

SCOUTING AND CIVILIZATION:
THE IDENTITY BUILDING PROCESS FOR THE BOY
SCOUTS OF AMERICA, 1910-1913

by

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jamie Bufalino", is written over a horizontal line.

Jamie Bufalino, Ph.D.

The Boy Scouts of America is one of the most popular, largest, and longest running youth organizations in the United States. Created in 1910, the organization competed with other youth organizations that started around the same time. This article looks at the incorporating documents, the letters and correspondence, and the minutes of the first national meetings, in order to identify and track the initial conceptualizations of the BSA as it asserted itself in the American society. The documents span from 1910 to 1913, the first three years of the BSA. The documents show that the future of the organization was not clear at the time, and that there were significant issues, like competing Scouting groups, presented to the organization as it formed. The documents also show that the BSA was a composition of the individual people that founded it, and the consensus on a course of action was not present at first. The individual decisions of the leaders of the organization led to a more clear definition of the organization's niche in society, its identity as a youth organization and as the group to oversee the Scouting movement in the United States.

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Introduction

The turn of the century found men across America struggling between old Victorian age ideals of *manhood* and newer conceptions of *manliness*. More specifically this rhetorical and real issue affected white men, predominantly of the middle-class. Manhood by its very nature is multi-faceted, encompassing societal roles, economic status and perceptions of race.¹ As Gail Bederman explains in *Manliness and Civilization*, pre-1900 American men defined their manliness as a control over their impulses, and the strength and duty to protect their wives and children.² However, at the turn of the century, movements for women's and worker rights challenged this construction of a manly identity, forcing the American man to redefine his manhood. Immigrants, working class men, and middle-class women all started encroaching on what was traditionally the middle-class white male's role in politics and the economy.³ Bederman argues that in reaction to this cultural shift, "between 1880 and 1910, then, middle-class men were especially interested in manhood."⁴ This interest translated into widespread involvement in social groups that featured manhood as a part of their core ethos.

The new conception of American manhood that arose in the late nineteenth century centered on the ideal of *masculinity*. In contrast to manliness, masculinity was used to describe aggressiveness, physical force, male sexuality, and a newer more powerful conception of the white middle-class male.⁵ This redefining of manhood in

¹ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 11.

² Ibid. 12

³ Ibid. 14

⁴ Ibid. 15

⁵ Ibid. 19

more active terms also meant tying conceptions of male masculinity anew to citizenship and civilization in general terms.⁶ In other words, in so much as manhood demanded a public persona, it necessitated that men expressed their manhood in the community and the nation at large.

Across the pond, in response to similar desires for a formulation of new expressions of masculinity, Lieutenant General Robert Baden Powell founded the Boys Scouting Program in 1908. His book *Scouting for Boys*, published in the wake of Powell's time in the Boer War in South Africa, was based on the games and drills that Powell had his scouts practice, but nonetheless became wildly popular with the youth in Great Britain.⁷ Powell capitalized on this popularity and created an organization for the youth. The scouting program was thus aimed at shaping the character of the young men of Great Britain by training them physically and mentally. The young men would learn outdoor and survival skills, as well as abide by a code of conduct, a sort of Victorian imagination of a chivalric code.⁸ *Scouting for Boys* was also being consumed across the ocean in the United States, where young Americans also took a keen interest. Various organizations tried to capitalize on this popularity, instituting their own organizational structures on the widespread interest in the Scouting movement. One in particular, the Boy Scouts of America was the best organized, and had the blessing of Powell. Powell thought the Scouting movement was "under... able management in the United States... and delighted to hear of the good progress."⁹ The group grew in size rapidly, and expanded the program to include younger boys, the Cub Scouts. Perhaps today, the

⁶ Ibid. 23

⁷ Robert Baden-Powell Baden-Powell, *Scouting For Boys* (London, 1908), 6.

⁸ [Ibid.](#) 12-13

⁹ Letter to the BSA from Lord Baden-Powell *Reports and Minutes 1910*

organization's success is nowhere more evident than in the notable list of Eagle Scouts, those who earned the BSA's highest rank. Neil Armstrong, Michael Bloomberg, and former President Gerald Ford are all Eagle Scouts.¹⁰ Nevertheless, if it were not for the decisions made by the founders to keep the BSA from over-militarization and differentiate it from other American Scouting groups by focusing on an accessible version of citizenship, today's BSA may never have existed.

Key to understanding the Boy Scouts of America and the terminology that they used in these first documents is the idea of character and personality. Warren Susman succinctly describes how the priorities of American culture changed around the turn of the century. In the years following 1900, American culture began to highlight and promote what Susman calls a "culture of personality," that the individual was promoted.¹¹ This new individualism compared to the previous "culture of character", whereas previously American Culture promoted a strong work ethic and the greater good, now the emerging American culture was based on pleasure and enjoyment. Instead of hard work and sacrifice for the good of society and the country, it emphasized relaxation and ease of use. When the founders of the Boy Scouts use the word *character*, then, they are referring to this older conception of good character; that of austerity, sacrifice, and the greater good of your family.¹² This thesis is an analysis of the early documents generated by the Boy Scouts of America to better understand

10 "U.S. Scouting Service Project: BSA FAMOUS SCOUTS". 2016. Usscouts.Org.
<http://www.uscouts.org/eagle/bsfamous.asp>.

¹¹ Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 275

¹² Ibid. 279

how the organization created its institutional identity, as well as better understand how the BSA positioned itself for future success.

Considering the size and longevity of the Boy Scouts of America there is a corresponding array of scholarly work. However the historiography on the BSA has been dominated in recent years by their modern era controversies on membership. Only a handful of works have addressed their foundations and intellectual history, while the vast majority of scholarship has fixated on the status of scouts and adult scout leaders who identify as gay.¹³ Of those works that are on the foundations of the BSA, the majority are biographical in nature, tracing the individuals that came together to form the organization.¹⁴ In addition to these historical works there is a significant amount of analysis surrounding the US Supreme Court case *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*.¹⁵ There are also a number of articles that examine the Scouting program from a conservation framework.¹⁶ Finally there is a concentration of articles in the field of

¹³ See Pynes, Joan E. "The Boy Scouts of America: Slowly Changing." *Journal of Homosexuality* 63, no. 1 (2016): 52-71, Andrew, Stephen. "Boy Scouts Fail the Tolerance Test." *New Statesman* 14, no. 668 (2001): 16, Johnson, Corey. "Twenty-Plus Years of Exclusion in the Boy Scouts of America: A Simulated Debate on Inclusion in Public and Private Recreation Agencies." *Scholar* 30, no. 2 (2015): Schole, 2015, Vol.30(2).

