



# Membership Retention in Scout Troops

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## 1 Introduction

The headline of Scouts Canada's annual report exclaimed in big letters "Membership is Climbing!". The report went on to praise the exciting programme Scouts Canada offers and to thank Scouters and others for making it all happen. That was in 1996, when membership rose to 231,042 members, an increase of 1% (Scouts Canada 1996:17). It was the first year of membership growth since 1981, but it was also the last. As of 2007, membership was 99,573.

The 57% decline between 1996 and 2007 is not the full story. At the height of membership in 1965, Scouts Canada had 321,608 members consisting of 288,084 young people and 33,524 adults. At this time, the Beaver section did not exist; young people had to be eight years old before they could join. With Beavers removed for a proper comparison, 2007 youth membership was 52,674, a decline of 82% since 1965.

This membership decline, both long-term and in recent years, is a pressing concern for Scouts Canada. Since Scouting is a non-formal educational movement for young people, fewer members means that Scouts Canada is further from achieving its mission. On a practical level, Scouts Canada spent \$139 per youth member on staff salaries and benefits during 2006/2007 (Scouts Canada 2007:4). The total payroll expense reported in Scouts Canada's annual reports has remained in the neighbourhood of \$10 million since at least year 2000, despite massive membership loss during this time. Since Scouts Canada is funded primarily by membership fees, it faces the possibility of being unable to afford its bureaucracy as the number of fees collected diminishes.

However, not all is dark. While membership is falling in general and groups are closing, some Scout groups are growing and vibrant. During 1999/2000, there was growth in approximately 900 groups, about one-quarter of groups at the time (Newsome 2001). This indicates that it is possible to run a Scout group with growing membership, but that few do so.

Canada is not alone. Scouting in many countries around the world is experiencing membership decline. This study will provide a picture of how Scouts Canada programmes look in real life and it will identify what characteristics of Scout troops lead to high levels of retention of members. My hope is that the findings of this research will be used to bring growth to Scouting, both in Canada and around the world.

## 1.1 The Rise and Fall of Membership

Let us begin by briefly examining Scouts Canada's membership figures from over the years. Figure 1 shows the membership census of Scouts Canada starting in 1914, the year Scouts Canada was incorporated, and ending in 2007, the most recent year for which figures are available (Scouts Canada, various dates). These numbers are from Scouts Canada annual reports which I found on a visit to the excellent library in the Belleville Scout-Guide Museum in Belleville, Ontario.

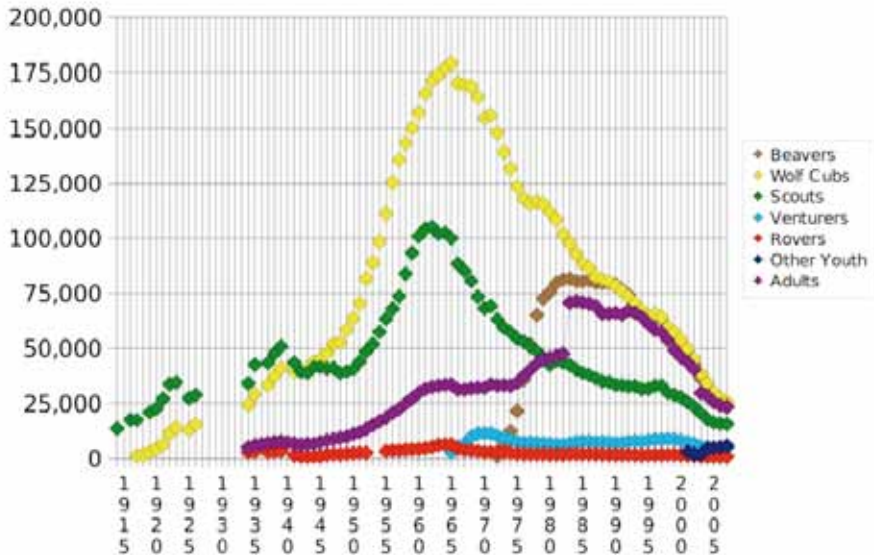


Figure 1: Scouts Canada's Membership by section

Scouts Canada's core programme sections are currently Beavers (ages 5–7), Wolf Cubs (10–8), Scouts (11–14), Venturers (14–17), and Rovers (18–26). "Other Youth" refers to short-term, non-Scout Method programs run by Scouts Canada since 2001. The Venturer program started in 1965. Until then, the age range for Scouts covered roughly what is now covered by Scouts and Venturers. Beavers started in 1972, which opened membership to an age range that had never before been able to join. Data for Rovers and Adults begins in 1934. Some early year data was not available and is interpolated in the graphs that follow.

The number of adults jumps up in 1983 when the membership census started to include "non-programme adults". Absolute numbers before and after this date are not directly comparable. The peak of adult membership, whether or not one counts "non-programme adults", was 1984, two decades after the peak of youth membership.

There is a sudden drop in adult membership in 2002. That year, Scouts Canada undertook a major restructuring which upset many adults. Locally-elected Scout councils were replaced with centrally-appointed teams. In 2000, a new Scouts Canada bylaw had divided the membership into Ordinary Members, with no voting rights, and Voting Members, of which there were 100 across the country. The changes of 2002 took away from the Ordinary Members their remaining say in the selection of the Voting Members. The transition to a non-democratic, self-perpetuating governance structure was complete.

The rate of membership decline has increased. The average rate of decline for five years ending 1992 was 1.5%; for 1997, 2.3%; for 2002, 6.7%; and for 2007, 9.1%. The Centenary of the Scout Movement was celebrated in 2007. That year had a decline of 3.1%, the smallest decline in a decade. This is likely due to the extensive media coverage of the Centenary and the Canadian Jamboree held that year.

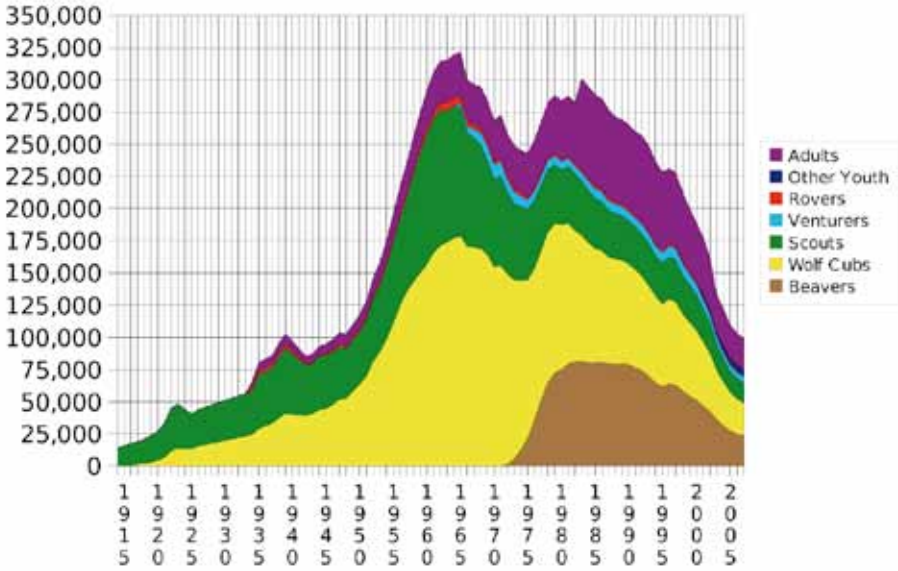


Figure 2: Scouts Canada's Membership, stacked

Figure 2 presents the membership data as a stacked graph. The second peak of membership, in 1981 or 1983, depending on how you count adults, is entirely due to the introduction of the Beaver programme.

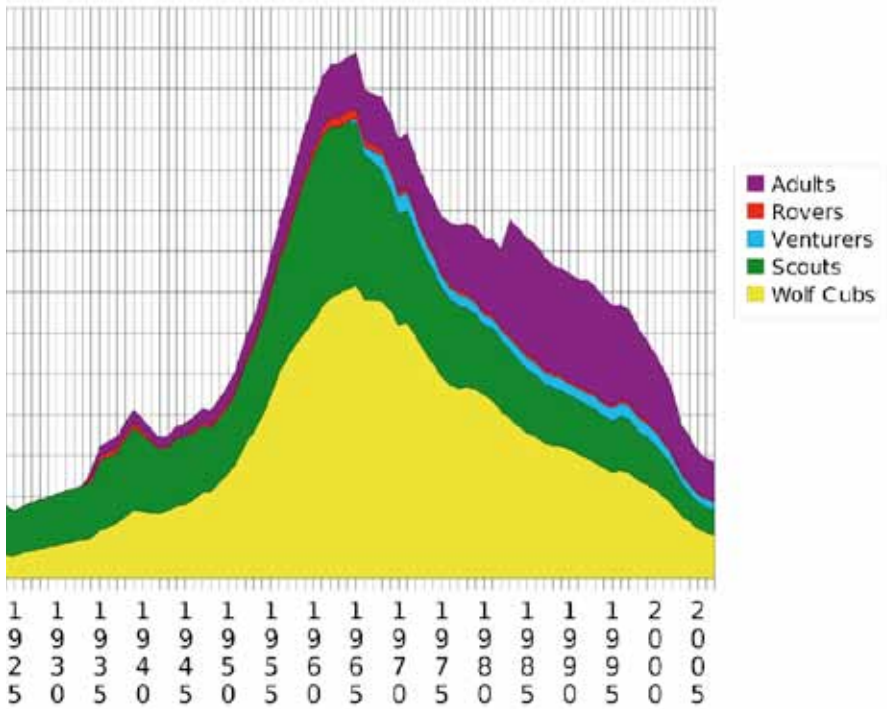


Figure 3: Scouts Canada's Membership, no Beavers

Since the Beaver section opened membership to a new age range, a more clear picture of the rise and fall of membership can be gained by removing Beavers from the picture (see Figure 3). Put simply, membership rose until the 1960s and has fallen since. In 1968, Scouts Canada conducted a massive redesign of its programmes. It would be tempting to blame these changes for the ongoing decline. However, it is not that simple: The 1960s were a time of substantial social change in Canada, reflecting some of the changes in the United States of America. Scouting is not immune to changes in the wider society.

