*, *SDT*, *boy scout*, and *BSA*. After an exhaustive search of articles pertaining to boy

scouts and the U.S. scouting movement, very few articles were found that were published between 2019 and 2024.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework chosen to inform this study was the SDT. The SDT is a psychological framework emphasizing an innate capacity for personal growth, development, and wellbeing. It was developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in the 1980s. The SDT has since evolved into a comprehensive theory that involves factors that influence human motivation and behavior. Individuals have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and satisfaction of these needs is crucial for fostering intrinsic motivation and optimal functioning (Koestner & Holding, 2021). Within the SDT, there are six minitheories: the cognitive evaluation theory (CET), organismic integration theory (OIT), causality orientations theory (COT), basic psychological needs theory (BPNT), goal contents theory (GCT), and relationship motivation theory (RMT; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

#### **SDT Minitheories**

##### ***CET***

The CET is a crucial aspect of the SDT. It involves the relationship between external factors, such as rewards and feedback, and their impact on intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Sansone & Tang, 2021). CET's central tenet is motivational crowding, which suggests that introducing external rewards or controls can either enhance or diminish an individual's intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The theory is used to distinguish between extrinsic motivators which support autonomy and those

that exert control and diminish autonomy. The nature of feedback or reward, perceived as informational or controlling, meaningfully shapes individual motivations. Intrinsic motivation may be undermined when external events are perceived as controlling (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Conversely, providing constructive feedback or affirming the competence of the individual can augment intrinsic motivation by satisfying the individual's psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). CET's implications extend beyond academic contexts to various domains, including the workplace and sports. Volunteer Managers and leaders can use CET to create work environments that support autonomy and foster intrinsic motivation among the volunteers they oversee. In short, CET plays a pivotal role in the broader Self-Determination Theory by shedding light on the complex interplay between autonomy support and control.

### ***OIT***

The OIT is a crucial part of SDT. It involves examining the process of internalization in terms of how individuals transform external regulations into internal ones and how this internalization influences motivation quality and sustainability (Ryan & Deci, 2017). There are three stages of internalization: introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation (Haivas et al., 2013). During introjected regulation, individuals internalize external incentives to avoid guilt or enhance self-esteem (Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020). While motivation is partially accepted during introjected regulation, during identified regulation, a deeper internalization of external factors transpires. During identified regulation, individuals accept external incentives and align them with their

personal goals and values (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The highest level of internalization is integrated regulation, where individuals fully assimilate external incentives into their sense of self, making them congruent with personal beliefs and values (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Ryan and Deci (2017) stated amotivation, or lack of motivation, implies reassessing motivation and engagement approaches. Volunteer managers can promote internalization by aligning organizational goals with volunteers' personal values, allowing for autonomy in terms of decision-making, and rewarding behaviors that are consistent with organizational values.

### *COT*

The COT is a vital aspect of the SDT, which involves categorizing individuals into autonomy-oriented and control-oriented categories based on their motivational tendencies. According to Ryan and Deci (2017), autonomy-oriented individuals are naturally inclined to seek experiences that fulfill their psychological needs in terms of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, leading to self-endorsement of their actions. By contrast, individuals who exhibit control orientation are more susceptible to external pressures, societal expectations, and regulations, which diminish intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Additionally, COT emphasizes the influence of early socialization experiences and environmental factors on causality orientations, that is, a person's belief that they can be a change agent (Ryan & Deci, 2017)—furthermore, Drs. Deci and Ryan (2017) posit that supportive and autonomy-promoting environments during childhood contribute to

the development of a strong sense of autonomy and intrinsic motivation to engage in activities, while control-oriented individuals may have experienced more controlling or lack support for autonomy, leading to reliance on external regulations for motivation. COT adds another layer to SDT by delving into individual differences that shape motivational orientations. By understanding causality orientations, volunteer managers and leaders within nonprofit organizations can create environments supporting volunteers by aligning their actions with their values and fostering a more satisfying and self-determined life through autonomy-supportive relationships.

### ***BPNT***

The BPNT, a pivotal component of the broader SDT, delves into the fundamental elements that reinforce human motivation and well-being. According to Ryan & Deci (2017), BPNT theorizes that individuals have three universal and innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The fulfillment of each of these needs is essential for fostering intrinsic motivation, optimal personal development, and overall psychological well-being. However, a failure to meet these needs may lead to adverse outcomes, such as diminished motivation, decreased well-being, and even psychological distress.

### **Autonomy**

Autonomy represents the need to experience one's actions as volitional and self-endorsed (Ryan et al., 2021). Moreover, autonomy involves a sense of independence and the ability to make choices that align with one's values and interests. In the context of BPNT, autonomy is not synonymous with isolation; instead, it emphasizes the

importance of feeling in control of one's behaviors and decisions (Ryan et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020). Autonomy-supportive environments, where individuals are encouraged to express themselves, make choices, and pursue activities that resonate with their values, contribute to satisfying this basic psychological need.

### **Competence**

Competence pertains to the need to interact effectively with one's environment to feel capable and proficient in one's activities. According to Ryan and Deci (2017), BPNT suggests individuals have an intrinsic desire to master challenges and develop a sense of efficacy. This can be achieved through the acquisition of different skills, such as resilience acquired by overcoming obstacles and the experience of success. Furthermore, different environments that provide opportunities for skill development, challenge, and feedback contribute to satisfying the competence need (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Sansone & Tang, 2021).

### **Relatedness**

Relatedness involves the need for social connection, belonging, and meaningful relationships with others (Ryan et al., 2021). Human beings are inherently social creatures, and satisfying relatedness needs is crucial for overall well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Positive social interactions, supportive relationships, and a sense of community contribute to fulfilling this fundamental psychological need (Ryan et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2017, 2020). The concept of relatedness through the lens of BPNT is not limited to having close personal relationships with others; it extends to a broader sense of connection and inclusion into larger social groups, such as nonprofit organizations.



***GCT***

The fifth mini-theory of SDT is the Goal Contents Theory (GCT). An invaluable aspect of SDT, GCT explains the nature of human goals and their impact on motivation, well-being, and overall life satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Zhang et al., 2018). GCT categorizes goals into three different types: autonomous goals, controlled goals, and impersonal goals (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Goals that align with an individual's intrinsic motivations, personal values, and genuine interests are considered autonomous goals, providing a sense of fulfillment and joy to the person. Pursuing these goals enhances well-being by reflecting an individual's authentic desires and contributing to a sense of purpose and meaning in life (Zhang et al., 2018). Autonomous goals, reflecting intrinsic motivation, contribute positively to that person's psychological health and overall life satisfaction. Driven by external pressures and societal expectations, controlled goals diminish intrinsic motivation because of a sense of obligation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As a result, controlled goals, driven by external factors, may yield short-term compliance but potentially negatively affect the person's overall well-being. The third and final goal outlined by GCT is impersonal goals. Impersonal goals that lack personal engagement and intrinsic interest in the person may lead to a sense of emptiness and dissatisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

***RMT***

The sixth and final mini-theory Deci and Ryan (2017) outlined in SDT is the Relationship Motivation Theory (RMT). RMT focuses on understanding the impact of interpersonal relationships on individual motivation and overall well-being. More

specifically, RMT asserts that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, autonomy, competence, and relatedness extends beyond individual experiences and significantly influences social interactions (Ryan & Deci, 2017). That said, the quality of relationships also plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' motivation, happiness, and overall psychological health.

According to Ryan & Deci (2017), autonomy in relationships is essential because it allows individuals to feel a sense of volition and choice in their social interactions. The concept of competence extends into social interactions and is predicated on two assumptions: one, effective communication is present within that social interaction, and two, the person contributes positively to the dynamics of the relationship. Relatedness is also a core need, emphasizing the importance of forming meaningful connections, experiencing a sense of belonging, and engaging in mutually satisfying relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In personal relationships, fostering autonomy, supporting each other's competence, and prioritizing meaningful connections can enhance the quality of interactions. In organizational contexts, RMT is valuable for volunteer leaders and managers, as it helps create autonomy-supportive work environments, recognize volunteer's competence, and foster a sense of relatedness within the organization.

## **Existing Literature on the SDT**

### ***Autonomy in Volunteerism***

Volunteerism, driven by intrinsic motivation, is vital to societal well-being. SDT, developed by Deci and Ryan, offers a valuable framework for understanding the motivational dynamics of volunteerism, with autonomy being a central component. This

synthesis delves into recent literature exploring how autonomy in volunteerism influences motivations, experiences, and outcomes.

Recent studies emphasize the critical role of autonomy in influencing volunteer engagement. In a 2020 study, researchers found that autonomy-supportive relationships with SDT significantly contribute to a person's intrinsic motivation and engagement (Huéscar Hernández et al., 2020). In environments where volunteers can choose tasks aligned with their interests, they are likelier to feel a sense of ownership and commitment to their roles. Autonomy in volunteerism is closely linked to intrinsic motivation, an essential aspect of SDT. Research by Kramer et al. (2021) highlighted that volunteers who perceive a sense of autonomy in their activities are likelier to experience higher levels of intrinsic motivation. These findings suggest that autonomy, as a basic psychological need, fosters a genuine interest and enjoyment in volunteer tasks, leading to sustained commitment.

Creating autonomy-supportive environments within volunteer organizations is crucial for cultivating volunteers' sense of autonomy. Aknin & Whillans (2021) argued that providing volunteers with choices, allowing them to decide on their roles or tasks, and acknowledging their preferences contribute to a more autonomous and fulfilling volunteer experience. Autonomy in volunteerism impacts motivation and contributes to volunteers' overall well-being. The satisfaction of autonomy needs is associated with increased psychological well-being among volunteers (De Clerck, Willem, et al., 2021). This suggests that autonomy support in volunteer activities has broader positive implications for volunteers' mental health beyond task-specific motivations.

Recent literature has explored the effectiveness of volunteer training programs in enhancing autonomy. Walk et al. (2019) investigated how training programs that support volunteers' autonomy, provide opportunities for skill development, and foster a sense of community positively impact intrinsic motivation. The results of the study found that autonomy-enhancing training interventions can empower volunteers and contribute to their long-term engagement.

Autonomy considerations have practical implications for volunteer management. Piatak & Carman (2023) suggested incorporating autonomy-supportive practices into volunteer management can enhance engagement and satisfaction. Moreover, recognizing volunteers' autonomy needs and aligning tasks with their interests can lead to more meaningful and fulfilling volunteer experiences.

In addition, recent literature underscores the significance of autonomy in volunteerism within the framework of SDT. Autonomy is not only a predictor of intrinsic motivation but also a crucial factor in volunteer engagement, well-being, and the overall sustainability of volunteer efforts (Fernandes & Matos, 2023). Organizations and volunteer managers must play a pivotal role in creating autonomy-supportive environments, recognizing volunteers as change agents with the freedom to make choices in their contributions.

### ***Competence and Skill Development***

According to SDT, competence refers to feeling effective and capable in one's actions. A substantial body of literature supports the idea that satisfying the need for

competence is crucial for fostering intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This intrinsic motivation, in turn, leads to sustained engagement and well-being.

Competence has been consistently linked to increased intrinsic motivation across various domains, including education, sports, and the workplace. In educational settings, when students perceive their academic tasks as challenging yet manageable, it contributes to a sense of competence, leading to increased intrinsic motivation (Vansteenkiste et al., 2009). The same principles apply to other contexts, where individuals who feel competent in their pursuits are more likely to be intrinsically motivated (Chan, 2020).

Competence within SDT extends beyond the mere feeling of effectiveness to encompass skill development. Research by Johnston-Wilder et al. (2021) highlighted that environments supporting competence encourage individuals to embrace challenges and view failures as opportunities for learning. In personal and professional development, the intrinsic feeling of competence drives individuals to acquire new abilities and refine existing ones. Furthermore, competence satisfaction has a direct impact on performance and persistence. Studies have consistently demonstrated that competent individuals are likelier to exhibit higher task persistence and achievement (Karlen et al., 2019; Kearney & Garfield, 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Schunk & Dibenedetto, 2020). Competence-driven motivation provides the energy and perseverance needed to overcome challenges and excel in various endeavors.

Additionally, the relationship between competence satisfaction and overall well-being has been explored in recent literature. Van den Broeck et al. (2016) conducted a meta-analysis revealing a positive association between competence satisfaction and

various indicators of well-being, including life satisfaction and positive affect. These findings suggest that when individuals feel competent, it contributes to task-specific motivation and a more general sense of life satisfaction.

Cross-cultural research within the context of SDT has also explored how cultural factors influence the satisfaction of competence needs. A recent study by Guay (2022), designed to explore student motivation from different cultural perspectives, found that cultural contexts emphasizing autonomy and individual achievement were associated with greater competence satisfaction. This highlights the importance of considering cultural nuances in understanding the dynamics of competence within SDT.

