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"Holla if you hear me": A Conversation with Black, inner-city youth on career preparedness programs

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Theressa N. Cooper entitled ""Holla if you hear me": A Conversation with Black, inner-city youth on career preparedness programs." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

Barbara Thayer-Bacon, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Allison Anders, Robert Kronick, Diana Moyer

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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A Dissertation Presented for
the Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Theressa N. Cooper
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Dedication

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose, Romans 8-28.

To all those who ever prayed with me and for me; to those who stood in the gap and prayed when they saw my spirit waning; to my mental and spiritual cheerleaders; to my ancestors who paved the way for me; to my primary and secondary teachers and university professors who challenged me to be great; to my neighbors in 'the hood' who sat on the stoop and cared enough to ask about my studies even though they didn't understand what I was talking about; to all the 'folks' in Jefferson, TX who believed a little country girl from rural East Texas would go on to do great things,
I dedicate this work to you.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This research study specifically addressed; how vocational preparedness programs effect the career aspirations of Black youth, within the context of the Middle Tennessee Council Boy Scouts of America's Exploring program. The goal of this research is to represent Black youth participating in a vocational preparedness program. Interviews, journals, and rich, thick descriptions are utilized in this work.

Using the lens of narrative inquiry and cultural studies, I hoped to further the field of career development through the experiences of some of its key players, African American youth. Within the context of their stories five major themes surfaced around the ideas: (1) Advancement via Individual Determination. (AVID), (2) Career Self-efficacy, (3) Roles of significant others in career development, (4) Perceptions of the Exploring program, and (5) what would you like to see happen in the Exploring program?

Beyond themes expressed by the research participants, the following underlying factors also came to light; (1) giving voice to Black youth which are part of the marginalized minority population and restoring a sense of narrative power and authority to the youths telling the stories, (2) The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program as a significant influencer, (3) structure and organization of the Learning for Life program, (4) the role of Black women as significant others in the career decisions of participants, and (5) career choice – trade vs. careers.

Preface

I *"I have come to understand that my African-ness does not diminish my American-ness and vice versa. My identity is not an either or proposition. Rather, it is both/and. In the same way my scholarship and my personal/cultural life are not either/or propositions. I do scholarly work that both challenges and enhances my personal and cultural life. I live a personal/cultural life that challenges and enhances my scholarly work. I am a "colored girl" who has attempted to make life in the academy satisfying and meaningful "enuf""*
– Ladson-Billings (1997)

In essence, I am who I am because of where I came from. What an interesting journey life has brought me on so far! In my current position I work as a program coordinator in a college, where one of my responsibilities is helping students figure out what they want to do with their lives and what path will get them there. This daunting task is more than picking out a career; it also consists of figuring out where they see themselves in ten, fifteen, or twenty years and what needs to happen to get them there. It is about hearing their story, for better or worse, and figuring out where they go from here. I am a counselor, advisor, mentor, and friend to the many souls who pass in and out of my doorway. Along with this responsibility, I also work with high school students, specifically Black students, in hopes of recruiting them into our programs and find that for most I need to dawn my "counselor/advisor/mentor/friend" hat so that I can meet their needs. My ability to help my students is deeply rooted in the road I have traveled up to this point.

I am the product of working class parent who, through many metamorphoses of careers (read jobs), worked very hard to offer my siblings and I the grounding, strength and wisdom it takes to be successful in a world with many challenges-especially to Black

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youth. My roots run deep in the piney woods of east Texas, however my parents gave me wings that allowed me to travel throughout my adolescents in search of opportunities. I believe it must be noted that my town could almost be divided 50/50 along the racial lines of Black and White. Our school systems where poor and small, yet nurtured us in a way that showed they cared about our education. Though this is the makeup of many small towns in Texas, it is one of the points which make my story unique.

In our small town there were few opportunities for adolescents (especially Black adolescents) to engage in extra-curricular activities outside of school and the local 4-H club. Though there were pockets of wealth, the majority of families were working class, in search of more/better opportunities for their children. Why is this important you might ask? To understand anything about growing up in the rural south is to live the "separate but equal mentality" – you stay on your side of town and we stay on ours. This "truth" was mostly negated for school sporting events and a few community festivals.

My family, to our Black counterparts, appeared unique in that we seemed to easily traverse the racial boundaries and operate within both cultural constructs beyond the occasions of "forced" interaction. This fact may have been due to the positions my parents held in our town; my dad was an Emergency Medical Technician (retired) at the only hospital in town – the only Black person in the position and Mom is the County Extension agent. Both jobs called for relationships to be forged that stretch boundaries.