When the Beaver section was formed, one of the hopes was that it would provide a steady supply of new members. It did provide a membership boost since young people can be members for longer. However, besides a short levelling-off of Cub membership decline in the late 1970s, there is no noticeable increase in the number of Cubs or Scouts. Beavers may have meant that young people join sooner, but it didn't cause more people to join than would have otherwise.

As I mentioned earlier, membership increased in 1996. This increase was felt in all five programme sections. Scouts and Rovers also increased the following year, but by much less. Why did this happen? The Wolf Cub programme was changed somewhat in 1995, but I don't think these changes would have led to increases in all sections. However, something was happening in Canadian society. Canada is a federal country with 10 provinces. In the French-speaking Province of Québec, there has long been political movement which wanted Québec to leave Canada. In 1995, there was a referendum on independence in which the Québécois

voted, by the smallest of margins, to stay in Canada. The debate within Québec created an outpouring of patriotism across the country. This may have lead parents to sign up their children for Scouting, perceiving Scouting as a movement connected with patriotism.

Scouts Canada was originally for males only. Females were permitted to join Rovers in 1971, Venturers in 1984, and the remaining programme sections in 1992. This was “local option co-ed Scouting”: individual units could choose whether or not to admit girls. In 1998, local option was removed and all sections were required to admit males and females equally. It is interesting to note that none of these changes in co-ed policy are readily apparent in the graphs, with the possible exception of the 1996 increase. Today, Scouts Canada’s youth membership is about 6% female.

Figure 4 shows how the youth membership of Scouts Canada was divided between the various core programme section. The Beaver section rapidly and very smoothly grew to having a membership share about equal to that of the Cubs, then declined along with the Cubs.

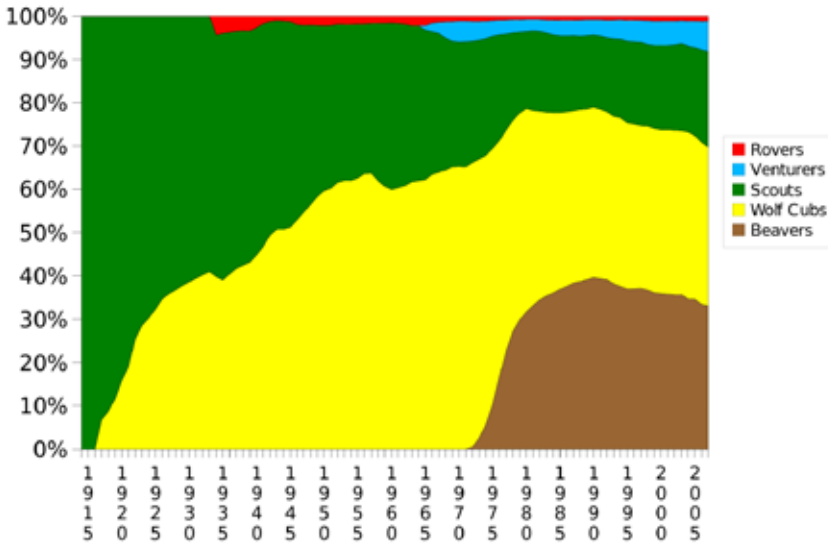


Figure 4: Scouts Canada’s Membership Section Share

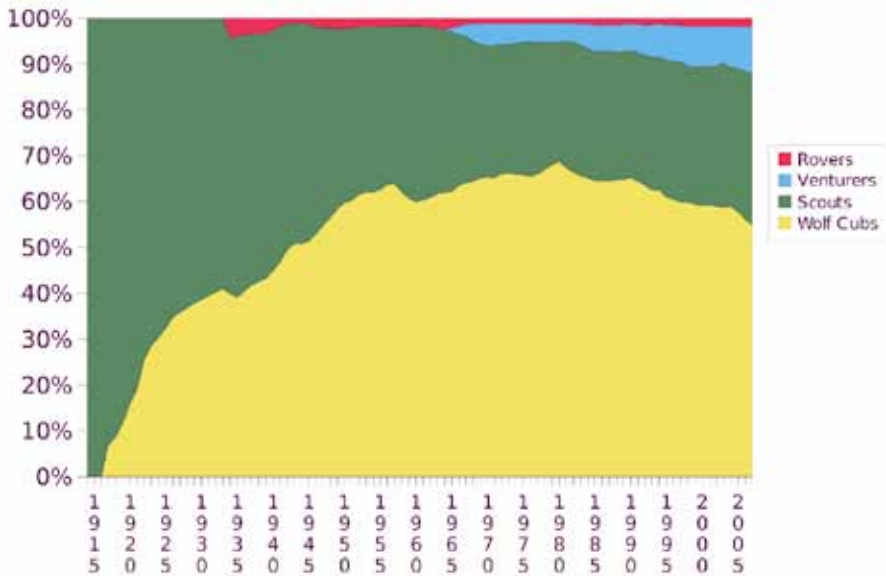


Figure 5: Scouts Canada's Membership Section Share, no Beavers

Figure 5 presents the membership share data with Beavers removed. Much like the Beavers, Cubs quickly carved out their share once the section started in 1917. Their share peaked in 1980 and has mostly fallen since, and with increasing speed. I hypothesize that this is because the Cub programme, which spends less time in outdoor activities compared to the older sections, has more effective competition from other youth activities. As well, Scouts Canada registration fees have increased at a rate well above the rate of inflation. As the price increases, parents may be more likely to consider the Scout and Venturer programmes to be worth the money since these programmes generally have more adventurous activities.

The Scout age range was divided into Scouts and Venturers in the mid-1960s. The Venturer membership share reveals what had been long true: most Scouts were in the younger part of that age range.

Membership numbers for the Rover section are not available before 1934. During this first year of data, it had the highest membership share here recorded. The share is diminished during the Second World War, when many Rovers left for the war, then bounced back somewhat before declining in the late 1960s to a relatively stable sliver of the membership.

Much can be learned by looking at the membership graphs, but ultimately, there is one underlying message: membership is declining and fast. This is happening while Canada's youth population remains relatively constant. The rest of the paper will look at part of why the decline is happening and what we can do about it.

## 1.2 This Paper

The remainder of this paper is the main part of my 2001 Senior Essay for my Honours Bachelor of Arts in Sociology at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, which I wrote under the supervision of Professor Ron Lambert. I have made a few minor edits to make the paper easier to understand. The introduction in the original paper is an orientation for those unfamiliar with the Scout Movement. The original paper also includes an appendix of descriptive statistics. The original paper is available on the Internet at this address: <http://scoutdocs.ca/MRST>

## **2 Method**

Scouts Canada has done some research on membership, such as a study by Angus Reid in 1998 (see McLaughlin 1998). Previous work has focused on the level of the individual, asking questions about why the individual left Scouting or about the individual's attitudes towards Scouting. The present study takes a different approach. The major unit of analysis is the Scout troop, not the individual Scout. This study will identify some of what differs between troops with high levels of membership retention and those with low levels.

Information was gathered in three ways. Troop meetings were unobtrusively observed. Of greatest interest was any ritual activities (such as flag break and reciting the Scout Promise), the use of uniforms, how much time was allocated to different activities, and how leadership was shared by the Scouters (adult leaders). General qualitative observations were also recorded.

The Scouters were asked to provide information about the troop. Scouters helped me to fill in a calendar of their activities between September 1999 and August 2000. Next they were asked a few questions about their programme, the use of uniforms, and recruitment and retention activities. Last, Scouters were asked about their troop's membership. They were given a list of Scouts registered with the troop during the 1999/2000 year and asked about their current status. Scouters were asked where new members had come from. Once the information was collected, the list of names and the data were separated to protect privacy.

Scouters were given a written questionnaire which included questions about their training, knowledge about Scouting, and some attitude questions. Responses for a given troop were aggregated to create troop-level data.

The data was analyzed with percentage retention of members between 1999/2000 and 2000/01 as the primary dependent variable. The study was conducted during the first part of 2001, so the conditions during 1999/2000 were not observed. It is reasonable to assume, for the purposes of an exploratory study, that what was observed in 2001 is similar to what happened during 1999/2000. A future study employing longitudinal methodology would not rely on this assumption and would avoid the potential problem of poor recall on the part of the Scouters.