### ***Relatedness and Social Connections***

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) suggests that individuals have a fundamental psychological need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This synthesis explores recent literature focusing on the role of relatedness and social connections within the context of SDT.

As defined by SDT, relatedness involves the need for meaningful connections and relationships with others (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Recent research emphasizes the significance of relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation, well-being, and positive outcomes across various life domains. Furthermore, recent studies have shown that satisfying the need for relatedness contributes significantly to intrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (2000, 2017) assert that individuals who experience supportive social connections are likelier to engage in activities for the inherent satisfaction and joy they bring. In educational settings, for instance, individuals with strong social connections to

peers and teachers are more intrinsically motivated to learn (Calderón et al., 2020; Fernández-Espínola et al., 2020; Pelikan et al., 2021; Shin & Bolkan, 2021; Vansteenkiste et al., 2009).

Recent literature has delved into the relationship between social connections, relatedness satisfaction, and overall well-being. Wu & Zhang (2022) conducted a longitudinal study, revealing reciprocal associations between relatedness satisfaction, self-esteem, and prosociality in individuals. Su et al. (2021) conducted a similar study and formed the same conclusions. The findings of the two studies underscore the importance of positive social interactions in promoting a sense of relatedness and contributing to overall psychological well-being.

Within volunteerism with a nonprofit organization, relatedness is critical for role satisfaction and volunteer engagement. Research by Lee (2021), Ngah et al. (2022), and Trent et al. (2020) each explored the relationship between relatedness satisfaction and work-related outcomes. In each of the three studies, researchers observed the same trend, highlighting that volunteers who experience positive social connections with colleagues and volunteer managers report higher levels of job satisfaction and engagement.

Cross-cultural studies have also contributed to understanding relatedness within SDT. Several studies, such as Lai et al. (2022), Su et al. (2021), and Yuen & Wu (2023), have all explored how cultural orientations impact the internalization of relatedness needs. From each study, similar conclusions are drawn, notably that cultures emphasizing collectivism and interconnectedness tend to place a higher value on relatedness satisfaction.

Recent literature affirms the central role of relatedness and social connections within the framework of SDT. From educational settings and workplaces to cultural contexts, satisfying the need for relatedness emerges as a key factor in promoting intrinsic motivation and overall well-being. Understanding and nurturing positive social connections, whether face-to-face or digital, can contribute significantly to individuals' sense of relatedness and, consequently, their psychological flourishing.

### ***Motivational Profiles of Volunteers***

In the last five years, an increasing body of research has explored volunteer motivation through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). This synthesis provides an overview of recent literature, highlighting the diverse motivations that drive individuals to engage in volunteer activities and the implications of these motivations on volunteer outcomes.

Recent studies have emphasized the vast differences in motivational profiles among volunteers, recognizing that a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations drives individuals. One such study was Cassidy et al. (2019), who conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews and concluded that volunteers may exhibit a spectrum of motivations, ranging from altruistic values to personal benefits. In another study by Wu et al. (2023), researchers performed a meta-analysis comprised of five qualitative and three quantitative studies spanning five different countries regarding volunteerism in the prison system and told that volunteer motives spanned from altruistic to social reasons. In both studies, the diversity underscores the need for a thorough understanding of the motivational landscape within volunteerism.



Intrinsic motivation remains a central aspect of volunteerism within SDT.

Volunteers motivated by a genuine interest in contributing to a cause or helping others exemplify high levels of intrinsic motivation (De Clerck et al., 2021; Manganelli et al., 2018). Research by Faletihan et al. (2021) found that volunteers with intrinsic solid motivation more often align themselves with altruistic values, emphasizing the importance of the cause over their gains.

While intrinsic motivation is pivotal, SDT acknowledges the role of extrinsic factors in shaping volunteer motivations. According to De Clerck et al. (2021), understanding these extrinsic motivations is crucial for volunteer management and program design to cater to diverse preferences. Furthermore, recent literature highlights the coexistence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations within individuals. In the case of Troop Volunteers, many are initially drawn to a cause due to personal benefits (e.g., spending time with their child) but gradually develop a deeper intrinsic connection as they engage in the activity. A study by Harkins (2021) explored this dynamic, emphasizing recognizing the evolving nature of volunteer motivations.

Longitudinal studies within the last five years reveal that volunteer motivations can evolve. Wu & Zhang (2022) conducted research indicating that the motivations of individuals may shift as they gain experience and establish a sense of relatedness within their community. Understanding these transitions is crucial for volunteer organizations to adapt strategies to retain and sustain volunteer engagement.

Recognizing the diversity in motivational profiles has practical implications for volunteer program design. In their article about volunteer engagement, Arnon et al.

(2022) proposed that organizations can improve the satisfaction and engagement of volunteers by tailoring programs to align with volunteers' motivations for participating. One way you can accomplish this is by providing opportunities for skill development for those motivated by personal growth or creating platforms for social connections that can foster a sense of relatedness.

In short, the synthesis of recent literature on the motivational profiles of volunteers within the context of SDT highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of volunteerism. Understanding the interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and recognizing motivational transitions over time is essential for designing effective volunteer programs. When volunteer managers tailor strategies to the diverse motivations of volunteers, organizations can foster a more inclusive and satisfying volunteer experience.

### ***Implications for Volunteer Management***

Recent literature has delved into the implications of SDT for volunteer management, shedding light on how organizations can foster autonomy, competence, and relatedness to enhance the volunteer experience. This synthesis provides an overview of key findings, strategies, and practical implications for volunteer management informed by SDT.

Huéscar Hernández et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of autonomy support in volunteer engagement by concluding that the perception of autonomy support is linked to positive physical behavior and higher overall satisfaction levels. Volunteer managers can create environments that support volunteers' autonomy by offering choices on job

tasks, involving them in decision-making processes, and recognizing their personal preferences. This autonomy-supportive approach fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among volunteers (De Clerck et al., 2021; Huéscar Hernández et al., 2020; Kramer et al., 2021).

To satisfy the need for competence, volunteer managers must provide constructive feedback and acknowledge volunteers' contributions. A study by Gómez-Barrón et al. (2019) suggested that recognizing volunteers' competence and providing opportunities for skill development can enhance their motivation and overall satisfaction. Implementing regular feedback sessions between volunteer managers and volunteers can contribute to a sense of progress and accomplishment. In another study, Huang et al. (2020) examined the relationship between perceived organizational inclusion, volunteer need satisfaction, and future behavioral intentions and found that nurturing social connections within volunteer programs leads to meaningful engagements among volunteers and stronger intentions to continue volunteering. Managers of volunteer programs can facilitate relatedness by providing opportunities for volunteers to communicate with one another, work together, and develop a sense of community within their organization. Putting on social events, holding networking sessions, and participating in team-building activities are all great ways to achieve this goal.

Recognizing the diversity of volunteers within organizations enables managers to tailor their programs to cater to various motivational profiles (Piatak & Carman, 2023). For example, volunteers with a strong desire for skill development may benefit from

different training programs. In contrast, individuals who seek to make social connections may benefit more from opportunities for networking and collaboration.

Zhou & Kodama-Muscente (2023) meta-analysis explored why people chose to volunteer and suggested that understanding volunteers' intrinsic motivations, notably the volunteer's values, is crucial for recruitment and retention strategies. To target volunteers among the vast array of different values, volunteer managers can emphasize the intrinsic rewards of volunteering in recruitment materials, such as personal growth, fulfillment, and a sense of purpose. This approach attracts individuals who are more likely to be sustained and engaged volunteers (Zhou & Kodama-Muscente, 2023). In another study, Prince and Piatak (2023) explored the perspectives of volunteer management across satisfaction levels and emphasized the role of training programs in enhancing volunteers' autonomy and overall satisfaction. The studies highlight the importance of volunteer managers aligning their training and volunteer engagement initiatives with SDT principles, providing autonomy-supportive learning environments and opportunities for volunteers to collaborate and share experiences.

### **Rationale for Framework**

Applying Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to measure recruitment strategies for BSA Troop Scoutmasters is an effective strategy for several reasons. SDT is a psychologically informed approach that emphasizes intrinsic motivation, competence development, relatedness, flexibility, choice, sustained engagement, enhanced volunteer satisfaction, and promoting a positive organizational culture (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Intrinsic motivation is driven by personal interest and satisfaction (De Clerck, Willem, et al., 2021), and BSA can attract Troop Scoutmasters interested in contributing to the organization. By aligning recruitment strategies with autonomy principles, SOSS can enhance intrinsic motivation by providing autonomy in decision-making and emphasizing the meaningfulness of their role. Competence development is also a key factor of SDT (Wessel & Riyan, 2023), as BSA can design recruitment strategies that highlight opportunities for leaders to develop and demonstrate their skills.

Relatedness and community building are also important aspects of SDT, as volunteering fosters a sense of community and a sense of belonging (Fernandes & Matos, 2023). SOSS can design recruitment strategies that offer flexibility in terms of roles and time commitments, catering to the autonomy aspect of SDT.

Sustained engagement is another benefit of SDT, as recruitment strategies based on SDT principles create an environment where volunteers feel their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are continually satisfied, leading to a more committed and enduring contribution to the organization (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Enhanced volunteer satisfaction is another benefit of SDT, as it aligns expectations and experiences with psychological needs, increasing the likelihood of volunteers finding their roles satisfying and fulfilling (Huang et al., 2020). A positive organizational culture that values autonomy, competence, and relatedness will attract volunteers who resonate with these principles, enhancing the overall volunteer experience.

Lastly, by using SDT as the conceptual framework for this study, SOSS can gain insights into the psychological mechanisms driving volunteer motivation and engagement. SDT's holistic and psychologically informed approach will undoubtedly augment BSA recruitment strategies by attracting, engaging, and retaining motivated, satisfied, and fulfilled Troop Scoutmasters.

## **Literature Review**

### **Evolution of the BSA: 1910-2023**

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) has played a significant role in shaping the lives of millions of young individuals since its inception in 1910 (Order of the Arrow, n.d.). The organization's history is woven with the threads of leadership, community service, and personal development. This section will provide a comprehensive history of the Boy Scouts of America and delve into the key milestones, challenges, and transformations that have defined the organization over the past century. In light of the scarcity of peer-reviewed articles pertaining to the subject matter, a number of the sources used for this section were obtained from official publications of the organization, as opposed to scholarly databases. Furthermore, in adhering to this section's emphasis on history, articles that were older than five years and focused on the organization's past were also incorporated.

### ***Founding and Early Years (1910-1920)***

The roots of the Boy Scouts of America can be traced back to the British Boy Scout movement founded by Sir Robert Baden-Powell (Pryke, 2001; Saelee, n.d.). Inspired by Baden-Powell's ideas, Chicago publisher William D. Boyce incorporated the

Boy Scouts of America in 1910 (Saelee, n.d.). Rapid growth and enthusiasm are adjectives that best describe the early years of the BSA. The organization aimed to instill character, citizenship, and personal fitness in young boys. The first official Boy Scout Handbook was published in the same year, and the first Boy Scout troop was organized in Washington, DC (Johnson, 2016). Two years later, the iconic Eagle Scout rank was introduced in 1912, symbolizing the highest achievement in Scouting (Peterson, n.d.).

### ***War and Postwar Resurgence (1920-1950)***

The Boy Scouts played a significant role during World War I, conducting service projects and supporting the war effort by selling war bonds and savings stamps, as well as distributing government literature and collecting peach pits for use in gas masks (Order of the Arrow, n.d.; Rohrer, 2023). Between the First and Second World Wars, the scouting movement continued to grow, emphasizing the Scout Oath and Law as guiding principles.

During World War II, Scouting again played a crucial role in supporting the war effort (Order of the Arrow, n.d.). Many Scouts collected resources like tin, aluminum, and tires to be recycled into war materials, while others took a more conservational route and planted trees (Order of the Arrow, n.d.). The BSA's dedication to patriotism and service to the country was strengthened during the war years. After being postponed in 1935, two years later, in 1937, the first National Scout Jamboree was held at the National Mall in Washington, DC, bringing together Scouts from across the country (Order of the Arrow, n.d.). The BSA's commitment to outdoor activities and education became evident with the establishing of the Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico in 1938 (Boy Scouts

of America, n.d.-a). Post-World War II, the BSA continued to experience a surge in membership as the country focused on rebuilding and instilling values in the youth.

### ***Civil Rights Era and Social Change (1950-1980)***

The civil rights movement of the 1960s had profoundly impacted the BSA. The organization faced criticism for its segregationist policies, and a landmark decision in 1974 led the BSA to become fully racially integrated (McCallister, 2023); this period marked a turning point in the BSA's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

In the 1960s, the BSA also faced challenges related to changing social attitudes, including debates over the role of women in scouting. However, BSA reaffirmed its commitment to a single-gender model, with the Girl Scouts of the USA offering a parallel program for girls. However, BSA would later, in 1969, permit girls aged 14-20 to join Exploring Troops; an alternative scouting organization emphasizing high-adventure activities (McCallister, 2023).