I count myself blessed to be among the Blacks who were able to have vast experiences outside of my cultural norm.

As stated earlier, one of the goals of my parents was to try their best to ensure our lives were much better than theirs. In their eyes, this meant encouraging and fostering our interests in activities such as; piano lessons, tennis lessons, attending/participating in cultural events such as plays and musicals, and traveling inside and outside the state for group sponsored activities and to visit family all in the name of broadening our perspectives. They did not want our scope of opportunities and career aspirations to be limited to our small town (population 2000).

My most vivid memory of this fact was a period in my life when I thought I wanted to attend law school. Luck would have it that I was given an opportunity to explore my interest at an exclusive law camp held on the campus of Stanford University. Despite the expense of participation ($2000), my parents did not wince at what a great opportunity this was and how important it would be for my career development. Truth be known, none of us knew where the money would come from (we certainly didn't have it), but my parents told me that if you truly want something, you can find a way to get things done. I then set out on a fundraiser mission that was out of this world; writing and calling all my family and friends asking for sponsorships, and my grandmother gave me a homemade quilt to use as a raffle item. Needless to say, I raised the money and off I went.

The result of this particular experience was a reality check, in that if becoming a lawyer was a dream I would pursue, it would take lots of hard work and dedication. Though I later decided to go in a different direction, I was able to learn from the experience and able to make an informed decision as to why it was not the career for me. This is just one example of how my family nurtured my dreams. I could name countless experiences that were afforded to me by my parents that enabled me to make conscious decisions about the direction I wanted my life to take. I was always told to take chances and make mistakes – this was the only way to make your way in this world. It was all about the experience! This spirit, passed on by my family, has led me to strive for new heights, set goals, and continuously reflect on where I am in life and where I want to be. The drive given to me by my parents has fueled my desire to help Black youth find their way just as I have found mine.

As a Black social scientist, I feel that I am in a unique position to accomplish this goal. The uniqueness of my perspective is forged through what Jennifer Obidah has termed "living blackness", which can be defined as the negotiation of one's humanity through a maze of socially constructed notions of what it means to be Black as part of one's everyday life (Generett & Jefferies, 2003, p. 66). This "lived" experience encompasses the legacy of ethnocentric knowledge derived from past social science research on Black communities in America and the fact that as a Black Scholar I was once a Black child – one of the subjects whose social, cultural and cognitive styles were denied the complexity of their experience (Generett & Jeffries).

As research has struggled to identify and define the Black experience (Du Bois, 1903; Bell, 2002), Obidah (2003) suggests that one of the lasting theoretical frameworks that resonates for the social science community and for Black people themselves is Dubois (1903) notion of double consciousness. Dubois (1903) found that as African Americans[1], we live two lives – one that is full of pride for its African-ness and all that it encompasses; and a the second life in which we have to assimilate into the American (White) culture. Therein lies the struggle, where the African American is seeking to find a place where our Black experience can become a part of the "American" experience without having doors closed in our face for simply "being". With respect to Dubois' work, he points to how Black Americans are, in a sense, forced to define themselves in terms of White America. It begs the question, "what does it mean to see oneself only through the eyes of others" (Obidah, 2003, p. 45) while actively pursuing a definition of oneself through your own eyes; and, consequently what has to take place such that the latter is accepted as the norm.

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[1] I have chosen to use Black and African American, interchangeably to denote this cultural group

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CHAPTER 1

In the United States, the influence of history and resulting present circumstances on the lives of African Americans very much affects the decisions we make today (Diemer & Blustein, 2007). Historically situated structures, such as our roots in slavery, discrimination, and socioeconomic status, very much affects our lives and the opportunities available to us (Hatch, 2002). Thus the actions and choices made as far as careers are concerned cannot always be attributed to what appears to be superficial reasoning. Those interested in this decision-making process must delve deeper into the lives of African American people to gain insight into the ideas and thought processes that frame their decisions. My belief in this idea causes me to look at issues more deeply through the lens of social justice.

When viewed in terms of career knowledge and influences, the results of such a reflective inquiry into the African American experience can help identify some of the characteristics of what it means to be "successful" within Black culture. It can also show how outside factors, such as race, class, power, and socioeconomic status, influence how African American youth make decisions about their careers. The implications of such a study have the potential to affect how those who aid African American youth in making career decisions can instill necessary tools for success.

Much of the research that has been done on the academic and vocational development and behavior of minority youth has been criticized because the theories and concepts on which it is based were derived from studies of middle class Whites

(Griggs, 1992; Chaves et al., 2004). Along these lines, Murry (1993) found that many inner-city adolescents have no hope for the future and see little point in undertaking the sacrifices necessary to achieve middle-class status. The aforementioned types of research cannot truly represent the needs of minorities. In order to "understand the development of minority youth, research must be considered within the cultural context and attention be given to the variations in the subjective experience which influences them" (Griggs, 1992, p. 3).