### **2.1 Sample**

Seventeen urban Scouts Canada troops from Waterloo Region, Ontario participated in the study. A list of Scout groups showing adult membership and Scout-section membership had been provided by the local Scouts Canada office. Troops were contacted by telephone through their Troop Scouter. The response to requests to participate was enthusiastic. Of troops contacted all save one were happy to participate, and indicated that they felt such research would be very valuable. Due to time constraints, four of the 17 troops were not visited at their meeting. For these troops, the survey section was completed with one of the troop's Scouters at another time. One troop was excluded from most of the statistical analysis because it had operated for only a relatively small part of 1999/2000.

Questionnaires were distributed to 33 Scouters. Most completed them on the spot. Five brought them home with stamped and addressed envelopes. Of these, two responded. The questionnaires included information letters and informed consent forms.

### **3 Findings**

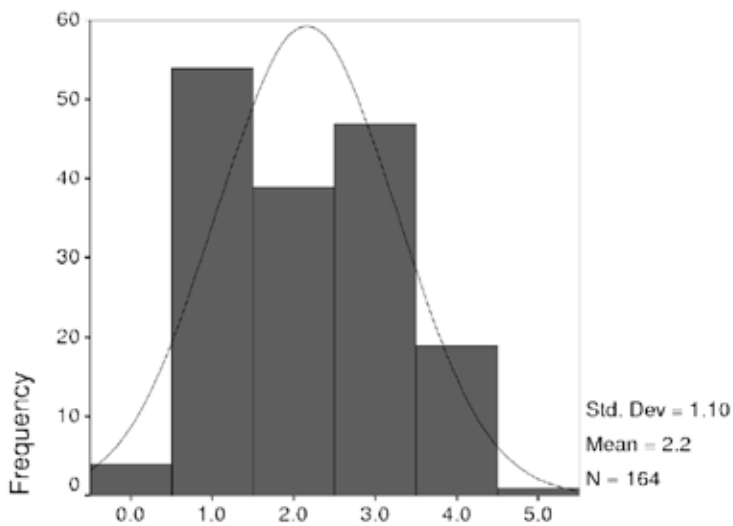
The first number calculated was the rate of retention for each troop. To calculate this number, the number of Scouts who were members of the troop during both 1999/2000 and 2000/01 was divided by the number of Scouts who were members during 1999/2000. Scouts who moved away or who became of Venturer age were excluded from the calculation. The average rate of retention was 68%. Troops ranged from retaining no one to retaining everyone. The following sections look at the effect of various variables on membership retention.

#### **3.1 Troop Membership**

Before looking at troop-level variables, let us get a sense of the nature of the beast, so to speak, by looking at the membership composition of the Scout troops. I will examine the number of years the Scouts have been in the Scout section and the badge level obtained.

Troops in the sample had a total current membership of 164 Scouts (see Figure 6). The frequency distribution has an interesting shape. For analytical purposes, Scouts who have been in for zero years (N=4) will be ignored. These Scouts are ones who had leaped up from Cubs within the past few weeks. Scouts who have been in for four years (N=19) and five years (N=1) will also be ignored. Many Scouts move to Venturers at this age, so the numbers will not count all who have been in Scouts for that length of time. (While Beavers and Cubs are generally conceived as three-year programmes, Scouts is seen as either three or four years. The Scout and Venturer age ranges overlap by one year. I do not have any information about Venturer Company membership.)





Year in Scouts	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	4	2.4	2.4	2.4
1	54	32.9	32.9	35.4
2	39	23.8	23.8	59.1
3	47	28.7	28.7	87.8
4	19	11.6	11.6	99.4
5	1	.6	.6	100.0
Total	164	100.0	100.0	

Figure 6: Troop Membership

The frequency distribution shows an odd pattern with a clear mode in first year, a large drop to second, then an increase to the third year. To attempt to explain this pattern, we will look at how retention rates vary by the seniority of the Scouts. In Figure 7, we see that 60% of first year Scouts were retained while 84% of senior Scouts (all other years) were retained. In other words, Scouts who have returned to Scouts once are much more likely to return again.

			Retained in Scouts		Total
			Not retained	Retained	
Seniority	First year	Count	24	36	60
		% within Seniority	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
	Senior	Count	13	66	79
		% within Seniority	16.5%	83.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	37	102	139
		% within Seniority	26.6%	73.4%	100.0%

**Pearson Chi-square**  $\chi^2=9.677$ ;  $p=.002$  (2-sided)

Figure 7: Retention in Scouts by Seniority

The low rate of retention of Scouts between first and second year explains the drop seen in Figure 6. Why the increase in year 3? We must keep in mind that the population of Cubs is constantly declining (see Figure 1), and therefore the number of Cubs leaping up to Scouts is also declining (nearly three-quarters of new Scouts come from Cubs). The current third-year Scouts would have come up from Cubs in a larger cohort than did the second-year Scouts. Since 84% or so of them would have been retained when moving from second to third year, this cohort remains larger than the second year cohort. It is smaller than the first year cohort because of the large drop in membership between first and second year. A longitudinal survey could get a better fix on these trends. Suffice it to say that many young people try Scouts for one year and don't return for more. For every two Scouts who join, only one will make it to third year.

Let us look at how number of years in Scouts affects the chances that a Scout will continue to Venturers. In all, 14 of 31 Scouts of Venturer age (45%) continued to Venturers. Seven were of Venturer age not having been in Scouts at least three years (see Figure 8). (The number in the Year in Scouts column is their year number assuming they were still in Scouts. So someone who was in Scouts for three years then moved to Venturers will have a four in that column.) We see in Figure 8 that 69% of Scouts who had been in for three years were retained through to Venturers. Of young people who stayed in Scouts for an extra year, only 27% made it to Venturers.

			Retained to Venturers		Total
			No	Yes	
Year in Scouts	3 or fewer	Count	5	2	7
		% within Year in Scouts	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
	4	Count	4	9	13
		% within Year in Scouts	30.8%	69.2%	100.0%
	5	Count	8	3	11
		% within Year in Scouts	72.7%	27.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	17	14	31
		% within Year in Scouts	54.8%	45.2%	100.0%

**Pearson Chi-square**  $\chi^2=4.196$ ;  $p=.041$  (2-sided)

Due to small number of cases in year 3 or fewer, statistics are

Figure 8: Retention in Venturers by Seniority

This difference can easily be accounted for. Fourth-year Scouts are usually in Grade 9 and 14 years old. They have little in common with the Grade 6 eleven year-olds who would be the first year Scouts. This, combined with a possibly repetitive programme, may have caused these older Scouts to become bored and dissatisfied with the programme. Because of this dissatisfaction with Scouting, they were less willing to give Venturers a try. The policy implications of this are that Scouts should be encouraged to move to Venturers after three years in Scouts, not after four. This finding fits with the World Scout Bureau's recommendations on the age ranged of Scout programmes (WOSM 1998:30; 1997a:23).

It is possible, of course, that most Venturers only stay in that programme for one year. This would mean that moving a Scout to Venturers after three years rather than four would have no impact on the total amount of time that that young person would spend in Scouting. However, this seems unlikely to me. For this to be true, the retention rate in Venturers would have to be much lower than in Scouts. It seems to me that the greatest loss of members happens between sections. More research on Scout-Venturer linking could resolve this question.

Having said all this about the troops as a whole, individual troops tend to display modal clustering of members in one or two year levels. For example, a troop may have lots of second year Scouts, but few in other years. I suspect that this is the result of variable numbers of new Scouts leaping up from Cubs. A longitudinal study could find out if this is the case.

### 3.1.1 Effect of Badge Earning on Retention

So far, we have found that Scouts who have returned once are more likely to return for another year than Scouts who have not. Is there something we can do to increase the likelihood that Scouts will return, particularly if they are first year Scouts? Let us look at the effect of badge achievement. A Scout can be at one of five badge levels. The first level is uninvested. Scouts are normally formally invested into troop membership shortly after they join. Upon investiture, they become Pioneer Scouts. By earning a number of badges, Scouts can advance to become Voyageur Scouts, Pathfinder Scouts, and then achieve the Chief Scout's Award. Figure 9 lays out the relationship between retention and badge level. Scouts who have achieved a higher badge level have much higher levels of retention. This result is probably polluted by the fact that the measure of badge level is the Scouts' current badge level. Scouts who did not return would not have the option of advancing in their badges. However, each level above Pioneer Scout should be obtainable in one year. A longitudinal study could investigate this point more fully. For now, we can get some confirmation by looking at the relationship between badge level and retention to Venturers. Venturers cannot work on Scout badges with the exception of a final three months of work on the Chief Scout's Award (Scouts Canada 1998:100).

			Retained in Scouts		Total
			Not retained	Retained	
Badge level	Pioneer Scout	Count	23	46	69
		% within Badge level	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	Voyageur Scout	Count	8	45	53
		% within Badge level	15.1%	84.9%	100.0%
	Pathfinder Scout	Count	1	9	10
		% within Badge level	10.0%	90.0%	100.0%
	Chief Scout's Award	Count		1	1
		% within Badge level		100.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	32	101	133
		% within Badge level	24.1%	75.9%	100.0%

**Pearson Chi-square**  $\chi^2=6.978$ ;  $p=.073$  (2-sided)

Figure 9: Retention in Scouts by Badge Level

Scouts who have earned a higher badge level are more likely to move to Venturers (see Figure 10). Twelve out of 13 (92.3%) Pioneer Scouts did not move to Venturers while only four out of 17 (23.5%) Scouts who had earned higher levels failed to make the jump. This suggests that advanced badge levels would help with Scout retention as well, lending support to the finding above.