### ***Adapting to Contemporary Challenges (1980-2000)***

The latter half of the 20th century saw the BSA adapting to societal changes. Environmental awareness became a significant focus, and in response, the BSA established the Leave No Trace principles in 1994 to promote responsible outdoor ethics (Marion & Reid, 2001). During this time, the BSA also faced legal challenges related to its membership policies, leading to debates about inclusivity and LGBTQ rights.

In 2000, the BSA faced a significant controversy when the Supreme Court ruled in *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale* that the organization had the right to exclude gay members (*Boy Scouts of America v. Dale (Opinion of the Court)*, 2000). The far-reaching



effects of this decision sparked debates within and outside the organization about the compatibility of Scouting principles with evolving societal norms.

### ***Challenges and Transformation in the 21st Century (2000-2023)***

The 21st century has brought both challenges and opportunities for the BSA. Membership has declined, financial challenges have emerged, and the organization has faced lawsuits for its policies on gay and transgender members. In 2013, the BSA lifted the ban on openly gay Scouts, a historic move reflecting changing societal attitudes (McCarty, 2013).

In 2018, the BSA announced renaming the Boy Scouts program to Scouts BSA, emphasizing its commitment to inclusivity. The organization faced backlash from traditionalists but pressed forward with its vision of providing a scouting experience to all youth. The inclusion debate continued, and in 2019, the BSA announced that it would admit girls into its ranks, creating the Scouts BSA program (Kalkwarf, 2021; McCallister, 2023). This decision marked a significant shift in the organization's century-old tradition of being a boys-only organization.

Amidst these changes, the BSA filed for bankruptcy in 2020, citing the financial burden of numerous legal challenges; the bankruptcy process aimed to establish a Victims Compensation Trust (Rohrer, 2023). The Victims Compensation Trust was established to address past abuse claims, highlighting the importance of child protection within the organization. In 2021, the BSA emerged from bankruptcy after reaching settlements with abuse survivors. Since then, the organization has continued its efforts to revitalize scouting, emphasizing safety, diversity, and community engagement.

As the Boy Scouts of America looks to the future, it continues to face the ongoing task of balancing tradition with inclusivity, community engagement, and adapting to the evolving needs of youth in an ever-changing world. The Scouting movement, with its rich history and enduring values, continues to inspire and shape the lives of countless individuals, contributing to the fabric of American society for over a century.

### **Recent Trends Within the U.S. Scouting Movement**

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA), now known as Scouts BSA, has been influential in youth development since its inception in 1910. Over the years, the organization has undergone significant transformations, adapting to societal changes, legal challenges, and evolving expectations. This section will examine the recent trends within the US Scouting Movement, including key developments, challenges, and ongoing efforts to modernize and revitalize scouting in the 21st century. Similar to the previous section, a review of the relevant literature revealed a scarcity of scholarly articles. As a result, a number of the sources utilized in this section were obtained from official publications of the organization, as opposed to scholarly databases. Furthermore, in consideration of the historical significance of this section which underscores contemporary developments within the US Scouting Movement, articles that were older than five years but focused on the transformation of the organization and society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century were also incorporated.

#### ***Inclusivity and Coed Scouting***

One of the most transformative recent trends within the US Scouting Movement is the shift towards inclusivity and co-ed scouting. Historically, the BSA had been a male-

only organization (Order of the Arrow, n.d.). In 2013, the BSA took a significant step by lifting the ban on openly gay scouts, recognizing the importance of inclusivity (McCarty, 2013). This decision, while controversial within some circles, was a response to the broader cultural shift towards LGBTQ+ acceptance.

In 2019, the BSA went a step further by announcing the admission of girls into its traditional scouting program, which was subsequently rebranded as Scouts BSA (Kalkwarf, 2021; McCallister, 2023). This move departed from more than a century of exclusively serving boys. Scouts BSA aims to provide girls with the same opportunities for leadership, outdoor adventure, and skill development that boys have enjoyed (Scouts BSA, n.d.). The decision aligns with a broader recognition of gender equality and the evolving societal roles of men and women.

The shift to co-ed scouting has been met with a spectrum of reactions, undoubtedly impacting Troop Scoutmaster recruitment efforts. While some applaud the move for breaking down gender stereotypes and offering equal opportunities to all youth, others express concerns about the impact on single-gender groups' unique experiences and dynamics (M. French, personal communication).

### ***Bankruptcy and Legal Challenges***

In 2020, the Boy Scouts of America filed for bankruptcy, a move that reverberated across the scouting community. Rohrer (2023), in her article about the BSA's Chapter 11 bankruptcy, argued that the filing was prompted by a surge in legal challenges related to allegations of sexual abuse within the organization, which in turn prompted thousands of individuals to come forward with claims of abuse, dating back

decades. The filing process for bankruptcy aimed to establish a Victims Compensation Trust to address the claims of survivors of abuse (Rohrer, 2023). Establishing the Compensation Trust highlighted the significance of child protection within the organization and the requirement for preventative measures to reduce the likelihood of abuse. While the bankruptcy process has allowed the BSA to make settlements with abuse survivors and move forward, it has also sparked discussions about the broader issue of child protection within youth organizations. These concerns have consequently harmed Troop Scoutmaster recruitment efforts.

### *Adapting to Technology*

The recent trends within the US Scouting Movement also reflect a concerted effort to integrate technology into scouting programs (Boy Scouts of America, 2022). Scouting organizations leverage technology to enhance the scouting experience by developing digital resources, training modules, and communication tools. Online merit badge courses, virtual troop meetings, and digital communication platforms have become commonplace in recent years. These technological changes not only facilitated scouting during the COVID-19 pandemic but also catered to the personal preferences and interests of a new generation of scouts more accustomed to digital communication.

As time has passed, it has become progressively more common to see Troop Scoutmasters leveraging social media and online platforms such as Scoutbook to engage with their scouts, parents, and troop volunteers. This digital transformation extends to administrative tasks, event planning, and record-keeping, streamlining the operational aspects of scouting and making it more accessible to a tech-savvy audience (Capital Area

Council, 2020). Unfortunately, technological advances within Scout Troops have undermined Troop Scoutmaster recruitment efforts by deterring those not technologically savvy.

### ***Emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion***

In response to the growing awareness of social justice issues, there has been a heightened emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the US Scouting Movement. According to (Order of the Arrow, 2022), the BSA continues to promote DEI within the scouting organization by committing over the next three years to increase diverse representation in Troops and by increasing access and removing barriers to all Scouts and their leaders attempting to participate in the scouting program. Scouting organizations are actively working to create more inclusive environments that reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.

Efforts to promote diversity extend beyond the inclusion of girls. Scouting organizations actively engage with communities of color, reach out to underserved populations, and provide resources to ensure that scouting is accessible to all youth, regardless of their socio-economic background (Order of the Arrow, 2022). The goal is to make scouting more reflective and representative of the larger society.

Training programs for leaders have increasingly incorporated more cultural competence and sensitivity modules. BSA introduced a new Eagle-Required merit badge, Citizenship in Society, in July 2022, promoting Scouts to understand the significance of diversity, equity, inclusion, and ethical leadership in society and Scouting (Boy Scouts of America, 2023). Leaders must first complete the online training module "Diversity,

Equity, and Inclusion" to teach the new merit badge. The aim of these new initiatives is not only to diversify the membership but also to foster an inclusive culture where every scout feels a sense of belonging. SOSS leadership needs to determine whether these new initiatives to promote DEI have disproportionately affected Troop Scoutmaster recruitment efforts.

### ***Challenges and Opportunities for the Future***

The US Scouting Movement is progressing in inclusivity, technological adaptation, and diversity but still faces ongoing challenges. Membership decline, financial sustainability, and the aftermath of the abuse scandal, among others, have continued to be pressing issues that have undermined SOSS's Troop Scoutmaster recruitment efforts.

Another challenge is navigating the delicate balance between tradition and innovation (Harkins, 2021). As scouting evolves to meet the needs of a changing society, many desire to preserve the core values and principles that have been at the heart of scouting for over a century. Balancing is crucial for retaining current Troop Scoutmasters and attracting new ones.

### **Volunteerism Within Youth-Serving Organizations**

Volunteerism in youth-serving organizations fosters positive change, community engagement, personal development, and the well-being of volunteers and the youth they serve. It is beneficial to investigate the factors that contribute to the growth and maintenance of the commitment of volunteers if one wishes to understand the dynamics of volunteering in this setting. SDT offers a unique perspective on understanding the

psychological foundations of volunteerism, emphasizing the inherent human desire for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In this section, key factors that enhance volunteerism within youth-serving organizations will be analyzed, drawing insights from the principles of SDT. Similar to the previous two sections, a literature review revealed an absence of scholarly articles concerning Boy Scouts of America volunteerism. Therefore, scholarly articles concerning volunteer work within other youth-serving organizations, including the Boys and Girls Club of America and the 4H Club, were utilized in this section to augment the literature review.

### ***Empowering Volunteers with Choice and Purpose***

SDT posits that autonomy, the sense of volition and self-endorsement in one's actions, is a fundamental psychological need (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Autonomy in youth-serving organizations refers to the perceived choice and control of volunteers over their actions. When volunteers feel they have autonomy in selecting their roles, contributing their skills, and making decisions that align with their values, they experience increased self-motivation, accomplishment, and fulfillment (Kramer et al., 2021).

Youth-serving organizations that offer diverse volunteer opportunities, allowing individuals to choose roles that align with their interests and skills, are more likely to attract and retain volunteers. Huang et al. (2020) and Vansteenkiste et al. (2020) both argued that the involvement of volunteers in decision-making processes, active participation in all organizational activities, and effective internal communication can significantly enhance their satisfaction. Wessel & Riyan (2023), in their study of volunteerism within the nature and conservation field, found that encouraging autonomy

and flexibility in volunteering activities can help volunteers overcome obstacles, prevent burnout, and prevent future disillusionment with the volunteer experience.

### ***Flexibility and Accommodation***

Flexibility in scheduling and accommodating volunteers' needs aligns with the principle of autonomy within SDT. Youth-serving organizations that recognize and respect volunteers' diverse commitments and constraints are more likely to attract and retain a diverse pool of volunteers (Stefanick et al., 2020).

By offering flexible volunteer opportunities that accommodate varying skill levels and time commitments, organizations enable volunteers to customize their involvement to suit their unique needs. A study by Stefanick et al. (2020) showed that between 2013 and 2016, 40% of volunteers with the Boys and Girls Club of America who stopped volunteering did so due to time constraints. Organizations that recognize the balance between volunteers' personal and professional lives and offer adaptable roles demonstrate a commitment to volunteers' autonomy, ultimately fostering a more positive and sustainable volunteer experience.

### ***Skill Development and Mastery***

Competence, the belief in one's capabilities, and the desire for mastery is another core element of SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Youth-serving organizations focusing on skill development and continuous learning are more likely to attract and retain committed volunteers. Franck & Donaldson (2020) concluded that when youth-serving organizations implement training programs, workshops, and mentorship opportunities, it contributes to



competence satisfaction, significantly influencing the enjoyment and fulfillment experienced by the volunteer.

Offering constructive feedback, recognition, and acknowledgment of volunteers' accomplishments enhances their confidence and fosters their sense of competence. Grant et al.'s (2020) study of volunteerism within the 4H Youth Development program found that many volunteers felt that they contributed significantly to the development and growth of young people, and these volunteering experiences have positively impacted volunteers' belief that they made a meaningful contribution. These findings are supported by Stefanick et al. (2020), who highlighted volunteer turnover rates at the Boys and Girls Club of America in their study. According to the findings of the research, 72% of the people who volunteered did so out of a selfless desire to give something back to the community. These intrinsic motivation factors foster a sustainable commitment to service.

### ***Supportive and Inclusive Community***

The need for relatedness, or the desire to connect with others and form meaningful relationships, is a cornerstone of SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Recent literature indicates that organizations that foster a sense of community and connection among volunteers are more likely to provide a positive and enduring volunteer experience (Fernandes & Matos, 2023; Huang et al., 2020; Kramer et al., 2021; Manganelli et al., 2018; Wessel & Riyan, 2023).

Social events, team-building activities, and mentorship programs enhance the sense of belonging among volunteers. Employees understand and embrace the

organization's mission, vision, and values when it has a strong, positive organizational culture (Thomas, 2022). When the organizational culture includes inclusivity, where volunteers feel accepted and valued, they are more likely to create an environment where individuals are motivated to contribute their time and effort over the long term.