¹⁴ See Scott, David C., and Murphy, Brendan. *The Scouting Party : Pioneering and Preservation, Progressivism and Preparedness in the Making of the Boy Scouts of America*. 1st ed. Irving, Tex.: Red Honor Press, 2010, Solomon, Deborah. *American Mirror : The Life and Art of Norman Rockwell*. First ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013., Anderson, H. Allen. *The Chief : Ernest Thompson Seton and the Changing West*. 1st ed. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1986., Hillcourt, William. *Baden-Powell; the Two Lives of a Hero*. 1st American Ed.]. ed. New York: Putnam, 1964.

¹⁵ *Boy Scouts of America v Dale*, 530 U.S. 640 (2000).

¹⁶ See Jordan, Ben. "'Conservation of Boyhood': Boy Scouting's Modest Manliness and Natural Resource Conservation, 1910–1930." *Environmental History* 15, no. 4 (2010): 612-42., Love, Ben. "Be Kind to the Earth." *Boys' Life* 82, no. 12 (1992): 6., Terry, Jr., Robert. "Development and Evolution of Agriculturally Related Merit Badges Offered by the Boy Scouts of America." *Journal of Agricultural Education* 54, no. 2 (2013): 70-84.

education that deals with how the BSA acts as an educational institution, as well as the relationship between the BSA and existing education systems in the US.¹⁷

While so much of the modern historiography on the BSA has centered on the issue of sexual orientation, the early history of the organization may ultimately be equally beneficial to understanding this complicated issue. Membership of the BSA requires scouts and adult leaders to be "morally straight."¹⁸ Since its foundation the central organization of the BSA interpreted this commitment as an exclusion of homosexual scouts and scouters (Adult members of the BSA).¹⁹ James Dale, an openly homosexual assistant scoutmaster, sued the BSA in 1999 after he was kicked out of the organization. In 2000 the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the BSA, the main reason being that as a private organization it can have control over the criteria of its members.²⁰ However corporate sponsors to the BSA began to end their relationship with the organization, and finally in the summer of 2015 the ban on openly gay scouts and scouters was lifted.²¹ In a way, the issue raised by Dale over the accepted membership of the BSA echoes the issue of militarization that the founders faced in 1910. In both a balance between the goals of the organization, the individual experiences of Scouts and Scouters, and public perception was critical to achieve an acceptable end result.

¹⁷ See Hintz, Rachel, and Barbara Thomson. "Geoscience Education in the Boy Scouts of America." *Journal of Geoscience Education* 60, no. 2 (2012): 159-67., Hintz, Rachel, and Thomson, Barbara. *Science Education in the Boy Scouts of America*, 2009, N/a. Wang, Jun, Kaitlyn A Ferris, Rachel M Hershberg, and Richard M Lerner. "Developmental Trajectories of Youth Character: A Five-Wave Longitudinal Study of Cub Scouts and Non-Scout Boys." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 44, no. 12 (2015): 2359-73.

¹⁸ Scout Oath *Boy Scouts of America*

¹⁹ The first edition of the *Boy Scouts of America Handbook* states that boys should have "clean habits, and clean relationships with others." Dale v BSA is the first time that the legality of the BSA's definition was challenged.

²⁰ 100 *Boy Scouts of America v Dale*, 530 U.S. 640 (2000).

²¹ Leopold, Todd. 2016. "Boy Scouts Change Policy On Gay Leaders". CNN.

There are a number of law review and other academic articles that criticize the Supreme Court's decision in *BSA v Dale*. One article, "Scouts (Dis)honor: The Supreme Court allows the Boy Scouts of America to discriminate against homosexuals in *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*" by Scott Kelly rips the decision of the court. The case left "the general public wondering why the Boy Scouts, an American icon, fought so vehemently for a very un-American "right"-the "right" to discriminate."²² The Supreme Court "entertained and endorsed anachronistic prejudices against homosexuals" instead of "dispelling the myths and stereotypes about homosexuality" that the BSA held during the case.²³ The vast majority of articles published about *BSA v Dale* echo the sentiment expressed by Kelly in his article.

The Boy Scouts of America is one of the largest youth organizations in not just the United States, but also the world. Every year the organization produces a national report and fact sheet that outlines the impact the BSA has on the American community and economy. As of 2014 there are 2.4 million active members ranging in age from 6 to 21 years old.²⁴ This number excludes the hundreds of thousands adult leaders and professional staff that run the councils and summer camps to facilitate the Scouting experience for those youth members. In the American economy, the impact of the BSA is profound. In 2014 alone Scouts contributed over 14 million hours of volunteer work, valued at approximately \$300 million.²⁵ Millions of young men have been involved in the Scouting program in the United States since its inception, placing it in the company

²² Scott Kelly, "Scouts (Dis)honor: The Supreme Court Allows the Boy Scouts of America to Discriminate against Homosexuals in *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*," *Houston Law Review* 39:1 (2002): 274.

²³ *Ibid.* 274

²⁴ Boy Scouts of America. 2014. BSA Annual Report. http://scoutingwire.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/bsa_annual_report.pdf.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

of only the Boys and Girls Clubs, and the YMCA in size.²⁶ Over the hundred years of its existence, the BSA has provided trillions of dollars' worth in community service, not just to urban communities but also to the United States' national parks. For example in 2008 the Order of the Arrow, BSA's national honor society, conducted intensive conservation efforts at five national parks across the country.²⁷ ArrowCorps⁵, the name of the event, donated 250,000 hours of conservation work to the selected national parks.²⁸ The work helped to clear the parks of invasive plant species, rehabilitate hiking trails, and other conservation projects. Like many aspects of the BSA's mission, its history of national service projects dates to the inception of the organization. During World War II the Scouts helped the Office of War Information in distributing posters and flyers on the home front. In 1942 President Roosevelt even went so far as to name the Boy Scouts of America the "Official Dispatch Bearers" for the OWI.²⁹ The cooperation between the BSA and US government-run service projects could not, however, begin without a strong relationship. Dating to the first year of the BSA, there is a documented relationship with the President of the United States.³⁰ Since its incorporation, the Boy Scouts of America have listed the current President of the US as the Honorary President of the BSA.

26 YMCA., 2016. "The Y: Organizational Profile". Ymca.Net. <http://www.ymca.net/organizational-profile/>; "Boys & Girls Club Facts And Figures". 2016. Boys & Girls Clubs Of America. <http://www.bgca.org/whoweare/Pages/FactsFigures.aspx>.

27 "Order of The Arrow - Arrowcorps5". 2008. oa-bsa.org. <http://www.oa-bsa.org/events/arrowcorps5/index.php?p=mediainfo>.

28 Ibid.

29 Archives, National. 2010. "How The Boy Scouts Won World War II". Prologue: Pieces Of History. <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2010/07/19/how-the-boy-scouts-won-world-war-ii/>.