			Retained to Venturers		Total
			No	Yes	
Badge level	Pioneer Scout	Count	12	1	13
		% within Badge level	92.3%	7.7%	100.0%
	Voyageur Scout	Count	3	7	10
		% within Badge level	30.0%	70.0%	100.0%
	Pathfinder Scout	Count	1	3	4
		% within Badge level	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	Chief Scout's Award	Count		3	3
		% within Badge level		100.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	16	14	30	
	% within Badge level	53.3%	46.7%	100.0%	

**Pearson Chi-sqaure**  $\chi^2=14.840$ ;  $p=.002$  (2-sided)

Figure 10: Retention to Venturers by Badge Level

We have examined the effect of both seniority and badge level on retention. The picture gets more interesting when these two variables are combined. Figure 11 combines these variables. No first year Scout had obtained either Pathfinder or Chief Scout's Award, which is not surprising since this is essentially impossible. We will restrict the analysis therefore to Pioneer and Voyageur Scouts. For senior Scouts, Voyageurs have a slightly better retention rate than Pioneers (85.0% instead of 81.5%). For junior Scouts, however, the difference is substantial: 57.1% of Pioneer Scouts retained compared to 84.6% of Voyageur Scouts. The Voyageur Scout level is comparable to that of senior Scouts.

Badge level				Retained in Scouts		Total
				Not retained	Retained	
Pioneer Scout	Seniority	First year	Count	18	24	42
			% within Seniority	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	Senior	Senior	Count	5	22	27
			% within Seniority	18.5%	81.5%	100.0%
	Total	Total	Count	23	46	69
			% within Seniority	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Voyageur Scout	Seniority	First year	Count	2	11	13
			% within Seniority	15.4%	84.6%	100.0%
	Senior	Senior	Count	6	34	40
			% within Seniority	15.0%	85.0%	100.0%
	Total	Total	Count	8	45	53
			% within Seniority	15.1%	84.9%	100.0%
Pathfinder Scout	Seniority	Senior	Count	1	9	10
			% within Seniority	10.0%	90.0%	100.0%
	Total	Total	Count	1	9	10
Chief Scout's Award	Seniority	Senior	Count		1	1
			% within Seniority		100.0%	100.0%
	Total	Total	Count		1	1
		% within Seniority		100.0%	100.0%	

**Pearson Chi-sqaure**

Pioneer Scout:  $\chi^2=4.381$ ;  $p=.036$  (2-sided)

Voyageur Scout:  $\chi^2=0.001$ ;  $p=.973$  (2-sided)

Pathfinder and Chief Scout's Award: No statistics are computed because Seniority is constant.

Figure 11: Retention in Scouts by Badge Level and Seniority

Putting these findings together, it seems that Scouts which are either senior by year or advanced in badges have high levels of retention. First year Scouts who do not earn their Voyageur are much less likely to continue with Scouting. This suggests that Scouts in general are attracted by earning badges. Badges, it seems likely, reinforced their connection and therefore their commitment to the group. In order to earn the badges, the Scouts must get fully involved in the programme, leading to higher levels of satisfaction and a desire to return. For some Scouts, however, badges are much less important, so they stay in Scouts regardless of not having advanced badge levels. Since the badges are less important to them, their retention rate remains relatively high once they are senior Scouts.

I noted above that troop membership tends to have modal clustering by year. This clustering is even more pronounced by badge level. In nine out of 16 troops, at least half the members were Pioneer Scouts. In five troops, more than three-quarters were Pioneers. If Scouts who are at a non-modal badge level in their troop are less likely to return, this would create an amplification effect which would tend to make modes more distinct.

To test this, the retention rates of Scouts on the modal badge level for their troop was compared to the rate for those off the modal badge level. Troops without a clear mode were excluded. The level of retention is the same for both groups (see Figure 12).

			Retained in Scouts		Total
			Not retained	Retained	
Mode badge level	On mode badge level	Count	26	78	104
		% within Mode badge level	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	Off mode badge level	Count	6	15	21
		% within Mode badge level	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	32	93	125	
	% within Mode badge level	25.6%	74.4%	100.0%	

**Pearson Chi-square**  $\chi^2=0.117$ ;  $p=.732$  (2-sided)

Figure 12: Retention of Scouts by Modal Badge Level

The findings above, particularly the large number of Pioneer Scouts in sample troops, suggest that badge work is far from a priority in many troops, despite being important both educationally and for the retention of members. To boost membership retention, Scouts should be encouraged and given every opportunity to advance in the badge system. Scouters should make badges an important part of the programme. A good place to start would be with the Scouter training courses. I recall from my Woodbadge training that I was taught that badge work is of limited importance, that some troops are not badge-oriented, and that this situation is normal and acceptable.

### **3.1.2 Retention to Venturers**

I have discussed above the effects of years in Scouts and badge level on retention to Venturers. One further finding deserves note. Eleven of the troops had Scouts who could have or did move to Venturers. In five of these troops, none continued to Venturers. In four, they all were. In the other two, about two-thirds were. So, while the overall rate of retention to Venturers was 45%, in practice, troops tend to link to Venturers either none or most if not all Venturers-aged Scouts. A study which looks specifically at linking could isolate in more detail the variables at work here.

### **3.1.3 Troop Size**

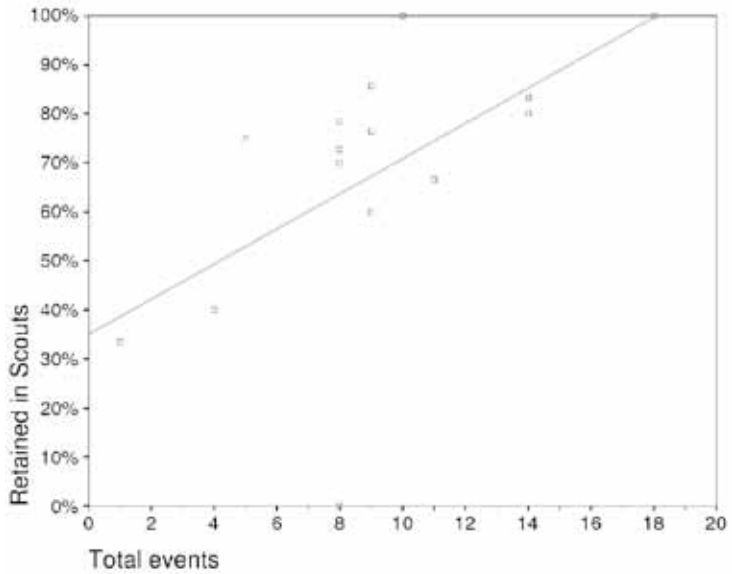
The average troop in the sample had 11.1 members. Troops ranged in size from two to 26. I was unable to isolate the effect of troop size on retention, if any. Retention does correlate with troop size, but certainly low retention will lead to a smaller troop. However, there are reasons to be concerned about small troops (see the Discussion section).

## **3.2 Troop Programmes**

This study is designed primarily to point towards changes that can be made in troop programmes which would increase the retention of members. All troop programmes had the same essential design consisting of meetings with games and skills, and camps and other outdoor activities. Many of the things that are different between troops are difficult to measure. This section will look at three more easily quantifiable variables: the number of outdoor activities, the level of autonomy given to the Scouts, and the involvement of Scouts in the troop's planning process.

### **3.2.1 Outdoor Activities**

Scouters were asked to complete a calendar showing how many camps and other events the troop had attended during the 1999/2000 season. Due to small numbers, the day events were aggregated for analysis. Day events are events, such as day hikes, that are not camps and not regular meetings. Fundraisers were excluded. Troops attended as few as one and as many as ten camps during the year. Fifty percent of troops attended five camps or fewer. The number of camps was added to the number of day events for a troop to yield a total number of events. Troops attended as few as one non-meeting event in the year and as many as 18.



Correlations		Retained in Scouts	Number of day events	Number of Camps	Total events
Retained in Scouts	Pearson Correlation	1	.448	.513	.575
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.041	.021	.010
	N	16	16	16	16

Figure 13: Events and Retention Correlation

Figure 13 shows the relationship between the number of events and retention of Scouts. The number of camps is well correlated with retention at .51 ( $p=.02$ ; see Figure 14 ). The number of day events was also well correlated at .45 ( $p=.04$ ). However, the total number of events, camps and day events, correlated even stronger at .58 and was more significant at  $p=.01$ . Thus, active troops, ones who have many activities in addition to regular meetings, have better retention. These activities could be day events or camps. Camps may be somewhat better.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
No Summer Camp	8	.5666	.29377	.10386	.3210	.8122
Summer Camp	8	.7940	.14956	.05288	.6690	.9191
Total	16	.6803	.25400	.06350	.5450	.8156

ANOVA  $F=3.810$ ;  $p=.071$

Figure 14: Effect of Summer Activities on Retention



Is the number of camps important by itself, or is it a matter of scheduling? For the most part, the events of a given troop were distributed throughout the school year. What impact do events in the summer months, July and August have? Eight of the 16 troops had no activities in July and August. Four of these also had nothing more than two regular meetings in June. Of the eight that had summer activities of any sort, two had weekend camps and the remaining six had camps of at least four nights, such as a week at Haliburton Scout Reserve or a canoe trip.