### ***Recognition and Appreciation***

The requirement for competence and relatedness, as defined in SDT, can be aligned with the importance of recognition as a major component in increasing volunteers (Kramer et al., 2021). Volunteers are more likely to feel competent in their contributions if they believe that their efforts are respected and acknowledged, according to the findings of an article by Walk et al. (2019) about volunteer turnover in the BSA. Acknowledgment can come in many ways, such as verbal compliments, awards, certificates, and mentions in newsletters and social media.

Youth-serving organizations implementing regular and meaningful recognition programs create a positive feedback loop, reinforcing volunteers' intrinsic motivation (Walk et al., 2019). Organizations can further strengthen volunteers' feelings of purpose and sense of belonging in the community by communicating the importance of their labor and expressing thanks for their contributions.

### ***Intrinsic Motivation Through Purpose***

When a person's personal beliefs and a broader objective align with their volunteer work, they are more likely to be intrinsically driven to perform that volunteer work (Ryan et al., 2021). Youth-serving organizations must craft compelling stories that appeal to potential volunteers and convey their programs' mission, values, and societal

impact. When people believe that the organization's objectives align with their beliefs, they actively search for relationships, activities, and goals that will allow them to feel a sense of connectedness (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Moreover, organizations that involve volunteers in decision-making processes and provide opportunities to contribute to shaping the organization's direction foster a more profound sense of ownership and purpose (Fernandes & Matos, 2023). This alignment with personal values and participation in organizational decision-making contributes to a more fulfilling volunteer experience.

### ***Holistic Approach to Volunteerism within Youth-Serving Organizations***

Volunteering within organizations that serve young people is dynamic and varied, and various psychological, social, and organizational factors impact it. A thorough framework for examining the motives and experiences of volunteers can be derived from an understanding of these aspects via the lens of SDT. When a person's fundamental psychological needs are met, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, it can lead to increased levels of intrinsic motivation and persistent commitment on the part of the volunteer (Haivas et al., 2013).

Collectively, the reviewed literature showed that it is more probable that a youth-serving organization will be successful in creating a positive and long-lasting volunteer experience if it places a priority on providing volunteers with autonomy, encouraging competence through skill development, developing a sense of relatedness within a supportive community, and recognizing the contributions made by volunteers. Additionally, providing volunteer opportunities that align with personal beliefs,

maintaining clear communication and trust with volunteers, enabling flexibility in the role, and emphasizing personal growth all contribute significantly to creating a holistic recruitment and retention strategy that enhances participation.

### **Summary**

Section 2 includes information about the history and development of the conceptual framework and contained a review and synthesis of different studies related to the SDT based on peer-reviewed and practice-focused research.

The SDT is a psychological framework that emphasizes personal growth, development, and wellbeing. Individuals have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are crucial for fostering intrinsic motivation and optimal functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The SDT has six minitheories: the CET, OIT, COT, BPNT, GCT, and RMT (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Research showed that volunteers who felt autonomy during their activities experienced higher levels of intrinsic motivation, leading to sustained commitment. Creating autonomy-supportive environments within volunteer organizations is essential for cultivating volunteers' sense of autonomy, which impacts their overall wellbeing.

Satisfying the need for relatedness contributes significantly to intrinsic motivation. In terms of volunteerism, positive social connections with colleagues and volunteer managers lead to higher job satisfaction and engagement. Understanding these motivations is crucial for volunteer management and program design, as they can evolve.

Diversity in terms of motivational profiles of volunteers is crucial for designing effective volunteer programs. The SDT is used to help organizations foster autonomy,

competence, and relatedness to enhance the volunteer experience. Volunteer managers can create environments that support volunteers' autonomy by offering choices regarding job tasks, involving them in decision-making processes, and recognizing their personal preferences.

Organizations that offer diverse volunteer opportunities, recognize diverse commitments, and provide adaptable roles demonstrate a commitment to volunteers' autonomy, fostering positive and sustainable volunteer experiences.

Section 3 includes information about the practice-focused research question and research design, my role as the researcher, and the research methodology. Strategies for data analysis, as well as issues concerning trustworthiness and ethical procedures are also presented.

### Section 3: Data Collection Process and Analysis

The COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated a substantial surge in young members, as evidenced by the 5% growth in SOSS membership in 2023. As of December 2022, the number of actively registered youth in SOSS stood at 1,025,000, reflecting a substantial growth compared to the preceding year. Nevertheless, the escalating membership of young individuals in SOSS and subsequent requirement for additional troop scoutmasters have presented the organization with an administrative dilemma. Prior endeavors to enlist fresh troop scoutmasters have yet to be successful, leading to a reduction of actively chartered troops by 52% during the preceding 3 years. Dissolution of troops was necessitated by reluctance of troop volunteers to assume the role of troop scoutmasters, which contributed to this decline. I aimed to enhance situational awareness of volunteer managers at SOSS by identifying intrinsic or extrinsic factors that contribute to the hesitancy of numerous troop volunteers to assume the role of troop scoutmasters. I produced a comprehensive report providing an overview of the issue, data-driven results, and conclusions from data. This study involved examining components of SOSS that contribute to the reluctance of troop volunteers to become troop scoutmasters. Its purpose is to provide leadership at SOSS with information that can inform reformation decisions, improve recruitment efforts, and foster a positive organizational culture.

In Section 3, I present the practice-focused research question, research design, roles of the researcher and client organization, and research methodology. In addition to presenting data analysis strategies, Section 3 includes information about ethics and trustworthiness in the study.

### **Practice-Focused Research Questions and Research Design**

The practice-focused research question informing this study was:

RQ: What factors do current and former troop scoutmasters believe exist that may lead to the unwillingness of other troop volunteers to become scoutmasters?

After the study has been completed, a detailed report summarizing study findings was provided to executive leadership of SOSS. This report also included conclusions that were drawn from data-driven results. After results were compiled, the managers and board members participated in a presentation of study findings. During this presentation, emphasis was placed on bringing awareness to root causes of their administrative problem. SOSS is just one of the many NPOs that face administrative challenges involving competent volunteer recruitment and retention. The deliverable's significance is based on increased awareness and understanding of the issue. Additionally, a study of this size and magnitude has never been performed in the history of SOSS.

I used a basic qualitative study to explore the research question. The influence exerted by troop scoutmasters on troops is frequently incalculable. I comprehensively investigated the topic, aiming to identify current obstacles and understand factors contributing to the limited number of individuals opting to pursue the role of troop scoutmaster. Aten and Denney (2023) posited the qualitative inquiry involves emphasizing inherent qualities or essences of a phenomenon instead of focusing on quantifiable outcomes. To implement my proposed research design, it was necessary to conduct individual interviews with current and former troop scoutmasters who have voluntarily relinquished their position within the preceding 12-month period to acquire

primary data. Interviews were chosen to gather data in order to address intrinsic aspects of the topic while mitigating cognitive bias. According to Saldaña (2021), during interviews, participants often bring unexpected insights which differ from what researchers observe in the field or contradict their values, attitudes, and belief systems. The objective was to conduct 10 to 12 interviews consisting of 14 questions centered around the three tenets of the SDT: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These interviews yielded enough original data to make meaningful comparisons. Upon conducting interviews, I compared outcomes with a comprehensive review of pertinent literature to derive conclusions.

### **Roles of the Researcher and Client Organization**

Having been involved in the scouting program both as a youth participant and adult scout volunteer for approximately 8 years, I possessed significant experiential knowledge regarding troop government and the broader BSA program. However, it is essential to acknowledge that this extensive personal experience may have lead to cognitive biases unless appropriate safeguards were implemented. Much of my involvement in scouting occurred within a different scouting council. As a result, my limited knowledge of participants and district operations assisted in reducing any potential cognitive bias. I fulfilled various volunteer positions including den leader, cubmaster, committee chairman, scouting with special needs district chair, and scouting with special needs council committee member. I currently serve as troop chaplain and religious emblems coordinator position at SOSS, a role I have held for approximately 14 months. Neither position entails any supervisory or instructional responsibilities



involving prospective study participants. As a result of my limited volunteer work at SOSS, the extent of my personal and professional relationships is limited. To mitigate risks of potential bias, scoutmasters with whom I had personal or professional connections were excluded from the pool of participants for the study.

As previously mentioned, my comprehensive understanding and expertise involving troop governments and the broader BSA program may lead to potential bias, necessitating implementation of appropriate safeguards. It is crucial to moderate subjective viewpoints and prioritize objective data analysis in order to interpret data accurately rather than relying solely on personal experiences. Several measures were implemented to mitigate any potential bias. Among the numerous volunteer positions I have held, I was never a scoutmaster. While I have previously held the position of cubmaster (comparable to scoutmaster at the cub scout level), I am unfamiliar with the day-to-day difficulties and factors that scoutmasters face. As a result, potential bias was minimized. Another measure to mitigate bias involves identification of the client organization. My tenure within the organization is relatively short, resulting in limited familiarity with the organizational culture at SOSS. Similarly, my lack of familiarity with internal operations of SOSS was necessary to collect and analyze data without bias. By restricting the participant pool exclusively to scoutmasters with whom I had no personal or professional affiliations, an additional safeguard was put in place to mitigate potential bias.

The primary function of the client organization in this study is to facilitate access to the participant pool and serve as a platform for conducting a targeted participant

recruitment effort. Annually, Troops engage in a Troop Recharter process wherein the Troop Scoutmaster, in collaboration with the Committee Chairman, furnishes a comprehensive report on their members and furnishes contact details for each of the Scoutmasters. SOSS furnished me with a comprehensive roster of all Scoutmasters affiliated with SOSS, including their contact details. Furthermore, SOSS organizes a monthly meeting and extends an invitation to all adult volunteers, providing essential information for effectively managing their respective Troops. Current and former Troop Scoutmasters are typically in attendance at these meetings. During each meeting, the leadership of SOSS afforded me the chance to communicate with and request the involvement of each current and former Scoutmaster present.

### **Methodology**

For this qualitative study, in-person interviews is the primary data source to answer why many Troop volunteers are reluctant to become Troop Scoutmasters. Qualitative interviews, with open-ended questions and nuanced responses, are ideal for studying complex community issues like scouting troop dynamics. In addition, in-person interviews can capture rich, context-specific details that other research methods, such as focus groups, cannot (Milena et al., 2008). By meeting with current and former Scoutmasters and performing interviews, much can be gleaned from hearing their responses to questions, particularly the Troop's complex dynamics and the subtleties that may cause volunteers' reluctance. Performing interviews in a relaxed, open environment builds rapport and trust with participants and encourages truthful responses (Osborne &

Grant-Smith, 2021). These responses will prove invaluable as the deliverable is being created following the study because they add context and depth to the results.

The software program Delve effectively organized the qualitative data obtained through the semi-structured interviews. Delve is a subscription-based computer-assisted qualitative data analysis system (CAQDAS) that allows the user to develop specific codes in the software to highlight key themes in the data. The transcripts of the interviews will be uploaded to the system, and three codes will be created based on the core concepts of SDT, which are relatedness, autonomy, and competence. This methodical approach, while time-consuming, will ensure that the qualitative data collection is aligned with the principles of SDT and allow for a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing the reluctance of Troop Volunteers.

For this research, I interviewed active Troop Scoutmasters and those who have recently succeeded within the previous 12 months of the position. For this study, the intent is to interview between 10 and 12 Scoutmasters meeting the abovementioned criteria. The number 10 was chosen as a minimum number of interviews to ensure that enough original data exists to draw valid comparisons between the data. The participant pool for this study is finite and consists of roughly 35 active or recently retired Scoutmasters. Each Scoutmaster in the participant pool will be identified using the organization's recharter log. This log displays all the organization's active Troop Scoutmasters and their respective contact information. In-person interviews were conducted one-on-one to gather the data. As the researcher, I facilitated the interviews and data gathering. Participant recruitment events will occur monthly during the

organization's leader meeting and will continue monthly until the target number of participants has been reached. The interviews were held at a separate location from the recruitment events, and the scheduling of each interview was determined based on the availability of each participant. A total of sixty minutes will be allotted for each interview. However, any interviews that exceed the 60-minute approximation will continue until the participant has answered each interview question. The information obtained through the interviews was transcribed by hand and then uploaded into the coding system known as Delve.

An in-person, one-on-one interview occurred between the researcher and the participant to collect the qualitative data for the study. The interview consisted of 14 questions, all centered on the core themes of SDT, autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Appendix C). Participants were asked to reflect on their own experiences from each question, and using active listening skills, follow-up questions were posed on a discretionary basis to seek clarity. The interview was audio recorded using the researcher's smart device. According to Fox (2006), an audio recording of an interview allows the interviewer to focus on what is being said and respond appropriately. In addition, participants will be asked to present how they maintain a healthy balance between their work and personal life and how an absence of such a balance has affected their intrinsic motivation to continue serving as Scoutmasters in the past.