30 Letter from the secretary of the President to Lee Hammer *Early History of the Boy Scouts of America 1910-1911*

A number of articles are published in the field of conservation and how it relates to the BSA. Articles like “*Conservation of Boyhood*”: *Boy Scouting’s Modest Manliness and Natural Resource Conservation, 1910–1930* and *Geoscience Education in the Boy Scouts of America* outline the way that the BSA works with the environment. The overall sentiment is that the Boy Scouts of America plays a critical role in conservation efforts around the US, and that the first-hand experiences of the youth in the BSA makes them more likely to practice conservation in their outdoor pursuits.

From an educational standpoint the Boys Scouts provide an opportunity to examine both the Boy Scouts as a teaching organization, but also a group of learners. In the variety of educational journal articles examining, for example *Science Education in the Boy Scouts* or *A Study of the Influence of Boy Scouting on Scholastic Achievements in Wawona District*, the track record of the BSA as a teaching organization is clear. These are just two examples of the multitude of articles that encompass the BSA as a school and student.

Overall there is a notable lack of detailed, primary source driven historical analysis of the BSA in the predominant historiography. While the issues raised by *BSA v Dale* and the ecological impact of the BSA are both important, nonetheless one would expect more historical analysis of the development of such a large and culturally relevant group. Addressing these lacunae, the present thesis provides an analysis of the Boy Scouts of America from a historical framework, in order to better understand how the BSA positioned itself for its future success.

Methodology

In 1934 the Chief Scout Executive of the Boy Scouts of America sent a series of letters out to those individuals who had been involved in the organization from the very beginning. The Executive Board felt it would be valuable to have “available records of the early years of Scouting.”³¹ The BSA as an organization wanted to have the resources necessary to “develop an authentic history of the Boy Scouts of America.”³² This desire led directly to the creation of the robust archive that the Boy Scouts have at their own museum in Irving Texas.

Through its self-conscious creation of an archive, the Boys Scouts of America has preserved and collected a large majority of its written past, dating to letters and journal entries from the founding fathers of American scouting prior to the official founding in 1910. At the National Scouting Museum in the archives, they have storerooms full of boxes of documents and trinkets, uniforms and artwork that spans the history of the Boy Scouts of America. This study is based on a series of documents and compendiums found at the scouting archives. The first organized structure of the Boy Scouts of America was the national council. It comprised all the adults interested in creating and running the fledgling organization. The BSA transcribes their annual meetings of the national council, and the meeting notes from the first three years are used as the main basis of this essay. One section of this essay deals entirely with the first meeting, as it acted as a barometer of the most significant issues that faced the new organization. In addition, this essay analyzes personal correspondence between important members of the Boy Scouts of America. These letters provide a more

³¹ Letter to Mr. Van Diss *James West Early Correspondence Collection*

³² Ibid.

personal view of the processes that went into defining the BSA. Finally, this analysis is based on various other documents from the time period in question, including selected letters from James West, the first Chief Scout Executive, to President Theodore Roosevelt, as well as subsequent National Council meetings in 1912 and 1913.

There are some drawbacks to utilizing this collection, however. As it is produced and curated by the BSA themselves, the archives reflect the history that the BSA would like to present to the public. One of the consequences of the selective nature of the archive is that it is be impossible to draw out of the BSA documents a fair or unbiased assessment of the viability of rival scouting groups, or detractors to the early BSA membership. Nonetheless, the handpicked foundational documents still provide a snapshot on the early founders of the scouts imagined their own role and the mission of their organization.

The purpose behind this essay is to examine the formative years of the Boy Scouts of America to understand how the organization positioned itself to succeed in the short term, as well as any basis supporting the longevity of the group. The BSA has a long and well documented history, but there is a lack of historical analysis of the organization's early history and corporate identity building process. This is a relatively new line of inquiry in the academic world regarding the BSA. As earlier outlined, there is no lack of academic work that analyzes the legality of the organization, as well as the statistical analysis of the participants. The specific historical academic community around the BSA is based mostly on low level analytical projects like biographies of the main contributors to the creation of the BSA.

Identity is a flexible term and consequently, the prospect of analyzing identity building requires some explanation. Concepts of identity are difficult to pin down for organizations, such as the Boy Scouts of America. Identity is normally a concept associated with individuals, not corporations. However the same principles can be applied to understand the process that a corporation or organization goes through to create their brand and their place in society. In *Concepts of Identity*, Catherine McCall explains this idea. “The identity of an individual as a person [or organization] is what is determined by third persons.... The individual is a public entity. In this sense....whatever is known, attributed, or thought of the individual [organization] constitutes that individual as a person.”³³ The identity of an individual is then determined internally as well as externally. Applied to an organization like the BSA, the identity of the group is defined in part by what the BSA says about itself, i.e. legal documents like the charter, as well as what the individuals that comprise the BSA think the identity is, or should be, as can be seen in the national meeting minutes. This definition provides two levels of identity analysis to the primary sources, understanding that the concept of identity is multifaceted.

Additionally, Bourdieu’s *Outline of a Theory of a Practice* can assist in this endeavor. Bourdieu’s work lays an analytical theoretical framework for studying anthropology and sociology. It also can help to explain how identity is built in a group. In the section on ‘structures, habitus and practices’ Bourdieu explains that “Each agent, wittingly or unwittingly, willy nilly, is a producer and reproducer of objective

33 Catherine C. McCall, *Concepts of Person : An Analysis of Concepts of Person, Self, and Human Being* (Aldershot; Brookfield: Avebury ; Gower Pub., 1990).

meaning.”³⁴ This means in the context of this essay that each of the members of the BSA, though most importantly those at the national meeting and James E West, are creators of objective meaning, of the facets that make up the Boy Scouts of America as an organization. One problem with analyzing the documents is attempting to determine any intent on behalf of the actors. This framework helps that process by simplifying the issues raised by intent. The impossible nature of attempting to understand exactly the intent and thoughts of long dead men is not included in Bourdieu’s analysis. Rather the discrete events and recorded information is used in a logical framework.

Habitus, or the general structure that an organization takes, is also examined by Bourdieu. “Habitus is... laid down in each agent by his earliest upbringing... and collective mobilization cannot succeed without a minimum of concordance between the habitus of the mobilizing agents and the dispositions of those whose aspirations and world-view they express”³⁵ This selection explains how the structure of the organization, and therefore the outcomes of the organization, are the reflection of the desires of the individuals comprising said organization. An obvious enough idea, but with important theoretical implications, most importantly in that it is possible to use the documents that explain the development of the organization to also explain the desires of the individuals that comprise the group. Extrapolating from this, organizations and their structures are successful at a national scale proportional to their level of national support. For example, if the BSA is widely popular across the country, one could reasonably say that a lot of Americans support the organization, or at least enough of the aims of the organization to participate in it. The study of history comes into play

34 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 79.
35 Ibid. 81

here because it can be used to track how an organizational identity has changed over time, what was important at one point, and whether that is still true twenty-five or fifty years down the road.