Figure 14 shows the effect of summer activities on retention. Troops with no summer activities had a retention rate of 56.7% while troops with an activity had a rate of 79.4%. Since no troops had summer activities without also having a summer camp, the impact of this distinction on the programme cannot be assessed. Given the result in Figure 13, it seems reasonable that one or more summer day events would also boost retention, though perhaps not as much as a summer camp. The summer is commonly described by Canadians as the best time to go camping. Given this, it follows that troops would do well to make use of it. The policy implications of this are clear. Troops should be encouraged to run their programmes year-round and supported in accomplishing this.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Never on own	8	.5634	.29341	.10373	.3182	.8087
On own at least once	8	.7972	.14472	.05117	.6762	.9182
Total	16	.6803	.25400	.06350	.5450	.8156

ANOVA F=4.083; p=.063

Figure 15: Effect on Retention of Scouts Being On Their Own

### 3.2.2 Scout Autonomy

One of the goals of Scouting is to help young people learn to take responsibility for themselves, both as individuals and as members of a team, and to develop leadership skills. Baden-Powell believed that patrol leaders (youth members) should be given a high degree of autonomy and responsibility in order for this development to happen (B-P nd:38). Besides making good sense from an educational perspective, I hypothesised that Scouts would like being on their own some of the time and that autonomy would therefore increase membership retention. In Canadian society, kids are not usually entrusted with much personal responsibility or the accompanying freedom. Most activities are adult-lead and supervised. Scouting has a real opportunity here to differentiate itself.

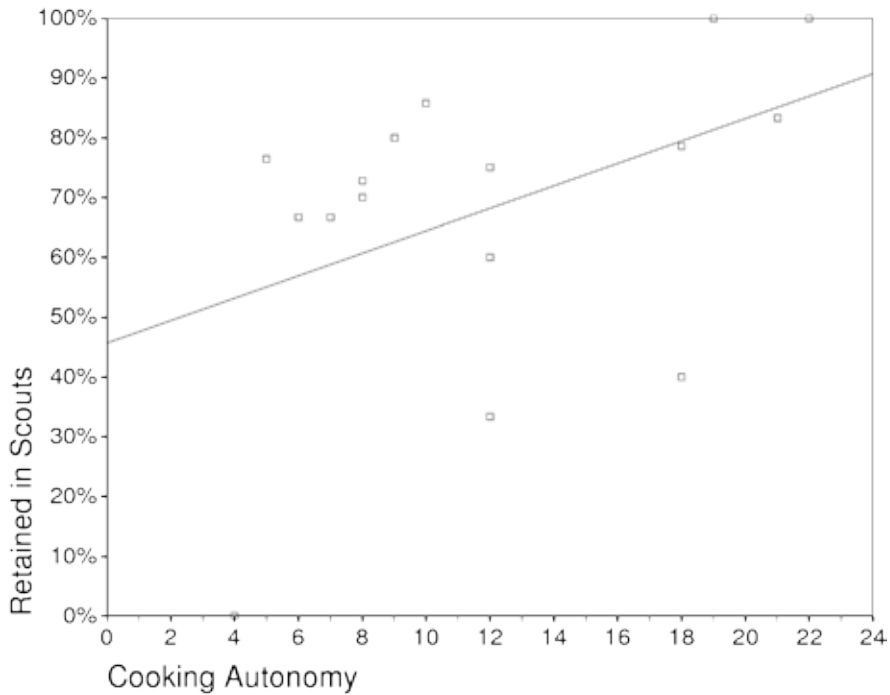
The first measure of autonomy was whether or not Scouts have opportunities to be on their own at Scout activities. Scouters were asked "At any of your troop's activities, were your Scouts on their own without a Scouter, such as for a patrol hike? ". Half of the troops reported that this never happened. The other half reported that it happened at least once. In only two troops had the Scouts been on their own more than twice, so a more detailed analysis was not possible. The rate of retention in the first group was lower than in the second, though with limited significance (see Figure 15). This result does point in the expected direction. More study should be done on this point. It seems unlikely to me that something as simple as having the Scouts be on their own for a single activity would have much impact on retention, yet we seem to observe one. Perhaps a willingness to allow this to happen is indicative of an attitude underlying how the Scouters in the troop relate to their Scouts all the time. Perhaps an attitude of trust of the Scouts may be the real variable, only measured indirectly.

<b>Planning</b>	
Scouters totally responsible	0 points
Scouts assist Scouters	1 point
Scouts plan, Scouters present to supervise	2 points
Scouts plan, Scouters not present	3 points
<b>Shopping</b>	
Scouters totally responsible	0 points
Scouts assist Scouters	1 point
Scouts shop, Scouters are in the store	2 points
Scouts shop, Scouters not present	3 points
<b>Cooking</b>	
Scouters totally responsible	0 points
Scouts assist Scouters	1 point
Scouts cook, Scouters present to supervise	2 points
Scouts cook, Scouters not present	3 points
<b>Cleaning up</b>	
Scouters totally responsible	0 points
Scouts assist Scouters	1 point
Scouts clean, Scouters present to supervise	2 points
Scouts clean, Scouters not present	3 points

Figure 16: Allocation of Points for Measuring Cooking Autonomy

Figure 16: Allocation of Points for Measuring Cooking Autonomy

The second measure of autonomy combines several variables relating to how the troop fed itself at camps. Troops were given between zero and three points in four areas: planning, shopping, cooking, and cleaning up. See Figure 16 for how points were allocated. The points for the last two camps were added p to create a overall score. The higher the number, the greater the amount of autonomy that the Scouts were given. The highest possible score is 24.



<b>Correlations</b>		<b>Retained in Scouts</b>	<b>Cooking Autonomy</b>
Retained in Scouts	Pearson Correlation	1	.436
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.046
	N	16	16

Figure 17: Effect of Cooking Autonomy on Retention

The average of the sample was just less than 12. Scores were clustered. Eleven troops had scores between 4 and 12, slightly skewed towards the higher end of this range. The remaining five troops had scores between 18 and 22. Typically in the first group, Scouters were totally responsible for shopping and were on hand to supervise the other aspects of eating. In some cases, they were totally responsible for planning and/or cooking. Almost never were Scouts totally responsible for any of these aspects. Never were Scouters totally responsible for cleanup. In the second group, scores for each aspect were always two or three. This means that Scouts were responsible for each aspect, frequently without the Scouters present to supervise. Cooking autonomy thus measured and membership retention correlated at .44 ( $p=.05$ ; see Figure 17). Here we have a clear indication that greater levels of autonomy increase retention of members.

Is there a relationship between the two measures of autonomy? It seems to follow that Scouters who allowed their Scouts to be on their own would also give their Scouts more cooking autonomy. Surprisingly, Figure 18 shows no significant relationship between these two variables. This may be due to the weakness of the Scouts-on-their-own measure. There is room for more research on this point. However, it is clear that troops have lots of room to give their Scouts more autonomy on cooking and that doing so would increase membership retention.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Never on own	8	10.13	5.515	1.950	5.51	14.74
On own at least once	8	13.75	6.042	2.136	8.70	18.80
Total	16	11.94	5.893	1.473	8.80	15.08

ANOVA  $F=1.571$ ;  $p=.231$

Figure 18: Relationship Between Scouts Being On Their Own and Cooking Autonomy

What is particularly interesting about this part of the survey was the Scouters' reaction to it. Judging from body language and tone of voice, acknowledging that these can mislead, it appeared to me that most Scouters felt that the level of autonomy they were giving was just the right one, regardless of what level that was. For example, Scouters who did not allow their Scouts to cook on their own seemed to find it strange that I would, by asking the question, suggest doing so. It may simply have not occurred to the Scouters that Scouts are capable of taking responsibility for their own food. This suggests that training may be able to go a long way in increasing the amount of autonomy Scouts are given, and therefore membership retention. Scouters could be told at training course about the importance of giving the Scouts lots of autonomy and how to do it. Unlike the number of events, which if increased leads to more demands on the Scouters, higher levels of Scout autonomy lead to fewer demands on the Scouters. If the Scouts are planning and cooking their food on their own, the Scouters don't have to do it.

### 3.2.3 Planning

Another aspect related to Scout autonomy is the process of planning the troop's programme. B-P wrote that the Court of Honour should be responsible for planning the troop's programme (B-P nd:39). The Court of Honour is a gathering of the Patrol Leaders (a Scout from each patrol) and the Scoutmaster (sometimes Assistant Patrol Leaders are included as well). The involvement of young people in decision-making has been recently reinforced by a new policy from WOSM (see WOSM 1997b). It follows from findings above that more autonomy would increase retention. Planning one's own programme is a form of autonomy. Having Scouts do the planning aligns troop activities with Scout interests and is an excellent educational opportunity.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Scouters	8	.6293	.31702	.11208	.3643	.8943
Scouts assisted Scouters	6	.6973	.16689	.06813	.5221	.8724
Court of Honour	2	.8333	.23570	.16667	-1.2844	2.9510
Total	16	.6803	.25400	.06350	.5450	.8156

ANOVA  $F=0.502$ ;  $p=.617$

Figure 19: Who Did Planning

Despite Scouting's formal emphasis on having the Scouts participate in programme planning, only two troops used a Court-of-Honour for this purpose. A further six troops indicated that the Scouts had some sort of input into the planning that was done by the Scouters. The remaining half of troops indicated that planning was done entirely by the Scouters. Because so few troops used a Court-of-Honour, it is impossible to draw any conclusions as to the impact of retention of doing this (see Figure 19).