### **Strategy for Data Analysis**

The data analysis for the study consisted of a thematic analysis derived from the data gathered during the in-person interviews. An inductive coding method using Delve

was used to organize and highlight specific themes in the data. Using an inductive coding method with a CAQDAS like Delve increases the study's trustworthiness (O'Kane et al., 2021). An inductive coding method allows the data to "speak for itself" (Saldaña, 2021). Once themes are developed, a hierarchical coding frame served as the framework to organize them. Hierarchical framing allows the researcher to organize codes based on organizational structure, supports a larger code frame, and allows for coding at various levels of granularity (Medelyan, 2019). This section will further present the comprehensive plan to conduct a thematic analysis of qualitative data. It will highlight how the study will utilize Delve to perform electronic inductive coding with a hierarchical coding frame. By performing the abovementioned data analysis and delving into the narratives within interview data, the intent is to find and analyze different themes buried in interview data and investigate and find similarities and differences in the participant's individual narratives.

### **Methods of Analysis**

Once the data was collected through semi-structured interviews, transcripts were uploaded to the Delve software. Once uploaded, the transcript underwent electronic coding for a nuanced interpretation of the interview data. Electronic coding is preferred when independent research studies require multiple participant interviews or extensive note-taking because it stores, organizes, manages, and reconfigures the data to enable human analytic reflection (Saldaña, 2021). This hands-on method ensures that the researcher is actively engaged in the coding process, capturing the depth and complexity of the narratives. Themes within the Delve software will be developed inductively; that

is, they will be created after conducting the interviews, uploading the transcripts in Delve, and conducting an initial review of data samples. Themes were created inductively to safeguard against potential cognitive bias. Once developed, a hierarchical coding frame will organize the different themes.

### **Steps for Analysis**

Data analysis for this study will be completed in three steps: transcription/familiarization, coding process, and theme identification. The first step in the data analysis is transcription. Transcription is essential for qualitative research because it converts qualitative data and information into textual form (McLellan et al., 2003). To facilitate analysis, interviews were manually transcribed into a Microsoft Word document using the “dictate” function, converted to a PDF to preserve formatting, and uploaded into the Delve system as a text-based dataset. Data familiarization will also take place in the first step. Transcribing the data, reading and re-reading the data, and noting down the initial ideas are all part of data familiarization (Chawla et al., 2021). Total immersion into the interview data must occur before any themes or conclusions are created. That is, I will familiarize myself with each interview individually and then as a whole to comprehend the data's substance, context, and subtleties. Once interview data has been uploaded to Delve, an extensive familiarity with the data has been achieved, and the preset codes are created. The second step in the data analysis process is coding the information. For this step, Delve will manually apply codes based on the transcribed interviews. Although more time-consuming, this process's iterative nature enables continuous improvement and investigation of new patterns. Once the information has

been coded, the final step is identifying overarching themes within SDT's three core themes: autonomy, relatedness, and competence. This step will be done electronically using Delve. Although Delve electronically analyses the themes, the researcher must manually extract key pieces and data and assign a code to them (Saldaña, 2021). These findings will be combined and applied in the study's deliverable; a summary report provided to SOSS leadership. The report in the deliverable will describe the organizational issue, data-driven findings, and conclusions drawn from the data.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

Establishing credibility is critical to qualitative research, ensuring that findings are trustworthy, accurate, and valid. Researchers employ various strategies to enhance credibility, building a solid foundation for the study (Amin et al., 2020). Some key strategies include member checks, saturation, and peer review.

#### ***Member Checks***

Member checking involves the validation of findings with the participants themselves (Amin et al., 2020). In this study, informal member checking will take place to increase the credibility of the results. Immediately following the interview, the participant's responses will be read back to them to ensure accuracy. In doing so, participants can recall additional points, correct errors, and provide context (Amin et al., 2020). This iterative process ensures that the participants' viewpoints align with the researcher's interpretations, enhancing the study's credibility. Member checking also

empowers participants, allowing them to contribute to the research process and validate the accuracy of the results.

### ***Saturation***

Saturation, commonly called thematic saturation, is achieved when new data ceases to provide additional insights or alter emerging patterns (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). When saturation is achieved, the researcher has thoroughly explored the phenomenon under investigation, reducing the likelihood of overlooking important aspects. Saturation contributes to the robustness and reliability of the study's findings. To achieve data saturation in this study, 10-12 interviews will be conducted, equally nearly one-third of the available participant pool. In addition, three interview questions have been developed for each core SDT theme: autonomy, relatedness, and competence to maximize the opportunity to view the phenomenon holistically and substantively.

### ***Peer Review***

Peer review is a widely recognized strategy for ensuring the quality and credibility of research. Peer review is separate from peer debriefing, which involves a disinterested peer reviewing the study; peer review involves having external experts evaluate the research design, methods, analysis, and conclusions, adding a layer of scrutiny (Amin et al., 2020). The peer review aims to provide valuable feedback to the researcher and help identify potential flaws or biases, ensuring that the research meets high academic standards. In this study, peer review is built into the structure of the capstone process, with frequent reviews and feedback from the doctoral committee chair



and second committee member. This external validation enhances the study's credibility within the broader academic community.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is a crucial aspect of qualitative research that focuses on how findings can be applied or generalized to other settings or contexts (Makel et al., 2022). Establishing transferability in your results ensures that your results can apply to a different or more extensive audience. In the case of the study, establishing transferability would allow the results to be applied to other non-profit or scouting organizations. Two key strategies for promoting transferability in qualitative research that will be used in this study are thick description and variation in participant selection.

### ***Thick Description***

Thick description is a methodological approach that provides rich, detailed, and contextually nuanced descriptions of the research setting, participants, and the phenomena under investigation (Amin et al., 2020). Thick description emphasizes the importance of capturing the intricacies of social and cultural contexts. The key to thick description is going beyond surface-level observations, delving into the meanings and cultural nuances that may influence the interpretation of findings.

Incorporating thick descriptions in qualitative research enhances transferability by allowing the reader to understand the intricacies of the studied phenomenon and the specific context in which it occurred (Chowdhury & Shil, 2021). Utilizing this approach in the study will facilitate a deeper understanding of the factors that may influence Scoutmaster recruitment efforts and the overall transferability of the study's results.

Additionally, this approach will support a more informed application of the findings in different settings.

### ***Variation in Participant Selection***

Variation in participant selection is another critical strategy for promoting transferability in qualitative research. Instead of relying on a homogenous sample, researchers intentionally select participants representing diverse perspectives, experiences, or contexts related to the research question (Levitt, 2021). This variation enhances the likelihood that the study's findings will have relevance and applicability across different situations.

By purposefully including participants with diverse characteristics or from different settings, researchers acknowledge and account for potential contextual variations (Levitt, 2021). In this study, the participant pool is homogenous concerning their character because of the unique aspects of being a Troop Scoutmaster. For example, it is expected that many participants will enjoy working with youth and being outdoors. The participant pool is also anticipated to be not racially or sexually diverse. According to Harkins (2021), a recent BSA National Executive Board survey found that 85% of Scout Leaders are white and 70.3% are male. This variable, unfortunately, negatively impacts the transferability of the study to other non-profit organizations that are more racially and sexually diverse. Because each Troop is intrinsically different in size, demographics, and camping experiences, the participant pool will have diverse experiences. This diversity in participant selection will help to uncover a range of perspectives and experiences, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the

phenomenon. Consequently, the findings will undoubtedly be transferable nationally to a broader range of scouting organizations.

### **Dependability**

Dependability in qualitative research refers to the consistency and stability of the study's findings over time and across different researchers or research settings (Korstjens & Moser, n.d.). A common strategy for promoting dependability is the use of audit trails.

### ***Audit Trails***

Audit trails involve the documentation and transparent recording of the research process, from the initial design through data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Carcary, 2020). This thorough documentation leaves a trail that allows other researchers or interested parties to follow the decision-making process and evaluate the study's dependability. Examples of audit trails include taking detailed notes on the chosen research design, data collection methods, coding procedures, and decisions made during the research process. In this case, an audit trail will be developed using audio-recorded interviews and Delve, a CAQDAS that will electronically store, organize, and restructure developed themes for analysis.

Maintaining a clear and thorough audit trail enhances dependability by providing a roadmap for understanding the study's context (Carcary, 2020). The steps that will be taken to promote transparency within the study will allow different researchers to scrutinize the results and replicate the research.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability in qualitative research refers to the objectivity and neutrality of the study's findings, ensuring that the data is void of any biases and preconceptions from the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, n.d.). Establishing confirmability is critical for preserving the integrity of qualitative research and providing a solid foundation for the credibility of the findings. One key strategy to promote confirmability is reflexivity.

***Reflexivity***

Reflexivity involves the researcher critically examining their role, biases, and influence on the research process (Amin et al., 2020). More importantly, reflexivity recognizes that researchers' perspectives, experiences, and values influence the study and its interpretation. Researchers can minimize biases in data collection and analysis by actively reflecting on their positionality and biases therein boosting the study's confirmability (Nyirenda et al., 2020). Being transparent about the researcher's background, experiences, and biases is crucial to reflexivity and allows the reader to evaluate the researcher's impact on the study's results. Other aspects of reflexivity include self-awareness throughout research (Nyirenda et al., 2020). Researchers should constantly evaluate their feelings, reactions, and assumptions while working with participants and analyzing data. Lastly, self-awareness helps researchers spot and address biases, minimizing their impact on the study's results.

**Ethical Procedures**

Qualitative research, mainly interviews, can shed light on complex phenomena, but researchers must consider ethical concerns. These concerns must be addressed to

ensure research integrity and trustworthiness. Prior to conducting any research, approval was given from SOSS leadership to provide access to the participant pool and to be given a platform at the monthly leadership meeting to present the project and solicit participation from Troop Scoutmasters. However, approval must first be obtained from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before any interviews are conducted. An application will be submitted through Walden University's Office of Research Ethics to solicit approval. This section will present ways to overcome ethical issues in qualitative research interviews, including gaining informed consent, ensuring participant confidentiality and privacy, maintaining respect for participants, using ethical data collection and analysis practices, and using findings responsibly.

Informed consent underpins ethical research. Researchers must inform participants of the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits before participating (Nnebue, 2010). A consent form in this study has been created and will address this by providing critical information in plain language. Before the interview transpires, a signed consent form will be required. Participants will be allowed to ask questions and seek clarification in an open dialogue before signing the consent form. To ensure voluntariness, participants will be advised of their ability to leave the study at any time without penalty (Nnebue, 2010).

Another ethical concern taken into consideration during the study is ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of each participant. The participant pool for this study is comprised of SOSS volunteers. Participants may share sensitive information during interviews, so extreme care will be taken to preserve the confidentiality of each

participant's identity and data. Data will be kept secure using codes instead of names, and interviewee responses will be password-protected. As Walden University requires, data will be kept for five years before destruction.

Respecting participants is critical in qualitative research and is yet another ethical consideration that must be considered. Recognizing the power dynamics inherent in the researcher-participant relationship, researchers must strive to establish a collaborative and equitable partnership (Oyinloye, 2022). This ethical concern will be easily overcome in this study because I do not hold a supervisory position with SOSS and will have little to no familiarity with the study's participants. This dynamic also eliminates any ethical concerns related to recruitment efforts, and any extrinsic pressure to participate that is common with supervisor/subordinate relationships.

The final two ethical considerations in the study are ensuring that the data collection and analysis efforts remain ethical, and the findings are used responsibly. As the researcher, it is vital that any preconceptions are put aside, and active listening skills are used to ensure that the data is accurately portrayed. Additionally, it is critical to ensure that findings are collected and reported accurately and transparently. Thus, great care will be taken in this study to mitigate any misinterpretation of the data based on bias.

### **Summary**

Section 3 included information about the practice-focused research question, design, researcher, and client organization roles. In addition to data analysis strategies, Section 3 also included information about research ethics and trustworthiness issues. Basic qualitative methods were used to answer the research question. I investigated

current obstacles and why fewer troop volunteers are becoming scoutmasters. I interviewed 10 to 12 current or former troop scoutmasters who resigned within a year to reduce cognitive bias.

Personal experiences with scouting necessitate cognitive bias safeguards. My limited participant and district operations knowledge involves reducing cognitive bias. I supervise no study participants as troop chaplain and religious emblems coordinator, eliminating external influences and conflicts of interest. I excluded scoutmasters with whom I had personal or professional ties to reduce bias.

This qualitative study involved using in-person interviews. Qualitative interviews with open-ended questions and nuanced responses are best for studying complex community issues like scouting troop dynamics. Responses were used to contextualize and deepen study results.