When considering the cultural contexts and experiences of minority youth, it is important to note that in the 21st century, where career and educational opportunities are endless—in contrast to earlier eras, when minorities were more or less relegated to service-industry jobs—young African Americans are not being positioned to take advantage of these opportunities (Alliman-Brissett et al., 2004; Lease, 2006). For this generation, education and vocational preparedness take multiple forms, such as job shadowing programs, experiential learning opportunities, career mentoring, etc., and must be looked at beyond traditional parameters if we are to ensure the success of all students.

Vocational preparedness programs, as they concern this research, are defined as an opportunity for students to connect with a professional (mentor), in a specified industry or area of interest, who has specific knowledge about an occupation or career in which the student has an interest. Students have the opportunity, through experiential learning, to explore job responsibilities and tasks associated with the

mentor's career and ask questions about the knowledge, skills, talents, and level of education required for the job.

As we begin to examine the historical significance and present-day circumstances that surround the ways in which Black youth make decisions, social stratification may be a concern. When societies are complex and serve large populations, they always possess some kind of status system that, by its own values, places people in higher or lower positions (Levine, 2006, p. 71). Social classes have the following set of characteristics:

- "Its members…have similar market advantages and disadvantages and therefore share similar reward or life-chance situations" (Waters, 1991). As Waters (1991) states, the most important indicator of class membership for most of the members of any society is occupation.

- "Members can move relatively freely within the class but with considerable difficulty outside it. They will have their careers within their class, place their children in it, marry within it, and their friends and associates will be part of their class. Classes are thus self-reproducing across time" (Waters, 1991, p. 157).

- "Members will practice closure against the members of other classes and will experience barriers to social intercourse established by other classes. In this way both a position of material advantage and the ability to control and influence others are both identifiers of privilege in a social

class. "The greater the level of class advantage the greater the extent to which closure practices will be exclusionary; the less the class advantage, the more likely they are to be usurpationary" (Waters, 1991, p. 157).

Social class is not just a matter of material difference; it is a pattern of domination in which some groups have more power than others (Anderson, 2006). "Ethnic minorities resist both attempts at minimizing their differences as minorities and the stereotyping that is associated with a specific class" (Miron & Mickey, 1995, p. 33). It is important to note that for Blacks, identity politics "remained embedded in the historical development of racial formation in the United States" (Miron & Mickey, 1995, p. 34).

In some instances, social class designations affect the career aspirations of the class members. These effects can either be positive or negative. For example, some may aspire to move beyond their current class designation, out of the impoverished class to the upper class with all the assumed benefits that go along with the designation; others may prefer to maintain the status quo and choose career paths that allow them to maintain the comfortable lifestyles they were born into. It has been my experience that many minority students choose careers based on their ability to make a substantial amount of money with hopes of living a better life so that they will not have to struggle as much as their parents or guardians did. I will further trouble the idea of social stratification later in this paper as it relates to Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black youth.

The goal of this research is to represent Black youth who are participating in a vocational preparedness program, specifically the National Boy Scouts of America's (BSA) Exploring Program in Nashville, TN. I will produce the representation through interviews, journals, and rich, thick descriptions. The purpose of the Exploring program, which is geared mainly toward inner-city youth, is to provide experiences that help young people mature and to prepare them to become responsible and caring adults. Exploring is based on a unique and dynamic relationship between youth and organizations in their communities. Local community organizations establish a specific Exploring Post by matching human and program resources to the interests of young people in the community. The result is a program of activities that helps youth pursue their career interests, grow, and develop.

Purpose of the Study

This study will address how vocational preparedness programs affect the career aspirations of Black youth. I will examine Middle Tennessee Council Boy Scouts Exploring, a work-site-based program. I will contextualize the need for this study using the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), specifically, (1) racism, (2) societal expectations, and (3) self-efficacy, in the hope of furthering the field of career development through the voices of its key players, African American youth.

In this chapter my goal is to first define the relationship between the Boy Scouts of America and the Black community from a historical context. I will then discuss current

trends in career choice as they relate to Black youth. From there I will discuss CRT and

social justice as it relates to my interest in Black youth and careers. The discussion on

CRT will be followed by a description of the narrative inquiry research method I will use

in this study, and how I intend to analyze the data. I will close by discussing anticipated

results and possible implications of the study.

Boy Scouts of America and Race

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) was established in the United States in 1910.