### 3.3 Scouters

Scouts Canada emphasises the importance of training for its Scouters. This is done "in the belief that training can help [Scouters] develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required to be effective in their work in the organization" (Scouts Canada 2000a:69). Participation in training should mean that Scouters have a higher level of knowledge about Scouting and this should lead to higher levels of retention. There are two levels of basic Scouter training: Woodbadge Part I and Woodbadge Part II. There are also various skills courses and courses for trainers. This study limited itself to examining Woodbadge courses.

In the questionnaire, Scouters were asked, "What are the elements or parts of the Scout Method, also called Scout Practises? ". Of the 30 Scouters who completed questionnaires, 19 left this spot blank or wrote that they didn't know. Four wrote something that was completely wrong. Six wrote something that included a reference of some sort to at least one of the elements of the Scout Method. One wrote a nearly complete list of the elements, but wrote that they had looked them up. In essence, none of the Scouters had formal knowledge of the Scout Method, despite the fact that it is the fundamental tool box of the Scout programme. Given that only five of these Scouts had no training, it seems that training has failed to teach formal knowledge of the Scout Method. This does not in itself mean that training has not been a benefit for these Scouters, but it does suggest an avenue for improvement of training courses. I recall from my own Woodbadge training that the Scout Method was mentioned briefly at the beginning of the course and not touched again. Training could be designed such that the Scout Method is mentioned throughout the course. The training would then allow Scouters to come to a good understanding of how the Method is most effectively used.

Having said that, does training lead to better retention? Troops were grouped by what level of training had been achieved by the Scouter with the most training in a given troop. In two troops, no Scouters had any training. In 10 troops, Scouters had no more than Woodbadge Part I. In the remaining four, at least one Scouter had Woodbadge Part II. The average rate of retention in the groups shows no significant pattern (see Figure 20). Indeed, inexplicably, the two troops with no training had perfect retention. This result suggests that training may fail to increase retention, though a significant pattern may emerge in a larger sample.

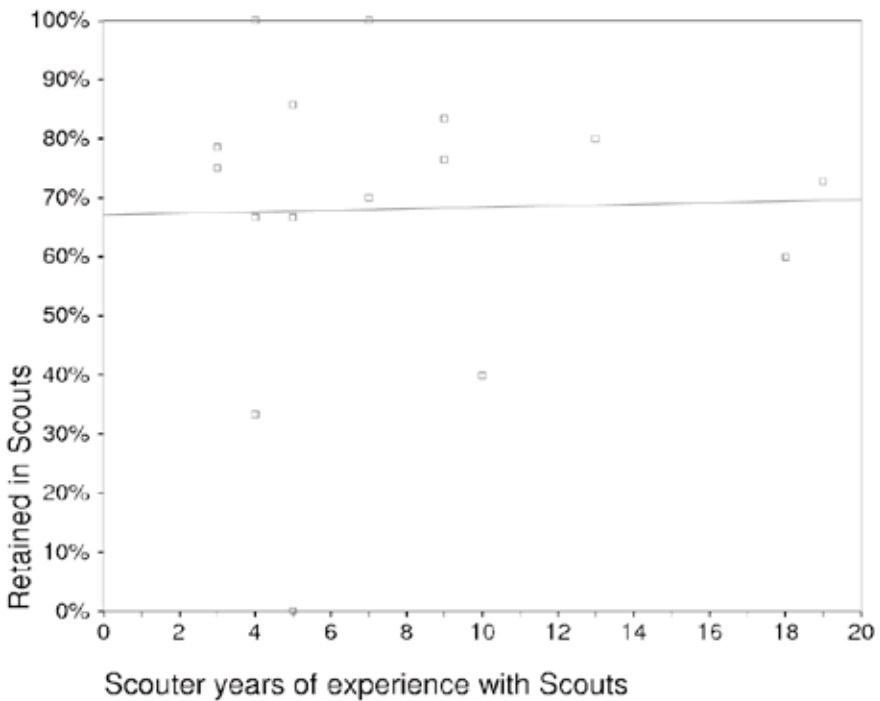
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
No Training	2	1.0000	.00000	.00000	1.0000	1.0000
Woodbadge I	10	.5994	.24728	.07820	.4225	.7763
Woodbadge II	4	.7226	.21635	.10818	.3784	1.0669
Total	16	.6803	.25400	.06350	.5450	.8156

ANOVA F=2.606; p=.112

Figure 20: Scouter Training and Retention

### 3.3.1 Scouter Years of Experience

In Scouting, there is a certain amount of reverence accorded to older, more experienced Scouters. Do more experienced Scouters tend to run programmes which have higher rates of retention? The number of years experience of the most experienced Scouter in each troop in the sample was compared with its rate of retention. The relationship is laid out in Figure 21. The only clear pattern is the happy face in the upper-left corner of the graph. These results lend no support to the hypothesis that experience leads to better retention. I suppose that experience can lead one to have refined one's programme, leading to greater retention. Experience can also lead to one become entrenched running a programme in a way that results in low levels of retention. It is important to note that in no troop was the greatest amount of Scouter experience less than three years. Experience may make a difference at very low levels of experience, but is then overtaken by other factors.



<b>Correlations</b>		Scout retention	Scouter years of experience with Scouts
Scout retention	Pearson Correlation	1	.026
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.463
	N	16	16

Figure 21: Scouter Experience and Retention

### 3.4 The Scout Uniform

Much attention has been paid recently to the role of the uniform in the Scout programme. Scouts Canada's National Commissioner claims that the uniform is a barrier to young people joining Scouting and contributes to a public image that "Scouting is irrelevant and old-fashioned" (Elsworth 2001a). Elsworth encourages Scouters to reduce and perhaps eliminate the use of the uniform in their programmes. Two new programmes that Scouts Canada recently started to offer, ScoutsAbout and Extreme Adventure, do not use uniforms at all (Scouts Canada 2000b:18-19). I have noticed that, in some troops, Scouts are reluctant to wear their uniforms.

In the questionnaire, Scouters were asked "What do you think of the use of the uniform in Scouting?" and were given five lines on which to write an answer. Despite such an open-ended question, answers fell into very few categories. Twenty-four respondents (out of the 30) indicated that they supported the use of the uniform. Most of these gave the reason that the uniform has a role in conferring identity or pride in Scouting (internal purpose), or that the uniform allows the Scouts to be recognised by others (external purpose). Eleven indicated that changes should be made to the uniform. (Seven had indicated both support and a desire for changes. One had no comment and one wrote a comment that fell into its own category.) While no one suggested changes, their criticisms fell into two related categories. Firstly, about half felt that the uniform should be more stylish so that it would appeal to the Scouts. Secondly, Scouters stated that they felt that the uniform is not functional, in particular, not functional for outdoor activities (the word "functional" was itself used in almost every summary, having a uniform is strongly supported by the Scouters because of the functions it serves in the programme. Some advocated changes, but none advocated getting rid of the uniform. The third of the Scouters that advocated changes supported changes that would make the uniform more "practical" or a better fit with dominant culture.

## 4 Discussion

### 4.1 Small Scout Troops

I noted above that the average troop size was 11.1 Scouts. It seems to me that it is more difficult to run a good Scouting programme in a small troop. I know from my own experience that small troops are limited in the kind of programme they can offer. For example, many games require large numbers of Scouts. B-P felt that between-patrol competition is important in the Scout programme (B-P 1945:23). This is not possible if there is only one patrol in a troop. "Each Scout troop consists of two or more Patrols of six to eight [Scouts]" (B-P nd:38). B-P's definition of a Scout troop leads to a minimum troop size of 12. Eleven troops in the sample were smaller than this. Only two troops were large enough to have more than two patrols. WOSM suggests that Scout troops should have between 24 and 48 members (WOSM 1998:25).

There are other reasons why small troops are potentially problematic. Small troops can lead to resources being inefficiently utilised. For example, if a small troop has a talented Scouter, then only a few Scouts will benefit from that Scouter's work. Similarly, some small troops have three Scouters. Scouts Canada policy requires that a troop have one Scouter for every six Scouts (Scouts Canada 2000a:62). Three Scouters could therefore be running a troop of 18. Material resources, such as increasingly rare free meeting halls, are also put to inefficient use with small troops.

Troops may be small because of deficiencies in their programme. Such troops would cause a crowding out effect. For example, Wolf Cubs would leap up the troop, be dissatisfied with the programme, and not return. In the process, they would generate negative word of mouth about Scouting in general. If the troop had not existed, the Cubs would probably have been linked with a neighbouring troop, been satisfied with the programme, and stayed. Thus the quality of a programme is more important than how many troops there are.