I created three initial codes: relatedness, autonomy, and competence. I collected qualitative data according to SDT principles in order to analyze troop volunteer reluctance factors. I thematically analyzed in-person interviews. Delve was used to perform inductive coding using a hierarchical coding frame.

Section 3 included information about trustworthiness and ways to improve the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Member checking, audit trails, and reflexivity ensured that results were valid, transferable, replicable, and confirmable.

Before conducting research, SOSS leadership approved access to the participant pool as well as a platform during the monthly leadership meeting to present the project

and solicit troop scoutmaster participation. The Walden University IRB approved interviews before they were conducted. Ethical considerations in this study include informed consent, participant confidentiality, privacy, respect for participants, ethical data collection and analysis, and responsible use of findings.

Section 4 contains an in-depth study analysis, including data collection procedures and a detailed analysis of original data. Section 4 also contains a report of findings and recommendations that resulted from data analysis and evidence synthesis.



## Section 4: Results and Recommendations

I sought to address issues within SOSS regarding troop volunteers' reluctance to become troop scoutmasters. Analyzing these qualities will assist district leadership in making judgments regarding necessary reforms to foster an organizational culture that will support troop scoutmaster recruitment efforts. Volunteer managers must build a feeling of community and actively involve volunteers, as volunteering is essential to any NPO (Arnon et al., 2022). In this study, I used the following research question:

RQ: What factors do current and former troop scoutmasters believe exist that may lead to the unwillingness of other troop volunteers to become scoutmasters?

Following conclusions of the study, SOSS's senior leadership will receive a summary report on study conclusions. Based on study findings, volunteer managers and board members will engage in a presentation of findings.

In Section 4, I provide a comprehensive analysis of data and highlight data collection procedures. Findings, strengths and limitations of the study, and analysis of the data and synthesis of evidence are also addressed in Section 4.

### **Data Collection**

Ten current and former scoutmasters participated in face-to-face interviews with me. They answered 14 questions. With the SDT serving as the study's conceptual framework, I addressed autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Four general volunteerism questions were added to conduct a more comprehensive investigation of the phenomenon. Participants in the study were at least 21 years old (the minimum age to hold the position of scoutmaster), and associated with SOSS as current or former

scoutmasters who voluntarily stepped down from their roles within the previous year. To protect participants' confidentiality, no additional demographic information was obtained. Each interview was conducted in unique locations selected by participants and me that provided isolation while also restricting extraneous noise so that interview questions and audio recordings could be heard clearly. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and audio-recorded on my smart device between January 18 and February 21, 2024. Following interviews, participant audio recordings were transcribed uploaded to Delve for thematic analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Coding Process**

Delve was used to inductively code transcripts for thematic analysis, revealing broader patterns, topics, and categories. After being uploaded into Delve, each transcript was inspected to ensure familiarity. During this step, I cross-referenced interview recordings and transcripts to check data accuracy before reviewing complete transcripts to acquire comprehensive information about datasets. This method was repeated for each of the 10 interview transcripts. Open coding occurred when data importing and familiarization were complete. Using open coding, I created initial codes that captured the essence of the dataset. In the study, each response was coded with matching question numbers and labeled to determine autonomy, competence, relatedness, or general volunteering. Following open coding, each question was individually examined and grouped into preliminary categories based on response similarities (i.e., positive vs. negative factors) using code sorting. During this step, hierarchical coding was used to

connect relationships between various codes. The third phase was thematic coding, which involved clustering distinct nodes and overarching themes to reveal commonalities and develop a deeper understanding of data. Because of the subject matter's intricacy and in order to guarantee that original data were thoroughly analyzed, thematic analysis was undertaken for each interview question, followed by analysis of complete interviews.

### **Interview Question Findings**

#### ***Question 1***

Nine of the 10 participants reported having children in troops when they became scoutmasters. Seven of those participants said this variable played a substantial role in their decision to become troop scoutmasters. SM 03 stated, "The father part of me wanted to share their Scouting experience with them, so I became Scoutmaster." SM 06 stated that their son's involvement in the Troop was "the sole reason they agreed to become the Scoutmaster."

#### ***Question 2***

All participants reported experiencing a strong sense of autonomy as scoutmasters, including the ability to manage their troops as they saw fit. Only five reported this autonomy increased their drive and willingness to stay as troop scoutmasters. The other five participants stated their level of autonomy had little impact on their motivation, instead citing altruistic origins. Participants stated autonomy from SOSS is a personal expectation in their roles as scoutmasters, so they did not draw motivation from something that was already expected of them.

***Question 3***

Five participants could recollect moments in which they thought they lacked autonomy while serving as scoutmasters. No clear patterns or themes emerged among these participants. Two participants expressed their discontent with SOSS' emphasis on annual popcorn sales and described their approach to directing troops to sell popcorn as forceful and overwhelming. Three participants cited disagreements regarding how to address situations between themselves and other entities: two with the chartered organization and one with the council. Two participants who reported having poor experiences said these events affected their motivation to continue as troop scoutmasters.

***Question 4***

Eight participants said they believed SOSS either supported their needs for autonomous relationships with district leadership or neither supported nor undermined it. Four of these participants said this perception boosted their motivation, while the other four participants said it did not affect their motivation to serve as scoutmasters. SM 02 stated, "It all comes down to the commissioner; my commissioner is very present and acts as a consultant and conduit for me, always connecting me with various resources." SM 01 reported no impact on their motivation and stated being a scoutmaster is a balancing act; any motivation they may derive from that relationship is offset by the risk of personal liability as the person ultimately responsible for the program and troops.

***Question 5***

The responses to Question 5 emerged as one of the most dominant themes in the data; of the ten people interviewed in the study, 100% reported having an experience as

Scoutmaster that significantly impacted their sense of competency and mastery in the role. Of the ten respondents who reported a noteworthy event, nine said it increased their motivation and readiness to continue as a Scoutmaster. A more in-depth examination of this phenomenon revealed that eight out of ten respondents directly linked their experience to the realization of youth growth and success inside the program. In one interview, a participant who reported having a good impact on their motivation when their youth succeed stated that he feels tremendously inspired to be the Scoutmaster when a youth attends Summer Camp and gains confidence in their capacity to thrive in the program. In another interview, the participant describes powerful times of inspiration to continue as Scoutmaster when he sees their youth participating in community outreach and learning new skills.

### *Question 6*

For this question, seven of the ten respondents interviewed in this study reported an instance in which they felt inadequate as Scoutmaster. Five of the seven respondents stated that they lacked competency when they first started and before completing position-specific training. Three of the five said this feeling made them less motivated to serve as Scoutmasters. The remaining two respondents who had a poor experience stated that their situation involved a youth-on-youth incident and that they were unprepared to handle it. In all situations involving youth-on-youth incidents, respondents stated that the experience had no bearing on their motivation to continue in the job of Scoutmaster. SM 10, who had a negative impact on their motivation after becoming a new Scoutmaster and feeling unprepared for the role noted, "I did not feel confident being a Scoutmaster, and

that had a bad effect on my motivation. I believed that unless I had been a Scout as a youth, I would be unable to be an effective Scoutmaster.”

### *Question 7*

For this question, nine of the ten respondents interviewed in this study stated that SOSS supported their need for competency and mastery in their role as Scoutmaster. Interestingly, six of the nine individuals who claimed that SOSS supports their desire for competence say that this perspective has no impact on their motivation to remain the Scoutmaster. The respondent's comments were notable for their operationalization of the term "support" and their impression of the "support" they received from SOSS. Four of the six respondents stated that they feel supported because courses such as IOLS, Wood Badge, and Online courses are available to them as Scoutmasters, but that SOSS does an inadequate job of encouraging or motivating their further education. In one interview, SM 08 stated, "They [SOSS] do not hold your hand; the training is out there if you want it, but it is up to you as the Scoutmaster to go find it." In another interview, SM 05 commented, "There is a lot of good training available online and in-person. There are many fantastic resources accessible; you just need to know how to find them and where to find them. If you do not know [how to locate the training], you will not know it exists because the district will not tell you.”

### *Question 8*

Seven of the ten study participants described a Scoutmaster experience that strongly impacted their sense of relatedness and connection to SOSS. Five of the seven respondents who cited a notable occurrence said it greatly motivated them to remain a

Scoutmaster. A deeper look at this phenomenon showed that a healthy relationship with one or more Commissioner Staff members and the recent Roundtable changes were the two variables most often mentioned by the seven people who reported a significant experience that impacted their motivation. "I feel that my relationship with my Commissioner and the person in those roles enables me to come to the district when I am struggling," said SM 03 whose motivation was boosted before adding, "It lets me be vulnerable when I do not have the answers and ask for help." In another interview, SM 01 said, "The Commissioner staff relationships I have built are the second biggest reason I want to continue serving as a Scoutmaster. Simply wanting to be involved and maintain those connections."

### *Question 9*

Eight of the ten study participants acknowledged feeling disconnected from SOSS at some point during their tenure as Scoutmaster. All eight respondents pointed to poor communication as the reason for their feeling of disconnection. Four of the eight said this made them less motivated to be Scoutmasters and made them avoid volunteer managers at SOSS. SM 04 said SOSS communication issues demotivated them by stating, "The district has had many District Executives (DE). This is the first time in over two years that the same DE has been in charge. Thus, the district does not know the Troop or Scoutmasters." In another interview, SM 07 said that when he has had questions for SOSS, leadership has been either unable or unwilling to help, leading to the Scoutmaster taking their Troop and "doing their own thing."

***Question 10***

For this question, seven of the ten respondents interviewed in this study stated that SOSS supported their need for relatedness and connectedness in their role as Scoutmaster, and four of those eight respondents reported that this perception significantly impacted their motivation to continue as Scoutmaster. More significantly, eight of the ten interviewed reported that SOSS's willingness and capacity to develop a culture of relatedness and connection had improved dramatically over the previous year. Each respondent ascribed the recent improvement to various reforms implemented by the current District Executive. Surprisingly, this attitude was shared by the two respondents who claimed that SOSS does not meet their desire for connectedness. In one interview, a SM 10 who described SOSS's efforts as supportive said, "It motivates me to be the Scoutmaster. When you feel part of something larger than your Troop, you believe you can have a greater impact on other scouts. This drives me to contribute more of myself as a Scoutmaster." SM 02 noted in their interview, "The fact that I have a good relationship with my Commissioner and the District encourages me to want to stay plugged in."

***Question 11***

Six of the ten people contacted for the study reported a change in their motivation to be a Scoutmaster over time; four had a negative shift, while the other two experienced a positive shift. Throughout the study, no clear patterns or themes developed among the six respondents who reported a shift in their motivation. Two participants expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of adult participation in their Troop. The two Scoutmasters who report a positive shift in motivation attribute it to the discovery of a broader purpose;



in one case, a call to serve at the district level, and in the other, a call to serve and oversee a BSA Girl Troop. SM 08 attributed their decreased motivation to the inclusion of girls in the Scouting program in 2019, the creation of the Citizenship in Society merit badge, and the sexual assault lawsuit, citing these events as the BSA's attempt to inject "politics" and "social justice" into a program meant to be "a place where boys can be boys." SM 07 who reported a shift in motivation cited the lifting of the ban on openly gay leaders in the BSA program as the key factor that caused the shift in motivation, adding that "he has a problem with BSA allowing gay leaders to be in Scouts."

### ***Question 12***

A study of participants' replies to Question 12 revealed a strong theme in the data. Nine of the ten persons interviewed for the study reported having an experience as a Scoutmaster where they felt a strong intrinsic motivation to continue serving. Of the nine respondents who reported a notable event, 100% of the events focused on one or more aspects of youth development and seeing Scouts in their Troop thrive in some way. In one interview, SM 10 expressed a strong sense of intrinsic motivation after witnessing a special needs scout thrive in the program after sensory adaptations were made as an accommodation, adding, "Through this situation, I became very motivated to remain the Scoutmaster and to keep helping our youth succeed." In another interview, SM 06 cited the inclusion of openly gay scouts in the BSA program as the source of his motivation, stating, "I felt that I needed to be there to help with the transition to ensure that these youth were protected and had a place to flourish in Scouts."

***Question 13***

An analysis of this question and the responses provided by each of the ten respondents revealed no noteworthy themes. Only four of the ten interviewed reported regretting or wanting to resign as Scoutmaster outside of typical succession planning. Three of the four respondents who reported this experience were former Scoutmasters, and they claimed that the situation that caused this feeling was the ultimate reason they decided to resign as Scoutmasters. In one example, the stressor was an outside influence from the respondent's spouse and pressure to resign as Scoutmaster. The other two respondents cited a toxic Troop culture within their Chartered Organization as the primary reason they stepped down as Scoutmaster. The only outlier, SM 04 who acknowledged wanting to step down but has not yet done so, cited declining health as the reason for their feelings, adding that they have tried to step down numerous times but "no one will take the job, because they do not want to get stuck in the role like I am."