Finally, one of the themes present in this analysis is the idea of identity building as an iterative process. The BSA evolved over time, and the issues that confronted the organization in finding their niche in 1910 is revealed in the primary sources. As such, one repeated issue is the question of what is and is not covered by the BSA. Boundary lines on the organization needed to be drawn to distinguish the BSA from other scouting groups, and in general to achieve their stated goals. The question of doxa, orthodoxy and heterodoxy is seen in the sources as well as described in *Outline of a Theory of a Practice*. The process of defining what is and is not acceptable, what is and is not part of the organization is key in the development of its identity. It establishes the boundaries of that identity. “Orthodoxy... is defined as a system of euphemisms, of acceptable ways of thinking and speaking.... Which rejects heretical remarks as blasphemies.”³⁶ Bourdieu is specifically talking about social groups, but nonetheless the idea applies to the BSA. The process of defining the orthodox is key to understanding the identity of the group. This is where the primary sources used for this essay are important. Bourdieu also supports the idea of Marx that “language is real, practical consciousness,” where what is said can represent a “dividing line” between the orthodox and heterodox.³⁷ The minutes of the national meetings, as well as the compilation of letters and personal correspondence provide a private view into the workings of the founders of the BSA. The documents are not the whitewashed public documents that only show the orthodox.

36 Ibid. 169

37 Ibid. 170

The nature of these documents means that they include dissent and arguments. They show the development of the orthodox, not just the final product.

Incorporating Documents through 1st National Meeting

Between 1910 and 1911, the founders of the BSA created their organization and its mission, largely through the construction of their foundational documents. These documents lay the foundation for how the BSA initially established its identity, and what immediate changes or issues arose in the primordial months of its existence. The natural starting point for this analysis is found in *The Early History of the Boy Scouts of America 1910-1911*. It is a compendium of various legal documents, texts, and letters. The first document is a "Memorandum Concerning the Boy Scouts of America." The memorandum details the incorporation of the Boy Scouts of America in the District of Washington on February 8, 1910. It defines in section 1, subsection 3 that the

“particular business of and objects of the Society [BSA] are to organize the boys of the District of Columbia and elsewhere in the United States, into units, and to teach them, or cause them to be taught, through duly designated leaders, discipline, patriotism, courage, habits of observation and self-control and ability to care for themselves in all exigencies of life.”³⁸

In its creation, the February 8 memo provides context for what is now generally associated with Scouting in the US. In addition, this is the incorporating document for the organization in Washington DC. It is the benchmark, the starting point from which we can evaluate the identity building process of the BSA.

First it sets up the standard of subdivision as the way to achieve the goals of the BSA. The current structure of the BSA is essentially a pyramid of management. The national headquarters oversee the four regions who oversee the regional sections, who oversee the councils, who oversee the units (Boy Scout Troops, Venturing Crews etc).

38 Memorandum Concerning the Boy Scouts of America *The Early History of the Boy Scouts of America 1910-1911*.

In the units themselves this idea of subdivision is seen. A Boy Scout troop is split up into "patrols" of 8-10 youths. The importance of segmentation and subdivision as a tool for teaching, learning, and completing tasks is one of the hallmarks of the American Scouting program. The national training program for youth in BSA is built around the idea of the "ideal troop" which is segmented into various patrols with a "senior patrol" in charge of the rest of the patrols.³⁹

The founders felt it necessary to include "patriotism"⁴⁰ as part of the identity of the program. This implies that patriotism was either something lacking in the American boy, or that the activities of the American boy needed to be patriotic to be worthwhile and relevant for the boy. Both of these interpretations are interesting. On the one hand, seeing this as a need for more patriotism would mean that the founders of the Boy Scouts saw themselves as patriots, and were worried about the nation's youth not following in their footsteps. Historically it is a common phenomenon for one generation to bemoan the next, dating back to Socrates quoted as saying "the children now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise."⁴¹ Another way of explaining the inclusion is that patriotism was in and of itself a valuable characteristic that was necessary for the program to be successful. This makes sense as well as organizations associated with patriotism and national identity, like the branches of the armed forces, continue to have close ties with the American Boy Scout program. For 30 years, from 1981 to 2010, the National Boy Scout Jamboree was held at Fort A.P. Hill, a US Army base in Virginia.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Suzy Platt, *Respectfully Quoted*. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1992), 56

What will become apparent later is that in the earliest years of its existence, the BSA was absolutely unequivocally against actions like hosting an event on a military base. Clearly how the organization defined patriotism, or citizenship, changed over time. Both of these explanations explain and inform the identity of the Boy Scouts of America as a fledgling organization, and the effects can still be seen in the modern day.

Finally the last phrase, "...habits of observation and self-control and ability to care for themselves..."⁴² is curious. Notably absent from this definition of the business and purpose of the Boy Scouts is any mention of nature or the outdoors. Camping, backpacking, conservation, finding edible plants, canoeing, kayaking the list of outdoor pursuits that are and have historically been strongly associated with the Boy Scouts is long. In this original description of the purpose of the Boy Scouts and how the organization wanted to mold the young men of America, the founders do not include any mention of using the outdoors. Perhaps the reason the founders did not include the outdoors is because it was implied in a Scouting program modeled after the original British Scouting for Boys text. Scouting for Boys includes multiple chapters on camping and various methods and techniques for survival. Nonetheless this omission suggests that the outdoors are not as important to the Boy Scouts of America as the overarching purpose of molding young men.

Prior to the 1st National Meeting of the Boy Scouts in America in early 1911, the managing organizers of the BSA were working to establish the BSA's place in society. A letter from John Alexander, managing secretary for the Boy Scouts, to Colin Livingstone, the national president of the BSA from its incorporation to 1925, also

⁴² Ibid.

establishes the baseline of how the BSA define its identity. The national president of the BSA acts similar to the role of a chairman of a board of directors, overseeing the organization from a bird's eye view. The letter, dated on June 14, 1910, outlines a variety of the issues that faced the organization in the first months of operation. First the letter list the four other organizations that are “national aspirants for leadership in the field.”⁴³ Since all of these groups were purported to be in the vein of the British Scouting movement the names are similar. Alexander lists The American Boy Scouts, The National Highway Protective Association, The National Scouts of America, and finally his own organization, the Boy Scouts of America.⁴⁴ The letter, in addition to identifying competing organizations, pinpoints what John Alexander saw to be their current strengths and weaknesses as well. The American Boy Scouts was actually run by the infamous publisher William Randolph Hearst, and Alexander expressed his contempt in this letter for Hearst “exploiting the American Boy Scouts” by “enrolling them in a temporary organization.”⁴⁵ Alexander expresses little concern with The National Highway Protective Association competing with the Boy Scouts of America. The NHPA had “announced the appointment of a national staff” but Alexander had “not heard of any patrols or troops which have been formed up to the present”⁴⁶ with that group. Alexander was rightly skeptical of the NHPA, as they soon after folded and came under the umbrella of the Boy Scouts of America, with the former leader Peter Bonus joining the National Council.⁴⁷ Alexander also analyzes the National Scouts of

43 Livingstone Letter June 1910 *The Early Correspondence and History Collection 1910-1912*

44 Ibid

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Richardson, Norman Egbert, and Loomis, Ormond Eros. *The Boy Scout Movement Applied by the Church*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1915.