Another problem with small troops is the opportunities that they give to potential child abusers. The one-on-one nature of a small troop gives the opportunity to develop the kind of relationships necessary to coerce children to participate in abuse and to remain quiet about it. A large troop has many more sets of ears and eyes. Chances are that at least one would reveal any harmful goings-on. While sexual abuse is probably foremost on most people's minds, discipline techniques which rely on physical or emotional abuse are also an increased risk in small troops.

Some people have suggested that small troops provide opportunities to participate in activities, such as some games, that do not work with a large number of people. This reveals a misunderstanding of the role of the patrol. The patrol is the small group. Large group activities should run at the troop level; small group activities should run at the patrol level.

Re-balancing troop size can be done in two ways. One can increase the number of Scouts or reduce the number of troops. I think one should always be striving to do the former, and hopefully the findings of this thesis will help with that. In the mean time, troops can be merged so that all are a reasonable size. As I discussed above, this merging may itself contribute to membership gain as resources are more efficiently utilised and a greater variety of activities becomes possible.

## 4.2 The Scout Uniform

I mentioned above that many Scouters believe that the Scout uniform is not functional, particularly for outdoor activities. The claim is interesting. Mountain Equipment Co-op is Canada's leading supplier of outdoor equipment. Their recent catalogue has an extensive section of outdoor clothing (MEC 2001:102-109). If one removes specialised clothing designed for specific activities, one is left with a third of a page devoted to organic cotton tee-shirts, and six pages devoted to shirts, trousers, and shorts which are very similar to the Scouts Canada uniform. There is a variety of button-front shirts with collars and front pockets, just like on the Scout shirt. Trousers feature large side pockets and are made of durable materials similar to the Scout trousers. It seems that Scout uniform-like clothing is preferred by serious outdoors people. Parks Canada apparently can't think of any better clothes for the outdoors either, since their park rangers wear a shirt identical to the Scouts Canada uniform.

Baden-Powell wrote that the uniform was designed after that of the South African Constabulary (a police force which B-P had established and designed the uniform for) and was designed to be "comfortable, serviceable, and good protection against the weather" (B-P nd:35). The current Scouts Canada uniform is very similar to the original one. Given all this, it seems to me that there is broad agreement among non-Scouts that the Scout uniform (or clothing just like it) is functional outdoor clothing. So we are left with the question of why so many people say that the uniform is not functional.

B-P said, in what is probably his most-quoted writing about the uniform (e.g. Elsworth 2001b), "I don't care a fig whether a Scout wears the uniform or not so long as his heart is in his work and he carries out the Scout Law" (B-P 1945:24). However, this quote is out of context. B-P goes on to say, "But the fact is that there is hardly a Scout who does not wear the uniform if he can afford to buy it. The spirit prompts him to it." This raises the question, Why does the spirit often fail to prompt Scouts to wear the uniform?



The opposition to the uniform which is expressed by the Scouts can, I think, be traced to the symbolic meaning it holds for them. Consider how the uniform is used. In most troops in the sample, the uniform was worn during only a few activities. At meetings it was usually worn during inspection, opening, and closing. At camps, it was usually worn while travelling to and from camp, and during ceremonies. This adds up to only a small amount of time. More important, it seems to me, is the nature of this time.

During inspection, Scouts are asked to stand still and quiet while their uniforms are critiqued by the Scouters. Opening consists of saluting the Canadian flag and, more often than not, a long series of announcements through which one has to stand. After this, the uniform is removed and a fun game is played.

Likewise at camps, Scouts wear their uniform while sitting in a car waiting to get to camp. They also wear it through the long and often boring opening and closing ceremonies of camps. They probably wear the uniform during Scouts' Own (a spiritual gathering) which often, in my opinion, is designed to resemble church, rather than to meet the Scouts' spiritual needs. Because of this, it too is often boring for the Scouts. The uniform is usually removed when the Scouts put up tents, cook, hike, explore, try out an obstacle course, and generally have fun and learn.

In short, the uniform is worn for the boring activities and removed before the fun begins. Thus, the uniform symbolically represents to the Scouts the boring parts of the Scout experience. They want to remove it so they can get to the fun stuff. Contrast this with a soccer uniform which is worn during games, that is, during the fun part.

Scouts Canada's Angus Reid survey found that kids who leave Scouting are more likely to dislike the uniform than those who stay in Scouting (Elsworth 2001a). Their interpretation of this is that the uniform is causing kids to leave. They dislike the uniform; they don't want to wear it; the only way to stop wearing it is to quit Scouts. They are taking a correlation for causation here. There is another explanation.

Consider a person who is a fan of a winning hockey team. To show their loyalty, they buy a team jersey. Some time passes and the team falls on a year-long losing streak. They haven't won the Stanley Cup in forty years. Some fans would be unfazed. This fan, however, is tired of "losing" and so becomes the fan of another team. Would this person still wear their beloved jersey from the old team? No, suddenly the old jersey is only worn by losers.

In the Scouting context, the Scout uniform represents the Scout programme (and, as we saw above, certain parts of it more than others). Some Scouts become dissatisfied with Scouting and decide to quit. They will likely also become dissatisfied with the uniform that represents the programme. A stark example of this is the case of some Scouts who later quit and became Army Cadets. While Scouts, they disliked the uniform and wore it as little as possible. Once in Army Cadets, they proudly strutted their new Cadet uniforms, which are very similar to Scout uniforms.

Since uniform usage was, with very few exceptions, very similar across the entire sample, nothing can be concluded statistically about the impact of different uniform usage on membership retention. However, there are theoretical reasons which support the hypothesis that uniforms can be used that they contribute to membership retention.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Catholic religious orders were undergoing reforms as a result of Vatican II. One of the changes was that the number of nuns entering orders became much less than the number leaving orders. Previously, it had been the other way around. The result was a large decline in the number of nuns. Interestingly enough, this decline happened to a much greater extent in liberal orders. These orders had accommodated themselves to dominant culture by allowing greater choice in dress and lifestyle. On the other hand, conservative orders, which continued to stress the importance of wearing the traditional habit and the adherence to traditional practises were twice as likely as liberal orders to recruit members (Chimino and Lattin 1998:106). The strict demands on members created a much greater sense of identity among the nuns.

It seems to me that as the habit confers identity to the nun, a Scout uniform should be able to confer identity on the Scout (see also Smith 1995:82). Young people crave identity and often find it by wearing, for example, certain brands of shoes which are heavily advertised. The uniform should help lead to a strong self-identity as a Scout and as a member of a one's troop. I don't believe this would happen, however, if the Scouts feel that they are forced to wear the uniform against their will. If forced, the uniform could become a symbol of being forced to do something, rather than a symbol of Scout identity. My experience suggests that the uniform is a successful agent of identity when new members of a troop see that it is valued by the senior members. They wear it first out of conformity. Later, as their experiences in Scouting builds their commitment to it, the uniform becomes part of their expression of their Scout identity.

It seems to me that the uniform is also more effective in conferring identity when the Scouts have seen that it creates recognition for them. For example, last spring, I took my troop on a bike hike on the Welland Canal. As always on Scout activities, we wore our uniforms. Part of the trip ran through a busy beach area. As we slowly biked through the crowd, I heard dozens of different people comment to their companions, "Oh, look. Scouts on a bike trip!" or words to that effect. The Scouts would have heard these and known that they were recognised. As well, from that standpoint of publicity for Scouting, a thousand or so people at the beach that day found out first hand that Scouts go on bike hikes. This is valuable advertising. If we had not been wearing uniforms, as is advocated by Elsworth (2001a), no one would have known that there were Scouts in the park that day.

There is some empirical support for the hypothesis that stricter use of uniforms contributes to membership retention. The Association des Éclaireurs Baden-Powell (AEBP) is a Québec-based independent Scout Association, member of the FSE, founded in 1973 as a "traditional" Scout Association. The AEBP puts more emphasis on the uniform than Scouts Canada and it is growing. Of course, there are other variables at work here, but this does show that an association can thrive while giving importance to the uniform.

### **4.3 Scout Culture**

Rates of membership retention varied greatly across the troops in the sample, though some patterns emerged. Scouts who had earned badges were more likely to continue in Scouts or to move up to Venturers. Larger troops have greater latitude in choosing programmes and can engage in between-patrol competition. This should lead to greater satisfaction with the programme. Troops have better retention when they are active, that is, when they have lots of outdoor activities. Having activities in the summer months also helps. Scouts crave autonomy. They are more likely to return in troops where they have opportunities to be on their own or when they have significant responsibility for their food at camps. There is reason to believe that making full use of the uniform also boosts retention.

Putting these findings together, the picture of a troop with high membership retention emerges as one which is relatively large, participates in many outdoor activities year-round, Scouts are actively involved in earning badges, Scouts are given significant autonomy, and proudly wear their uniforms as confirmation of their identity as Scouts. In short, it is a picture of a troop that makes the most of the things which differentiate Scouting from other activities. It is a troop which has fully embraced Scout culture.

By Scout culture, I mean the attitudes, values, norms, and behaviours that characterise Scouting. Underlying Scout culture is a radically child-centred approach to education. This child-centredness is the essential characteristic that sets Scouting apart from other approaches to education.