***Question 14***

An examination of the responses to Question 14 revealed that, according to the ten current and former Scoutmasters interviewed in the study, fear is the most critical factor that they believe leads to many Troop Volunteers' reluctance to become Troop Scoutmasters; specifically, a fear of commitment and inadequacy. Nine out of the ten people interviewed for the study expressed fear. Five of the nine respondents expressed a worry of inadequacy in their response. A worry that as a Troop Volunteer, they lack the necessary skills and abilities to be an effective Scoutmaster and would never "measure up" to the existing Scoutmaster. The remaining four respondents stated that many Troop

Volunteers hesitate to become Scoutmasters due to a fear of commitment. Most people are put off by the personal time and energy commitment required of each Scoutmaster to manage an effective Troop. SM 06 said in their interview, "The fear of the unknown and the 'what-ifs' holds most people back." During another interview, SM 03 remarked, "Time is always a factor in unwillingness." People work hard; some even work two jobs, and scouting is not a one-hour-per-week pastime."

### **Major Themes and Trends**

Following a thematic analysis of the dataset, three significant themes emerged. The first theme discovered is the considerable impact that being a Scout's parent has on the Scoutmaster's decisions. The second recognized theme is autonomy's diverse impact on motivation as seen through altruism. The study's third theme is Scoutmasters' driving need for competency and mastery and the impact this has on their motivation. Within SDT, Drs. Deci and Ryan argue that intrinsic motivation is directly related to an organization's ability to meet a person's needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The findings of this study provide strong support for Drs. Deci and Ryan's assertion. Of the ten participants interviewed for the study, each reported an increase in motivation when their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness were met, and a decrease in motivation when their needs were unmet.

### ***Parental Influence on Scoutmasters***

Their child's presence in the Troop greatly influenced an individual's motivation and decision to become a Scoutmaster. This theme is endorsed by most participants, with seven of the nine having children in the Troop stating that this factor played an integral

role in their decision to become a Scoutmaster. The desire to share the scouting experience with their child surfaced as a strong reason, with one participant openly expressing that being a Scoutmaster was motivated by his fatherly desire to be part of his child's scouting adventure. Another person indicated unequivocally that he became a Scoutmaster because his child was in the Troop. This topic emphasizes the personal and familial incentives that drive individuals to take on the position and the close links between parenting and Scoutmaster engagement.

### ***Autonomy's Varied Impact on Relatedness and Motivation***

Autonomy as a Scoutmaster has a mixed influence on participant motivation. While all respondents reported feeling independent in their Scoutmaster duties, just half thought it improved their motivation to stay in their role. While some were driven by the freedom to decide the course of their Troops, others were motivated by altruistic roots and did not see autonomy as a critical component. This theme emphasizes the many sources of motivation among Scoutmasters, with autonomy influencing individuals differently based on their innate drivers and volunteer management expectations. Eight of the ten people interviewed for the study reported feeling alienated from SOSS due to excessive autonomy. This topic emphasizes the value of community and connectedness to the larger Scouting organization. Addressing this issue is vital to future Scoutmasters' motivation and volunteerism.

### ***Competency and Mastery Driving Motivation***

Arguably, the most significant theme found in the study is the correlation between a Scoutmaster's feeling of competency and mastery in their work and how that feeling

significantly contributed to their motivation to remain in the role. 100% of the participants reported encountering events that strengthened their sense of expertise and mastery, with these experiences directly correlating to higher motivation. The realization of youth progress and accomplishment inside the program became a frequent motivating factor. This theme emphasizes the importance of personal fulfillment and accomplishment in the role, highlighting how a Scoutmaster's belief in their efficacy influences their devotion to the position.

### **Findings**

Based on a thorough examination of the original data and the existing body of research and literature on volunteerism within SDT, numerous trends following a thematic analysis rose to prominence. From the results of the study, it can be concluded that the two most significant factors that Troop Scoutmasters face with SOSS that may lead to the reluctance of other Troop Volunteers from becoming Troop Scoutmasters is a lack of communication or connection with SOSS leadership and a large amount of personal responsibility undertaken by the Scoutmaster to run the Troop operationally; a responsibility that requires a significant devotion of their time and energy.

#### ***Lack of Communication or Connection***

Eight of the ten individuals interviewed for the study expressed feeling disconnected from SOSS because of poor communication and an excess of autonomy. Addressing this issue is critical to future Scoutmasters' drive and volunteerism. The key is to recognize the Commissioners' role in improving communication, thus fostering motivation. Frankly, improving this support system is essential. SOSS should assess and

improve the effectiveness of Commissioners to ensure they are valuable resources and motivators for Troop Scoutmasters. In addition, SOSS should make a deliberate effort to encourage and incentivize Troop Scoutmasters to attend and participate in the monthly Roundtable. According to the interviews, welcoming interactions with Commissioner Staff and participating in the monthly Roundtable significantly impact nurturing their need for relatedness. By utilizing both, SOSS can foster a culture of support and community among their most valued volunteer leader.

### ***Devotion of Personal Time and Energy***

Troop Scoutmasters under SOSS must take on a significant personal responsibility to manage the Troop operationally; this obligation necessitates a significant investment of personal time and energy. Fear of insufficient time or competence to handle such a job surfaced as a significant potential barrier to volunteers becoming Scoutmasters. The objective is to raise awareness about this phenomenon and take steps to implement initiatives to overcome this fear. SOSS may address these concerns through outreach, new Scoutmaster mentorship programs, and establishing clear communication standards with new Scoutmasters, Commissioners, and District leadership. In short, establishing a supportive community that understands and resolves these concerns is crucial to volunteer recruitment. Understanding and tackling these theme areas will aid Scoutmaster recruiting and retention efforts and motivation within SOSS, resulting in a solid and motivated leadership team within the scouting community.

## **Deliverables and Recommendations**

### **Recommendation for Change**

According to the study's findings, the two most significant potential factors contributing to Troop Volunteers' reluctance to become Troop Scoutmasters are a lack of communication or connection with SOSS and a fear of inadequacy stemming from the personal responsibility that Troop Scoutmasters are required to take on when they assume the role. To specifically address these factors, SOSS must enact a series of reforms aimed at meeting Troop Volunteers' need for community and connection, as well as creating a support structure for Troop Scoutmasters designed to address and support the fear of inadequacy in accepting the personal responsibility that comes with the Troop Scoutmaster position.

One type of reformation may be for SOSS to examine and improve the effectiveness of Commissioners so that they are valuable resources and motivators for Troop Scoutmasters. One approach for Commissioners to accomplish this is to require them to camp with each Troop under their supervision at least once every calendar year. These campouts would be in addition to the required monthly Troop visits between Commissioners and Troop Scoutmasters. The main goal of their attendance at the campout is to form scouting ties with Troop Volunteers, which can only be accomplished around a campfire or on a hike. Another option for SOSS to strengthen ties with Troop Volunteers is to make a concerted effort to encourage and incentivize Troop Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters to attend and participate in the monthly Roundtable. One of the various methods SOSS could incentivize attendance is to have

door raffles, in which attendees are given a raffle ticket as they sign in. Then, at the end of the meeting, around 3-5 lottery tickets are drawn, and prizes are awarded. Potential prizes include limited edition patches, small camping items, or a Scout Shop gift card. This also encourages attendees to attend the entire meeting rather than just part of it.

To address the fear of inadequacy many of the study's participants expressed in their interviews, SOSS can implement targeted outreach to Troops, new Scoutmaster mentorship programs, and clear communication standards between new Scoutmasters, Commissioners, and District leadership. One approach District Leadership might use to improve their rapport with the Troops is to organize a "breakout" group at the Roundtable for first-time attendees. The meeting would be structured as a regular meet and greet, with attendees having the opportunity to talk with SOSS Executive Leadership (District Key 3), ask questions in a group forum, and begin to create long-term ties with SOSS leadership. Another option for SOSS to address a Troop Scoutmaster's worry of inadequacy in their role is to establish a new Scoutmaster mentorship program in which new Scoutmasters are partnered with Scoutmaster mentors. These mentors would include current Troop Scoutmasters who have successfully led a Troop for at least two years and former Scoutmasters from successful Troops who want to give back on a broader scale. SOSS may promote participation in the mentorship program as a mentor by waiving the mentor's annual registration fees and providing district recognition for effective mentor service for at least three years.



**Deliverable**

Following the study's completion, the SOSS Leadership Team received an Executive Summary Report detailing the findings (Appendix C). The report addressed the study's aim, methodological approaches, conclusions, and recommendations. The Executive Summary Report, created based on the study's findings, is a compilation of relevant facts about the research project presented in a way SOSS Leadership can read and understand. To ensure accuracy and maintain alignment between the PAS and the deliverable, the information found within the Executive Summary Report was extrapolated directly from the Professional Administrative Study's purpose section (Section 1), methodology section (Section 3), and findings/recommendations section (Section 4).

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The study's findings open several opportunities for further research in the scouting community. This study aimed to discover why Troop Volunteers were hesitant to become Troop Scoutmasters. However, two other leadership positions have shown to be critical in the scouting program: Cubmaster and Commissioner. The potential importance of studying volunteers within such roles and the consequences of additional research on these positions in igniting future societal change is immeasurable. The Cubmaster is the Scoutmaster equivalent in the Cub Scouting program, which serves youth aged 5 to 10. The Cub Scout program, which is roughly double the size of its Scouts BSA equivalent, serves as the focal point for most youth recruiting across the country, and recruiting and retaining competent and confident Cubmasters results in healthy Cub Scout Troops,

which leads to more youth participating in the Scouts BSA program. Approximately 50% of youth leave scouting after fifth grade and do not join a Scouts BSA Troop. This phenomenon is another topic for further inquiry. As previously stated, the Commissioner is the principal point of contact for Scouting Troops within the district and may be a great resource and motivation for scout volunteers. Having a qualified and motivated Commissioner in their capacity has far-reaching implications for every scouting organization that the Commissioner serves. As a result, studying volunteerism as a Commissioner will benefit both SOSS and the broader scouting community.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

Establishing credibility is essential for qualitative research since it ensures reliable, accurate, and legitimate findings. Researchers use a variety of tactics to increase credibility and provide a solid foundation for the study (Amin et al., 2020). Member checks, saturation, and peer review were implemented to strengthen the trustworthiness of this study's findings. Following the interview, informal member checking was conducted, during which the participants' responses were read back to them to confirm accuracy. Ten interviews were performed to reach data saturation in this study, representing almost one-third of the overall participant pool. Fourteen interview questions were developed to cover each fundamental SDT theme: autonomy, relatedness, and competence, maximizing the potential to assess the phenomena holistically and substantively. The chair and second researcher's doctoral committee member did an

external peer review. This review was accompanied by substantive feedback to increase the study's credibility in the larger academic community.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is an essential feature of qualitative research that examines how findings can be used or generalized to different settings or situations (Makel et al., 2022). Establishing transferability in research assures that the results can be applied to a different or larger audience. In this study, demonstrating transferability would enable the findings to be used by other non-profit or scouting groups. This study used two tactics to increase its transferability: thick description and variety in participant selection. Thick description focuses on expressing the complexities of social and cultural situations. To that purpose, each interview question asked the participant to recount an instance in which they felt an abundance or shortage of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. As a result, the social and contextual intricacies came to life, allowed me to consider the various contextual nuances during data analysis and evaluation. The ten individuals contacted for the study sufficiently represented a wide demographic of Scouting Troops in terms of Scoutmaster experience, age, median family income, and troop geographic location. Both male and female Scoutmasters were questioned, as were current and previous Scoutmasters. In doing so, I was able to gather various participants' experiences and issues.

### **Dependability**

Dependability in qualitative research is the consistency and stability of the study's findings throughout time and among different researchers or research settings (Korstjens

& Moser, n.d.). Audit trails were employed in this study to improve the reliability of the results. The audit trail was created using Delve, a CAQDAS that electronically saved, grouped, and reconstructed the study's identified themes. Each interview was audio-recorded using my smartphone before being transcribed into the interview sheet for analysis. Taking these measures increased transparency in the study, allowing different researchers to analyze the results and duplicate the research.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability in qualitative research refers to the study's objective and neutral findings, ensuring that the data is devoid of the researcher's prejudices and preconceptions (Korstjens & Moser, n.d.). In this study, reflexivity was a significant method for increasing confirmability. Reflexivity requires the researcher to critically examine their involvement, biases, and influence on the research process (Amin et al., 2020). Several safeguards were established during the study to ensure that cognitive bias did not interfere with the research process. The research focused on volunteerism in the Scoutmaster position, a role I have never held. Additionally, any current or former Scoutmasters with whom I have a personal relationship were eliminated from the participant pool. As a result, one Scoutmaster was removed from the participant pool.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

One notable strength of the study is its applicability, as it addresses an integral part of the BSA Scouting Community while investigating an issue many non-profit organizations face: volunteer recruitment. The research project used a qualitative method, using semi-structured interviews, to highlight the multifaceted character of Scoutmaster

motivation and its impact on volunteers. The study's emphasis on qualitative methodologies was particularly advantageous because it allowed for a detailed examination of the Scoutmaster's motivation, providing valuable insights into the various elements impacting their commitment and dedication to the role. Furthermore, the participant list contains a broad sample of Scoutmasters from various troop settings and geographic regions, which improves the study's external validity. Another notable strength of the study is the conceptual framework's alignment with the study's research question and its ability to thoroughly investigate the various aspects of SDT on volunteerism within the client organization. That is, the study's findings complemented the fundamental tenets of SDT: autonomy, competence, and relatedness well.