America. This group was of the most concern to Alexander, as the group's founder, Colonel William Verbeck, was the principal at a military boarding school in Manlius New York, and was "taking an active hand in the organization of troops and patrols"⁴⁸ The first issue that the BSA faces in determining its identity is how to differentiate itself from other competing organizations that wanted to enroll the American boy in the Scouting movement.

The letter goes on to explain precisely why it is so important that the Boy Scouts of America responds to the other organizations. Alexander argues that the other organizations have a "much more military conception than has the original movement in England."⁴⁹ Such a martial element was clearly not a goal of the Boy Scouts of America, as Alexander is quick to explain in the letter: "The Boy Scouts of America believe they are following the more closely the plans of the original movement and the principles which have accounted for its success."⁵⁰ This sentence is key to understanding the initial process of identity building for the Boy Scouts of America. As Alexander speaks for the BSA, he explicitly argues against the over-militarization of the organization. To Alexander's judgement "there should be a touch of the military, but the movement should be primarily and conspicuously an educational and character-building movement, that it should prepare boys for efficient living rather than for possible war."⁵¹

John Alexander, writing on behalf of the BSA, uses the phrase "The Boy Scouts of America believe" to start this paragraph that gives an outline of the identity of the

48 Livingstone Letter June 1910

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

BSA. Taken together with the content of the letter, a few things become apparent. First, the BSA was not the only organization competing to take the mantle of the Scouting movement in the United States. There was real competition from other groups, like the National Scouts of America, and the BSA's soon monopoly on American Scouting was not a predetermined outcome. The BSA was aware of its competition and, more importantly, identified a key area of concern. The lack of emphasis on the military aspect of the BSA was one of the organization's own distinguishing features. Instead, the BSA was focused on character building in the vein of what Susman describes.

The end of Alexander's letter invites Colin Livingston to a meeting on June 21, 1910. The provisional meeting of the national council was held in New York. A draft of the program of the meeting survives in the Boy Scout Archives in the folder of Early Correspondence and History Collection. The program, or agenda, is a small artifact, but one that also shows how the BSA went through the process of building their identity. The majority of the agenda is organizational framework, agenda items like "adoption of By-laws [*sic*]" and "field organization."⁵² However some of the notes are interesting. There is the agenda item "Attitude to rival organizations" with the subheadings "(a) independent (b) Amalgamation (c) co-operation."⁵³ While the letter from John Alexander establishes that the BSA was aware of competing organizations in the US, this agenda shows that the organization was still in the process of deciding what to do about the other groups. The three options listed suggest different approaches to the issue, from passive (independent) to active (cooperation). Unfortunately no record of

52 Suggested Program for June 1910 National Council Meeting, *The Early Correspondence and History Collection 1910-1912*.

53 Ibid.

the meeting itself exists to determine what exactly was discussed at that point.

However, as the later sections will explain, the issue of how to interact with other organizations based off the Scouting movement was not settled for some time.

An undated correspondence between the BSA and Lord Robert Baden Powell establishes how the BSA sought for the approval of the founder of the Scouting movement and sheds some light on how the Boy Scouts of America went about defining their identity. The letter does not have a date listed, however it is within a compendium entitled Reports and Minutes 1910. This letter sent to Lord Baden Powell and the response from him, since they are included in this report, can be pinpointed to the year 1910, though the month and day are missing. First the initial letter sent to Lord Baden Powell is entitled “The Boy Scout Idea as the Boy Scouts of America interprets it.”⁵⁴ The letter first describes three things that the BSA is not. It defines the BSA by exclusion, which provides two ways to understand the document. First it assists in charting the course the BSA took in how it defined itself. Second, because it is a list of what the BSA is not it means there are either organizations that are those things, or just in general the BSA felt it necessary to dispel myths about itself. The three points that the letter lists are that the BSA is “set firmly against military domination of the Movement”, “non-sectarian and opposes every effort to make the Movement the adjunct of any creed or sect”, and that the BSA “is not in opposition to existing organizations that are now working with boys”⁵⁵ Again the issue of militarization comes up, with the BSA making it very clear that the organization is absolutely against militarization. This letter provides a bit more context to that stance, as it does note that the BSA “does not

54 Robert Baden Powell, *Correspondence: Reports and Minutes 1910*.

55 Ibid.

oppose military drill when it is in proportion to other activities.”⁵⁶ The third point, that the BSA is not opposed to other groups work, is actually a clear example of the identity building process for the BSA. The wording of this paragraph provides a context to the BSA. By listing other organizations like the YMCA and the Boys Club, both having been established since the 1850s, the BSA is placing itself in their company as peers. The act of listing those other groups alongside the BSA equivocates the BSA with them. Another sentence in the paragraph also helps to cement the identity of the group, as they argue that “the name of the organization [The Boy Scouts of America] does not need to be changed either.”⁵⁷ Names are powerful identifiers. Kleenex is an example of a corporate branded identity that was so successful that the product, facial tissues, are referred to as Kleenex in the modern lexicon. The BSA by reiterating that the name should stay is staking their claim on the Scouting movement in the United States.

These early documents are critical to understanding the identity building process of The Boy Scouts of America. They serve to establish a baseline on not just what the organization hopes to achieve, but also a glimpse at the first challenges to the organizations feasibility and future. The group’s clear purpose, as seen in the incorporating document, is to develop the American male youth into future men of character and value. As has also been demonstrated, the methods to achieve that goal are where issues arise. There are two main issues seen in the early months of the BSA: first, the problem of differentiating the BSA from other groups in the United States that are trying to organize the Scouting movement, and second, a clear concern over the perception of the militarization of the BSA, and Scouting in general. Both of these

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

problems are critical because they explain the actions taken later down the road. Those actions are part of the identity of the BSA that created the foundation for future success.