Generally speaking, education is about training young people to meet certain adult-defined standards. Whether teaching sports skills, a musical instrument, or school classes, education is about creating an environment where the kids will move towards the adult understanding of the topic. This is not to denigrate this sort of education. If one is doing math or playing Beethoven, there is a right answer. However, Scouting's subject matter, building character, is one that demands a different approach.

Scouting's radically child-centred approach makes the most of the natural characteristics of young people. B-P wrote that patrol system puts young people "into fraternity-gangs which is their natural organisation, whether for games, mischief, or loafing..." (B-P 1945:18). The Scouter "has got to put himself on the level of the older brother" (ibid:3). Scouters guide their Scout patrols away from mischief, not by suppressing it but by proposing Scouting activities instead. The Scouter does not fight the natural gang organisation of the Scouts, rather attempts to work with it. While when teaching music, the students become mini-maestros, in Scouting, the Scouter becomes a "boy-man" (ibid:19).

This is not to say that the idea of adult standards is absent from Scouting. The very idea of education requires that there be some sort of goal which is being pursued. Standards in Scouting can be seen in the form of the Scout badges. But standards or rules are kept at a minimum. Scouting is "the man's job cut down to boy's size" (quoted in ibid:15). Within this environment, Scouts are given maximum autonomy and responsibility, and they rise to the challenge (ibid:23).

One of the reasons why Scouting works is because within this "child-sized" environment, something which I refer to as "necessary ethics" emerges. The true implications of meanness, a small theft, or other minor misdemeanours is not apparent in a neighbourhood of hundreds. However, when one is in the backwoods with the other six Scouts in one's patrol, it quickly becomes obvious that hogging the cookies ultimately makes the whole trip less pleasant for everyone. Necessary ethics are the ethical rules which become obviously necessary in an isolated small group situation. Scouts are given the Scout Law as a starting point, then learn what it really means by this natural process. If they bring this with them when they return to the city and into adulthood, Scouting has succeeded.

#### 4.4 Organisational Issues

The nature of Scout culture poses a challenge to making successful Scout programmes. Scout culture is counter-cultural. Dominant culture does not emphasise giving autonomy to young people. It does not emphasise the use of formally symbolic things, such as badges. This makes it difficult to get Scouters who are able to properly fill their role. Training and mentoring are important here and the Scout association has a primary role in providing these. For these to be successful, the Scout Association must be comfortable with Scout culture. Scouts Canada, however, seems to be moving in the opposite direction.

Scouts Canada's business plan charts a course towards centralisation. Scouts Canada has established a toll-free phone number to answer programme questions from Scouters, instead of encouraging Scouters to share with each other. The business plan calls for the hiring of staff to run the line (Scouts Canada 2000b:22). The business plan frequently mentions hiring staff to run or support programmes, such as new programmes ScoutsAbout and Extreme Adventure, rather than keeping Scouts Canada a volunteer-driven organisation (e.g. *ibid*:19). The focus seems to be on creating a business-like management structure rather than on creating strong Scout groups. In North Waterloo District, 29% of Scouters are "Admin. Members". This is the only category of membership which is growing in the district (Scouts Canada, North Waterloo District 1999 & 2000). Scouts Canada's business plan calls for the creation of a "Group Scouter" in each group. This would be yet another Scouter who does not work directly with the young people in the section (Scouts Canada 2000b:10).

B-P favoured decentralisation and autonomy for Scouters (B-P 1945:5). However, Scouts Canada is emphasising oversight over autonomy. While this may work well in business, this approach is incompatible with Scout culture. Further, there are only so many Scouters. The people who are to fill all the positions in Scouts Canada's thick bureaucracy have to come from somewhere. The result is that the best Scouters are removed from their troops and put to work as Service Scouters, commissioners, or in other roles. With these talented people gone, programme quality wanes, increasing the perceived need for better section support. More Service Scouters are recruited and the cycle continues. I believe this is the essential pattern that has led to the decline in members over the past three decades. Now, it has been going on so long that many people, even experienced people in high office, have limited knowledge of Scout culture. Without this knowledge, they change the programme and the organisational structure to match the dominant culture they are familiar with.

Is there a path back to traditional Scout culture and away from what B-P called "synthetic Scouting" (B-P 1990:164)? First and foremost, Scouts Canada must find ways of benefiting from those who have an understanding of Scout culture. For example, Scouters must learn how to give their Scouts autonomy. Talented Scouters who currently fill bureaucratic positions must get back to the section where their skills are needed most. This would involve greatly reducing number of Scouters who are dedicated to section support. However, much of this support serves to keep troops with weak programmes from closing, rather than helping troops offer excellent programmes. Scouting would be better off with few excellent troops than lots of mediocre troops.

Most important, Scouters need to have ways of learning Scout culture. Training courses should be times of cultural transmission, rather than focusing on specific skills. For example, modern Woodbadge courses spend a good deal of time on programme planning and on the difference between short, medium, and long range plans. *Aids to Scoutmastership* (B-P 1945) is based on the first Woodbadge course and says nothing about specific programme planning skills. The book is about getting Scouters into the right frame of mind for their role. Beyond training, there must also be opportunities for sharing between Scouters, such as at Scouters' Clubs. Rather than support from corporately appointed Service Scouters, this can encourage peer-level support, which fits with the decentralization of which B-P speaks.

## 5 Suggestions for Future Research

This study identified a number of variables important to membership retention and raises a number of questions which would benefit from more research. A similar study with longitudinal design would allow a more detailed analysis and would get around problem of poor recall. This would allow more detailed information about the nature of camps, for example, to be collected.

Linking from Cubs to Scouts and Scouts to Venturers should be looked at separately. The Secretary General of WOSM has speculated that young people who have been in Beavers are less likely to continue to Scouts because they have already spent so much time in Scouting that it may have lost its appeal (Moreillon 2000). A study of Cub to Scout linking could ask senior Cubs whether or not they were in Beavers to discover if that has any impact on retention to Scouts.

Scout autonomy should be looked at in more detail. In particular, a study could attempt to discover if there is a variable underlying the Scouts-on-their-own measure used above. A larger sample, which includes many troops which use the Court of Honour, could discover what impact this has on retention.

Research could be directed towards testing the hypothesis about the uniform advanced above. Does full use of the uniform lead to greater Scout identity and retention? What factors influence whether or not the Scouts take pride in their uniform or dislike it?

Related to uniforms are badges. One Scouter suggested that Scouts earn more badges on their own if they can only apply for them at one meeting a month, rather than at every meeting, since this creates a sense of urgency. This and other variables could be examined to find out what encourages Scouts to make full use of the badge programme.

Many troops included a number of ritual elements in their programme. For example, most break the flag at the start of each meeting. Many recite the Scout Promise or Law. What impact do these have on the troop? Do troops which recite the Scout Law have better formal knowledge of the Law? Are there fewer behaviour problems in troops which have better knowledge of the Scout Law?

Researchers could look in more detail at regular troop programmes. Activities at regular meetings were of three major types: games, like dodge ball; physical activities, such as doing knots or lashings; and talking activities, where Scouts sit in a group and talk about, for example, rights of citizenship. What impact do different ratios of these activities have on retention? What is the impact of patrol-on-patrol competition?

Much of these questions can also be applied to the other sections, Beavers, Wolf Cubs, Ventures, and Rovers. There could also be valuable research done on retention of Scouters and on the management of volunteer resources.

## 6 Conclusion

Whether or not one agrees with my interpretations in the Discussion section, this study has brought some empirical facts to light. Scouts Canada's membership is falling, not because of a lack of membership recruitment, but because of low levels of membership retention. These low levels of retention are the result of poor quality troop programmes. While many troops have excellent programmes, too often, this is not the case. Scouts Canada's new marketing slogan is "Bring on the Adventure". In too many cases, the question can legitimately be asked: Bring on what adventure?

Most important, there are things that can be done right now that will increase membership retention. There is no reason to either stand by and let membership decline, nor is there any basis for taking Scout programmes off in unfamiliar directions in an attempt to make Scouting "cool and relevant" for today. Increasing the number of outdoor activities and the level of Scout autonomy will quickly have a positive impact on membership numbers. While there is certainly room for much more research on Scouting and this research should be done, these are changes that can be made now.

## 7 Summary of Recommendations

**Focus on Scout culture.** You can't out-Disney Disney. Scouting programmes will be successful when they focus on those things which differentiate them from all the other options out there.

**Focus on quality not quantity.** Service Scouters should focus on helping troops to stay great and to become great, rather than on keeping weak troops open. Small troops should be merged to create large troops with ample resources. In most cases, move Scouts to Venturers after three years rather than four.

**Rethink training.** Mentoring should be used as the primary training method. Training courses should be focused around learning how to use the Scout Method. Scouters need to learn how to create Scout culture more than specific skills.

**More events including summer events.** Scout troops should run a camp or day event every month of the year. There should be at least six camps including a summer camp.

**Give Scouts more autonomy.** Scouts should be responsible for their own food at camps. There should be opportunities for Scouts to be on their own without Scouters. Patrol Leaders should be used to their full potential. The Court of Honour should be well used, particularly for programme planning.

**Use the uniform.** Make the uniform a full part of the Scout experience, rather than something that is pulled on only for ceremonies.

**Use Scout badges.** Make badge earning an important part of Scout programmes. Scouts should earn some badges with the troop and have the opportunity and support to earn badges on their own as well.

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