One noteworthy limitation in this study is the possibility of subjectivity and bias in the participants' responses. Participants were asked to express their opinions and perceptions; therefore, it is possible that the participants supplied socially desirable responses to the questions or failed to articulate their motivations accurately. Unfortunately, this could limit the findings' transferability, making applying them to a larger group of Scoutmasters more difficult. However, this issue can be addressed using triangulation approaches, such as cross-referencing interview replies with other data sources, such as official records or participant observations, to supplement interview results.

The results of the study are limited by its cross-sectional design. Interviewees were asked to provide their thoughts on the variables that supported or undermined their motivation to stay in the role. Although the interview questions were designed to allow

for responses that covered a wide range of periods, each participant was asked to respond to each question during a single interview. In doing so, the research design limited my ability to establish causal relationships across a more extended period. Taking a longitudinal approach and observing Scoutmasters across an extended period to capture the dynamic nature of their motivation would overcome this limitation.

### **Summary**

Section 4 included information about data collection methods and actions I took to capture and transcribe raw data in preparation for thematic analysis. Section 4 includes a summary of primary themes and trends during thematic analysis, followed by an assessment of findings, recommendations, and suggestions for future research. Section 4 also included explanations about implementation procedures during the data-gathering process to improve credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of results, ensuring trustworthiness of research. The section concluded with a description of the study's recognized strengths, weaknesses, and limitations, as well as recommendations for overcoming them.

Section 5 includes plans for disseminating this work to the leaders of SOSS, how outcomes will apply to a broader audience, and potential impacts for positive social change.

## Section 5: Dissemination Plan and Conclusion

### **Dissemination Plan and Conclusion**

Delve in conjunction with audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were critical in generating original data that were required to undertake thematic analysis in accordance with the study's research methodology. Collected data were derived from interview transcripts from 10 current and previous troop scoutmasters who consented to participate in the study as interviewees. Information acquired from interviews was used to conduct thematic analysis, with the goal of highlighting important themes and trends in data. This resulted in an executive summary report (see Appendix C). I found troop scoutmasters faced challenges involving SOSS due to lack of communication and fear of personal responsibility, impacting their motivation. These causes, among others, have contributed to troop volunteers' reluctance to become troop scoutmasters. This work will be shared with other academic researchers after it is published on ProQuest. Study findings will be presented to the SOSS executive leadership team in the form of a summary report. At the request of SOSS leadership, results will also be presented to a team of commissioners at SOSS in the form of small group discussions. To ensure long-term viability of this research, the SOSS leadership team and volunteer managers within the organization will be responsible for communicating with future volunteer managers and stakeholders about benefits of cultivating a culture of strong relationships and inclusivity in order to promote future volunteering. The time and date of presentation and discussion of the executive summary report (see Appendix C) with SOSS leadership will be scheduled after the study is published based on availability of the three members of

the executive leadership team at a time that is convenient for all parties. Small group discussions about study results with volunteer managers will take place at the first available SOSS committee meeting that is held monthly following the report's release.

Study findings have far-reaching consequences, with the potential to serve as a catalyst for future social change. In terms of other scouting organizations, due to standardization of the troop scoutmaster role from a national perspective, study findings can be applicable to any scouting organization nationally and used to change current volunteer recruiting and retention strategies. In doing so, these organizations, in addition to SOSS, can act as change agents in their communities to promote positive social change. In general, volunteer recruitment and retention are top priorities for almost every youth-serving and NPO. Because of the topic's universality, findings of this study are broadly applicable to volunteer recruiting and retention systems and processes. By improving volunteer recruitment and retention efforts in these groups, they can also function as catalysts for constructive social change.

### **Summary**

This research provided insights regarding complex dynamics that motivate people to devote time and effort to training and mentoring young scouts. A thorough thematic analysis of interview responses combined with a review of existing literature on volunteerism in scouting and other youth-serving organizations revealed intrinsic factors such as genuine passion for youth development, sense of personal fulfillment, and commitment to community were critical in terms of maintaining volunteer motivation. Furthermore, the study stressed the importance of having supportive organizational



structures in order to help troop scoutmasters stay motivated. Findings highlight the importance of creating positive and inclusive environments within scouting groups where volunteers feel valued and connected to a cause that is larger than themselves. As scouting organizations continue to rely on troop scoutmasters' dedication, understanding and addressing motivational variables that were identified in this study is critical for long-term sustainability and success. Finally, this research can help scouting leaders improve volunteer engagement techniques, assuring the scouting movement's continuous development and influence. It demonstrates that by recognizing and developing troop scoutmasters' natural motivations, scouting organizations can cultivate resilient and enthusiastic groups of volunteers who contribute considerably to the development and character building of the next generation of scouts.

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## Appendix A: Interview Recruitment Flyer

**INTERVIEW STUDY****SEEKING:****CURRENT TROOP SCOUTMASTERS****OR****FORMER TROOP SCOUTMASTERS THAT  
STEPPED DOWN IN THE PAST 12  
MONTHS?**

As a lifelong Scout and Scouter, I have spent a considerable amount of time in a Scouting Uniform; either enjoying the program as a youth or trying to leave the program better than how I found it. I am seeking 10-12 current or recently succeeded Troop Scoutmasters to interview for approximately 60 minutes. During the interviews, participants will be asked to reflect on their experiences as a Scoutmaster. The results of the study will help Timucua District better understand what obstacles and barriers Scoutmasters often encounter in their role to provide additional support. These interviews are part of the doctoral study for Robert Hoogerhyde, a DPA student at Walden University. Interviews will take place individually and will be scheduled based on the participant's availability.

**Prepared. For Life.®****ABOUT THE STUDY:**

—————  
**ONE INDIVIDUAL  
 FACE TO FACE  
 INTERVIEW**

—————  
**REQUESTING 1  
 HOUR OF YOUR TIME**

—————  
**INTERVIEW WILL BE  
 AUDIO-RECORDED  
 (NO VIDEO  
 RECORDINGS)**

—————  
**PARTICIPATION AND  
 RESPONSES ARE  
 CONFIDENTIAL TO  
 BOTH THE BSA AND  
 IN THE PUBLISHED  
 STUDY**

**TO CONFIDENTIALLY  
 VOLUNTEER  
 PLEASE CONTACT:**

Robert "Mike" Hoogerhyde

—————  
 —————



## Appendix B: Interview Questions

**Scoutmaster Interview Questions**

Interviewee Code: SM \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Questions:**Current Scoutmaster:  Former Scoutmaster:  When did you step down? \_Age Range: 21-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  61+ Tenure: 1-3 yrs  4-6 yrs  7-9 yrs  10+ Are you a parent to one of the Scouts in your Troop? Yes  No 

1. How did this variable impact your motivation and ultimate decision to become a Scoutmaster?

**Autonomy:**

2. Can you describe a specific instance where you felt a sense of autonomy and choice in your role as a Scoutmaster?
  - a. How did this autonomy impact your motivation within your role?
3. Can you recall a situation where you felt a lack of autonomy in your leadership role?
  - a. Did this situation deter you from wanting to remain a Scoutmaster? Why?
4. In your opinion, how well does the district and/or council support your need for autonomy as a Scoutmaster?
  - a. How has this perception positively or negatively impacted your motivation or willingness to continue to serve as a Troop Scoutmaster?

**Competence:**

5. Can you describe a specific instance where you felt a sense of competency and mastery in your role as a Scoutmaster?
  - a. How does this competence contribute to your motivation to continue in this position?
6. Can you recall a situation where you felt a lack of competency in your leadership role?
  - a. Did this situation deter you from wanting to remain a Scoutmaster? Why?

7. Reflecting on your role as a Scoutmaster, how well does the district and/or council support your need for competence and mastery as a Scoutmaster? Can you provide specific examples?
  - a. How does this perception impact your motivation and willingness to remain a Scoutmaster?

**Relatedness:**

8. Reflecting on your time as a Scoutmaster, can you share examples of how the district has fostered a sense of relatedness and connection amongst themselves and you?
  - a. How has this impacted your motivation and willingness to remain a Scoutmaster?
9. Can you recall a time, where the district has failed to foster a sense of relatedness and connection?
  - a. How has this impacted your motivation and willingness to remain a Scoutmaster?
10. In your opinion, how does the district and/or council support your need for relatedness and connectedness as a Scoutmaster? Can you provide specific examples?
  - a. How does this perception impact your motivation and willingness to remain a Scoutmaster?

**General Volunteerism Questions:**

11. Have you experienced a shift in your motivation for serving as a Scoutmaster over time? If so, what factors influenced this change?
12. Can you describe a situation where you felt a strong sense of intrinsic motivation to continue to volunteer in your role as a Scoutmaster? What factors contributed to this feeling?
13. Have you ever regretted becoming a Scoutmaster or wanted to step-down in your role (outside of normal succession planning)?
  - a. If so, please explain the situation that led to this feeling. Why did you ultimately stay?
  - b. For Former Scoutmasters, did this incident ultimately lead to you stepping down from your position. Please explain.
14. In your opinion, what factors do you believe exist that may lead to other volunteers' unwillingness to be a Troop Scoutmaster?

## Appendix C: Executive Summary Report

### Executive Summary Report for Scoutmaster Study

#### **Purpose -**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors within the organization contributing to the reluctance of many Troop volunteers to become Scoutmasters. The study aimed to support District Leadership in making decisions for organizational culture reformation to enhance Troop Scoutmaster recruitment efforts. Volunteering is essential for non-profit organizations, and fostering a sense of community is crucial for active volunteer engagement. The research question (RQ1) for the study focused on understanding factors leading to the unwillingness of Troop volunteers to become Scoutmasters. To answer the research question, in-person interviews were used as the primary data source for this qualitative study, which investigated why many Troop volunteers are hesitant to serve as Troop Scoutmasters. The qualitative interviews used open-ended questions to allow for a myriad of nuanced responses and were chosen because of their suitability for investigating complex community concerns such as scouting group dynamics.

#### **Major Themes -**

Following thematic analysis, three significant themes emerged:

1. **Parental Influence on Scoutmasters:** The presence of a child in the troop significantly influenced motivation to become a Scoutmaster, highlighting personal and familial incentives.
2. **Autonomy's Varied Impact on Motivation:** Autonomy in the Scoutmaster role had mixed effects on motivation, influencing individuals differently based on inherent drivers and expectations from volunteer managers.
3. **Competency and Mastery Driving Motivation:** The correlation between a Scoutmaster's feeling of competency and mastery in their work emerged as a significant contributor to motivation. Personal fulfillment and accomplishment played a crucial role in devotion to the position.

#### **Findings -**

Based on the analysis of original data and existing literature, two significant factors contributing to the reluctance of Troop Volunteers to become Scoutmasters were identified:

1. **Lack of Communication or Connection:** Poor communication resulted in volunteers feeling disconnected from SOSS. Addressing this issue is critical for future Scoutmasters' motivation, emphasizing the role of Commissioners in improving communication and fostering motivation.
2. **Devotion of Personal Time and Energy:** Scoutmasters undertook a significant personal responsibility in managing the Troop, requiring a substantial investment of time and energy. Fear of inadequacy and time constraints acted as barriers to volunteers becoming Scoutmasters.

### **Recommendations -**

To address the identified challenges, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Improve Communication and Connection:** Enhance and empower the role of Commissioners to improve communication. Encourage and Incentivize Troop Scoutmasters to participate in monthly Roundtables for a sense of community and support.
2. **Mitigate Fear of Personal Responsibility:** Implement initiatives such as focused outreach, mentorship programs, and clear communication standards to address the fear of personal responsibility. Establish a supportive community to resolve concerns and foster volunteer recruitment.

### **Conclusion -**

Understanding and addressing the themes of communication, connection, and personal responsibility will contribute to successful Scoutmaster recruiting and retention efforts within the organization. These initiatives will result in a motivated leadership team, ensuring a strong and supportive scouting community.