1st Annual Meeting

The New Willard Hotel stands just one block from the White House in Washington DC. It is not a coincidence that the 1st annual meeting of the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America was held here. The White House represents the head of the United States, and decisions made there have effects that ripple across the country. The same is true of this influential meeting of the founding brain trust of the BSA as it is the first time that they had all been in one room. From the opening remarks dedicated to the attendee of honor, President Taft, to the various discussions about membership and organization, this first meeting of the National Council is a turning point in the development of the Boy Scouts. This meeting, held on February 14 and 15 in 1911, is where the organization can be seen to evolve, in the words of the secretary Lee Hammer, “from an idea to a real organization.”⁵⁸

Setting the stage for the gravity of this meeting, Lee Hammer makes opening remarks directed at President William Taft. The direction of the first speech to the President shows how the BSA carefully aligned itself with the establishment, legitimizing the organization across the country. Hammer acknowledges that the purpose of the organization is to “make our American boys more resourceful and more manful men.”⁵⁹ Hammer means "resourceful" in the way of independence and survival skills, the ones that the Boy Scouts Handbook is full of. "Manful," from the incorporating documents, as well as *Manliness and Civilization*, means patriotic, a man who is virile but civilized, and white. The implications of this definition are explored

58 Minutes of the 1st National Meeting *Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America* 3

59 Ibid. 3

later in this thesis. The BSA has achieved, in one short year, exponential growth. Showing the market for an organizing group like the BSA, already 300,000 boys have enrolled in troops franchised with them. This opening speech also sounds remarkably like a sales pitch to President Taft. Hammer argues that the BSA is an organization that has “a substantial basis” and is “democratic and American”, and that it wants to “build up the American boy.”⁶⁰ Hammer effectively summarizes the purpose and value of the BSA to the most powerful man in America, and very clearly stakes the BSA’s claim to organizing the Scouting movement in the United States, a job made easier with the blessing the President.

Now that the BSA had identified themselves as the only group that could take up the mantle of organizing the boys of America under the Scouting program, other issues could be tackled. Within the National Council two sides emerged over a specific aspect of the BSA and how the Scouting movement was perceived. One unnamed member of the council asks the assembly what “reason for the objection on the term militarism?”⁶¹ Another member asks “What is really the advantage of using the word ‘military’ in connection with it [the BSA] at all?”⁶² Previously from correspondence Colin Livingstone had identified the perceived military nature of the Scouting movement as a significant hurdle to overcome. Mr. Connolly, National Council member and head of a subcommittee on administration, seizes this opportunity to argue for a very careful use of military ideas in the BSA. Boys have been attracted to the movement “on account of its militarism,” but that “very careful attention” is needed to ensure that the National

60 Ibid.47

61 Ibid.48

62 Ibid.48

Council preserves the movement “without offense.”⁶³ The BSA does not want to upset any potential members of isolationism mentality that dominated America Pre-World War I.

A handful of solutions are presented to the national council to both appease prospective young members, but also their parents. Connolly is acutely aware of the fine line the BSA walks, since he knows that if the National Council makes the BSA “a military organization, it would break down.”⁶⁴ Two solutions are presented immediately to the group, first that the BSA “drop all of the military titles” that they had been using, like “corporal.”⁶⁵ An easy change to make that does not affect the organizational structure. Titles carry meaning, so removing military titles also removes the military connotation. The second easy solution is to remove drilling from the BSA. Connolly points out that specifically “many parents object to it; they do not want their boys to go into it if there is going to be a lot of drill-work.... It would be wise to avoid it and leave it out of the movement.”⁶⁶ Drill work is an exclusively militaristic activity, dropping it from the BSA makes the distinction between Scouting and military more obvious. These two changes pass the National Council without opposition. In addition to the practical matter of removing the military titles and military drill work, this also represents an institutional decision that affects the overall identity of the BSA. These may be simple changes to make, but their effect on the program is more widespread. As a group, the National Council is taking steps to remove conspicuous militarism from the BSA.

63 Ibid.48

64 Ibid.48

65 Ibid. 48

66Ibid. 49

This decision risked upsetting some members of the National Council, as there were multiple high ranking military involved. Secretary Hammer protects these changes with a compliment to General Wood, noting his “cordial support”, and pointing out that volunteering to help the BSA is “still attractive to the military man” because a military man has vested interest in raising the “quality of the boys” that might be future soldiers should their nation need them.⁶⁷

The plea for military men to help the BSA as adult leaders leads into the next topic raised at the 1st National Meeting. The members of the National Council needed to identify and define the characteristics of the ideal adult leader to work with the BSA. Even if every boy in America joined the BSA, it would fall apart without dedicated volunteer men to act as Scoutmasters and a variety of other administrative positions, the mortar of the organization. Ernest Coulter, founder of the Big Brother movement, prepared a speech on the recruiting of boys and leaders to present to the National Council. In another move to consolidate power, the BSA invited Coulter to be a member of the National Council, asserting their position as the only organization that could control the American interest in the Scouting movement. The importance of recruiting not just any adult leaders but the right ones, was key to “the future of this organization” as Coulter saw it. While optimistic of the recruitment of adult leaders, Coulter also emphasizes that if “mistakes are made it will be... because due care has not been exercised in their selection.”⁶⁸ The first step in the recruitment of the *right men* is to define what the characteristics of an ideal adult leader, which is what the National Council then goes on to do. The ideal adult leader is not a “sentimentalist” or “faddist,”

67 Ibid. 49

68 Ibid. 59

but rather of “strong and sturdy temperament.”⁶⁹ The idea of a strong temperament reflects a “culture of character” instead of a “culture of character”, this is a call back to a conservative past, not the malleable ‘faddist’. This ideal leader also has a deep knowledge of the Scouting movement, a framework from which to assist the boys in achieving the goals of the movement, serious work not to be taken lightly.⁷⁰

One point of disagreement is whether or not the ideal adult leader should be college educated. Coulter himself does not believe that a college education is necessary, sharing his own experience with his Big Brother movement and “some of the men who have done the most for our boys have been through hard struggles themselves and by reason of their experience they make all the better leaders.”⁷¹ Mr. Connolly here disagrees, instead arguing not just that leaders be college educated but also that the BSA should “sponsor some school or method of instruction for scout-masters under the supervision of whoever may be chief scout-master of this movement.”⁷² The National Council finds a solution to this issue, however, as two unnamed members provide their own experience, one who has “given all his time to work in the interests of the boys,” and one who works not “necessarily [for] the scout-masters movement” but rather to the organization as a whole and running a council in Cincinnati. The groundwork for the future administrative structure of the Boy Scouts of America is laid here. The mixture of volunteer adults working with boys, as well as volunteers and some paid staff to run the administration of the BSA is the solution that is presented to the National Council, and accepted as the best way going forward. The advantages of this system is that is

69 Ibid. 60

70 Ibid. 60-61

71 Ibid. 61

72 Ibid. 64

minimizes overhead cost by relying on volunteer support, and keeps the goal of developing young men at the forefront, not the pocketbooks of those in charge. It does have drawbacks as well, as there is more institutional turnover, and as a Mr. Cook points out it is “a constant difficulty to get volunteer leaders to take up any new activity” or rather that it is difficult to marshal and effectively use volunteers.

While the question of what adults can volunteer for the BSA, and how they should go about it is a practical one, it is also a philosophical one. In developing the organizational identity of the BSA the choices made to include or exclude adult leaders also mirrors the choice of what boys to involve in the program. The BSA at the 1st National Meeting made a choice to include a wide variety of adult volunteers, with the most important criteria being that the volunteer wanted to help develop young boys into young men. The BSA had already attempted to make the program open to people of any religion or social class, as evidenced by their description of themselves in the official incorporating charter, and here at the meeting of the National Council that claim is supported by the decisions made. This choice to make the BSA accessible also includes the boys who are voraciously reading *Scouting for Boys* across America. The National Council takes steps to make the program more accessible. Mr. Robinson, another member of the National Council, warns that the BSA should “keep the price of the uniform down so it can be within the reach of the poorest boy.”⁷³ This idea is greeted with approval from the assembled leaders. This exemplifies the institutionalization of the proposed identity of the Boy Scouts of America. Boys all over the country were already reading the Scouting handbook, regardless of the BSA’s existence. Taking steps

⁷³ Ibid. 69

like a low uniform price ensure that the goal of the BSA, to govern the Scouting movement in the United States, is achieved.

The 1st National Meeting of the Boy Scouts of America is a watershed moment in the development of the identity of the BSA. It is here that the National Council made institutional decisions on two very important topics. First this meeting cements the BSA not as a para-military youth organization, but rather an organization to develop the young boys of America into better citizens and young men. Small steps like removing military titles from the organizational structure of the BSA set the course going forward, a line in the sand not to be crossed by future administrators. The second, and more important outcome of the meeting, is that the backbone of the organization, the adult volunteers, is defined and categorized. The BSA is not an intellectually elite group, as evidenced by the discussion regarding college educated leader. This affects not only the makeup of the adult Scouters, but also reflects a goal for the actual Scouts themselves.

Cementation of an Identity

In the months and years following the 1st National Meeting, the Boy Scouts of America grew in not just size, but also stature and importance in the national conscious. This is demonstrated in no better place than the budding relationship between the BSA and former President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt was in contact with James E West, one of the founders of the BSA, from the very moment of its birth in 1910. However Roosevelt did not take an active role in promoting and publicizing the BSA until 1911. A letter from the office of Roosevelt sent to James West on July 20th of that year cements Roosevelt's place as a cheerleader for the BSA and willing public advocate for the importance and power of the Scouting movement. Roosevelt expresses his belief that "the Boy Scout movement is a movement of peculiar importance to the whole country. It has already done much good, and it will do far more."⁷⁴ The progress of the BSA as the one and only organization that can harness the Scouting movement in the United States quickly is underlined here. An outsider, Roosevelt, recognizes the BSA as the "practical scheme through which"⁷⁵ the Scouting movement in the US is developed. The steps taken by the BSA to franchise the Scout troops throughout America is working. The progress of the BSA in defining their organizational identity is also validated. Roosevelt describes the BSA as a "movement for efficiency and patriotism."⁷⁶

More importantly, Roosevelt's letter confirms the stance of the Boy Scouts of America as a non-military organization.

⁷⁴ July 20th letter from Theodore to James West *Theodore Roosevelt Correspondence and Letters 1908-1919*

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

“You don’t try to make soldiers of Boy Scouts, but to make boys who will turn out as men to be fine citizens, and who will if their country needs them make better soldiers for having been scouts. No one can be a good American unless he is a good citizen, and every boy ought to train himself so that as a man he will be able to do his full duty to the community.”⁷⁷

Roosevelt describes two significant phenomena in his letter. First he notes that that Boy Scouts of America is *not* making soldiers, or is even a para-military youth group. The BSA is successful in delineating their organization not as a military group but rather an organization for the general well-being of young boys and developing them into men. The clear identifier of the BSA is instead the idea of *citizenship*. Citizens and citizenship has a variety of connotations, specifically at the time a concept that applied to men. That Theodore specifically defines a good citizen with a male pronoun, suggesting a direct tie or expectation of gender to citizenship, a notion that Bederman concurs with.⁷⁸ In addition to showing how the BSA distanced itself from concerns that it was a military group, Roosevelt also describes what is a fair summation of the BSA, the point of the group is to develop young boys so that they can "do their full duty to the community." The decision to very clearly separate the BSA from military terminology and instead concentrate on the teaching and citizenship aspect of the Scouting movement worked.

Finally the Roosevelt letter is one of the first concrete examples of the association of the Boy Scouts of America with conservation and the outdoors. Roosevelt points to the BSA as promoting the protection of “birds, trees and flowers, and so to make our country more beautiful and not more ugly.”⁷⁹ The Boy Scouts of

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 180-181.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

America is still developing their organizational identity. What now seems obvious was not so in the early years of the BSA. It is the relationship between the BSA and Theodore Roosevelt that crystalizes the inclusion of conservation with the outdoor skills in the Scouting program. Previous to this point outdoor skills were included in the *Boy Scout Handbook*, but newer editions began to include a section on conservation.⁸⁰ In addition, as will be discussed later, a later National Meeting would pass a resolution about the BSA's official stance on conservation.

Going forward a year from the 1st National Meeting, the next time the National Council met was February 1912. This meeting acts as a barometer for the progress of the BSA in developing as an organization, and whether or not their goals from a year ago had been achieved. The result is clear, that the BSA had indeed achieved their goal of defining the BSA separate from military connotations. In addition, the prestige of the BSA had risen dramatically. Two key points from this meeting paint a picture of how far the BSA had come in just one year. As mentioned earlier, one of the problems faced by the Boy Scouts of America was jockeying with other organizations for the right to franchise the Scout troops across the United States. By the second year of its existence, the BSA had enveloped or outmuscled all competitors except for one, the American Boy Scouts. As of February 1912, the American Boy Scouts was still around, but clearly not in position to fight the BSA for the title of the heir to the Scouting movement in the US. General Wingate, a member of the BSA's National Council had been working with General McAlpin of the ABS to incorporate them into the BSA. Up to this point the efforts were fruitless. The implication of Wingate's statement, that the

⁸⁰ *Boy Scout Handbook* ed. 1, 2, 3

ABS “would eventually cooperate,” identifies the ABS as no longer a competitor, but more of a nuisance to the development of the BSA.⁸¹ The ABS, in an attempt to differentiate themselves from the BSA renamed themselves the United Boy Scouts of America in 1913.⁸² At this point the Boy Scouts of America is unquestionably the Scouting organization for the United States.

Adding support to this is the fact that Lord Robert Baden-Powell was attending the 2nd National Meeting. Lord Baden-Powell was conducting a tour of the America to see how the Scouting movement had developed. The Boy Scouts of America had, in his view, successfully stuck to “the real purposes of the movement... that the Boy Scout movement was educational in character and in no way military, and further that it has nothing to do with any form of religion or politics, but was purely an educational movement.”⁸³ Again two descriptions of the Scouting movement, and of the BSA, appear here, that the BSA is not a military organization and instead is purely educational. The issue of militarization comes up over and over in the documents from the early years of the Boy Scouts of America. The perception and identity of the BSA is intrinsically tied to the decision to separate from the military. The educational aspect of the Boy Scouts is easier to sell to prospective parents of young Scouts, and the US pre-World War I was fiercely isolationistic. Put in concert with the BSA’s involvement in the war effort in World War II, the decision of how to market the identity of the Boy Scouts is a reflection of American society, a reflection of the priorities of the public, not the priorities of the members of the National Council. In terms of an organizational

⁸¹ *Minutes of the 2nd Annual Meeting of the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America 1912*

⁸² "UNITED STATES BOY SCOUTS NEW NAME OF ORGANIZATION". *Christian Science Monitor*, November 15, 1913, 22.

⁸³ *Minutes of the 2nd National Meeting*

identity, the decision of the founders to promote ideas of *citizenship* and *manliness* gives flexibility to determine the specifics of how to achieve that goal. At this point in the BSA's history, education and tangible survival skills are the method of choice to accomplish that ambition.

Finally, one facet of the Scouting movement had yet to be institutionalized. The first edition of the Boy Scout Handbook includes various chapters about outdoor skills like fire building and finding edible plants. However in terms of how the actual BSA thought of itself and how it defined its own identity the importance of conservation was missing. It took until 1913, at the 3rd National Meeting, for conservation to be officially included in the Boy Scouts of America. On February 11 a resolution was unanimously adopted. It read

“RESOLVED, that we recommend that the troops co-operate with the public authorities in the conservation of those forms of plant and animal life which are useful, and the prevention and destruction of those animals and pests, such as flies mosquitoes, rats and so forth, that are harmful. And further, that in order to have the most beneficial effect upon the scouts, the scoutmasters make clear to their troops that all such actions should be taken for the benefit of humanity, and that humane methods be employed.”⁸⁴

The BSA officially recognizes the importance of conservation for not just the Scouting movement but all of America. Interestingly it simultaneously advocates for conservation and eradication. A reflection of previous thoughts on how balance human and wild life, the BSA nonetheless incorporates forward thinking plans by recommending that troops work with public authorities. Thinking in terms of the organizational structure of the BSA, it's telling that the National Council 'recommends' this idea to their troops, instead of mandating it. Despite the continued growth of the

⁸⁴ *Minutes of the 3rd Annual Meeting of the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America 1913*

BSA, and their place as the central axis of the Scouting movement in the US, the National Council members felt it necessary to only recommend this action to the troops under their umbrella.

Three years into its existence, the Boy Scouts of America have succeeded in taking control over the Scouting movement in the United States. Early concerns with competing organizations, and the military perception of the public were tamed and turned into defining aspects of the identity of the BSA. The relationship with Theodore Roosevelt helped to cement the BSA as the most popular Scouting group in the United States, and the early letter containing the blessing of the founder of the Scouting movement had blossomed into the inclusion of Lord Robert Baden-Powell on the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Conclusion

The initial years of any organization are key to develop a corporate identity, and path going forward. The decisions made then can chart a course to success and longevity or to an early end. After the release of *Scouting for Boys*, the Scouting movement started by the Englishman Lord Robert Baden-Powell, troops of boys popped up across the United States. Various organizations popped up to take advantage of this opportunity, the Boy Scouts of America being one of them. The BSA was founded in 1910, in Washington DC. The location of incorporation was no accident, as the BSA sought to take up the mantle of organizing and franchising the Scouting movement in America. Understanding the development of the BSA requires first understanding the development of the identity of the group. This identity, the qualities and signifiers of the BSA, informs and reflects the course of action that the founders took in creating what is now one of the largest youth organizations in the United States. This alone is reason to study the Boy Scouts of America. The impact that the BSA has had on the men of America, and the undoubtedly significant impact of the BSA on American ideas of masculinity make academic work on the organization both needed and interesting. This work serves to open the door to the issues and challenges that the BSA faced in its formative years.

This task of tracking and analyzing the identity building process of the BSA is made easier by the BSA itself, as they took steps early on to preserve their own history. The archives for the BSA is filled with letters, notes, meeting agendas, uniforms and anything imaginable that is associated with them. The sources used for this thesis only scratch the surface of what is held in the BSA's archives.

Over the course of the first three years of the Boy Scouts of America, four main topics surface repeatedly, four areas where the BSA needed to define and defend itself as it grew. The first issue that the BSA faced was how to differentiate itself from other organizations that wanted to capture the American zeal for the Scouting movement. The American Boy Scouts and the Boy Scouts of the United States were two competing groups that fought for the control over the future of Scouting. However the Boy Scouts of America were the only group to receive the approval of Lord Robert Baden-Powell, which they parlayed into national recognition. In addition to pushing out other groups, the Boy Scouts of America also quickly worked to make their organization open and widely acceptable. The success of the BSA in numbers, 300,000 enrolled in the first year, proved that there was only one organization that captured the American desire for the Scouting movement.

Secondly, the Boy Scouts of America struggled with a perception of militarization. While partly related to the press generated by the decidedly para-military American Boy Scouts, the BSA still made the conscious decisions to step away from an over relationship with the military. Moves like removing any military titles from the organization worked to create space and redefine the BSA as a civilian group for the express purpose of developing young boys into men through educational means.

The early identity of the Boy Scouts was also tied intrinsically to ideas of citizenship. The implications in terms of gender and racial relations could very well be its own essay, a point of possible future work. One of the early decisions made by the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America was to state that one of the express purposes of the BSA was to develop citizenship. Ties to the President of the United

States, incorporated into the organization as the Honorary President of the BSA, also helped to develop the BSA as an authentically American organization.

Finally the Boy Scouts of America made the decision to define themselves as non-denominationally Christian, and open to boys of any social class. The early meetings show that there was active work to make the uniform cost less, and that the BSA was not just for any one Christian religion. While in the modern day the religious nature of the organization is contested, at the time the clear choice was to include God in the BSA. By opening the BSA to boys of any religion or social class, they paved the way for the enrollment of hundreds of thousands of boys.

While still in its infancy as an organization, the structural framework of a National Council and decisions to delineate the Boy Scouts of America as a decidedly civilian organization worked to mold the BSA into the only standard bearer of Lord Robert Baden Powell's Scouting movement. Strong and swift actions taken by the founders of the BSA headed off potential problems, and propelled the organization into decades of future success. The Boy Scouts of America is very clearly an organization that is conservative in nature. Instead of pursuing the culture of personality and luxury, it promoted character and citizenship. Instead of opening new avenues to define manhood, it harkens back to Victorian ideals of self-sufficiency, and ideals of citizenship. However at the same time the Boy Scouts, with an emphasis on outdoor skills also calls to mind the new virile and powerful ideas of masculinity developing at the same time that the BSA is founded.

This is the reason for the BSA's meteoric rise to prominence in the American conscious. By incorporating ideals of good citizenship and development of character the

BSA brought aboard older white men struggling with their changing understanding of their place in society. At the same time, the emphasis on outdoor skills and games and competition appealed to younger generations of male Americans. The balance between these two characteristics of the BSA allowed not just for success in 1910, but also helps to explain the longevity of the organization into the modern day.

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