Total membership since then has been more than 112 million (BSA at a Glance, 2008,

Purpose, para. 1). The purpose of the Boy Scouts of America is to provide an educational

program for boys and young adults to build character, train in the responsibilities of

participating citizenship, and develop personal fitness (BSA at a Glance, 2008, Purpose,

para. 1).

The BSA divides itself into three program divisions: (1) Cub Scouts (for boys in

first through fifth grades), "a year-round family- and home-centered program that

develops ethical decision-making skills for boys in the second through fifth grade.

Activities emphasize character development, citizenship training, and personal fitness"

(BSA at a Glance, 2008, Programs, para. 2); (2) Boy Scouts (for boys and young men aged

11 through 17), "A year-round program designed to achieve the aims of Scouting

through a vigorous outdoor program and peer group leadership with the counsel of an

adult Scoutmaster" (BSA at a Glance, 2008, Programs, para. 4); and (3) Venturing

(formerly Exploring; for young men and women aged 14—who have completed the

eighth grade—through 20), "A year-round program for young men and women to provide positive experiences through exciting and meaningful youth-run activities that help them pursue their special interests, grow by teaching others, and develop leadership skills" (BSA at a Glance, 2008, Programs, para. 6).

Through participation in events and successful completion of activities within the BSA programs, students earn merit badges. The Merit Badge Program plays a key role in the fulfillment of BSA's educational commitment and is one of its most basic character building tools (BSA, Merit Badge Program, 2008). "Through participation in the program…a Scout acquires the kind of self-confidence that comes only from overcoming obstacles to achieve a goal" (BSA, 2008, Merit Badge Program). The pinnacle of all merit badges and awards, Scouting's highest advancement rank, is the Eagle Scout. To qualify for the Eagle Scout Award, a Scout must design and execute a community service project, demonstrate leadership, and earn a total of 21 merit badges (BSA, 2008, Eagle Scouts, para. 1; Mechling, 2001). "The fact that a boy is an Eagle Scout has always carried with it a special significance, not only in Scouting but also as he enters higher education, business or industry, and community service" (BSA, 2008, Eagle Scouts, para. 1)

The influence of Scouting on American society is frequently cited by both its advocates and critics. It has had a storied past, ranging from female participation in the organization to the adoption of what basically amounts to a "don't ask, don't tell" policy

on homosexuality within the organization (Mechling, 2001; Peterson, 1984). My research is primarily concerned with African American participation in the BSA.

According to Peterson (1984), between the end of World War I and the Great Depression of the 1930s the BSA "reached out to rural and minority youth and settled into the organization structure we have today" (p. 97). Despite its segregated history in the South, the BSA never drew a color line; however, the movement stayed in tune with the prevalent feelings of the time (Mechling, 2001; Peterson, 1984). It wasn't until the precedent-setting ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), Brown I,* and, subsequently, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 349 U.S. 294 (1955), Brown II*, that the BSA began to move toward desegregated troops.

Brown I was a landmark court case in which the Supreme Court of the United States unanimously declared that it was unconstitutional to create separate schools for children on the basis of race. Five school desegregation cases from the states of Delaware, Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and the District of Columbia were brought together before the U.S. Supreme Court as *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (Brown I).* Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP's chief counsel for the plaintiffs, argued that segregated public schools are not "equal" and cannot be made "equal," and as such they are deprived of the equal protection of the laws. The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Warren, unanimously decided that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

Over the course of the year after the decision had been rendered, the Supreme Court struggled to frame the phrasing and timing of the desegregation order. Much of this indecision was due to Southern states' resistance to integration, as well as the costs and difficulties in upholding the law (Anderson & Bryne, 2004). In March 1955, after the decision had been announced, it was ordered that desegregation occur with "all deliberate speed" (Anderson & Bryne, 2004).

Since 1955, *Brown II* has been continually debated on many different fronts—from whether it truly accomplished its goal of desegregating schools to whether or not society is better off for having had the decision rendered. I agree with the argument that the "Brown decision undermined the legitimacy of Jim Crow and stimulated hope and protest but mandated almost no change" (Anderson & Bryne, 2004, p. 154) due to the phrase "with all deliberate speed". What most concerns my study is the impact of the Brown Decision from a societal standpoint. While *Brown I* ensured that integration was made a legal imperative, *Brown II,* with its hesitant decision to proceed, "with all deliberate speed," ensured that the legal imperative did not translate into a social imperative (Anderson & Bryne, 2004). What made the Brown decision effective in changing the South was the Civil Rights movement, which made race a matter of urgent national concern (Anderson & Bryne, 2004). The need to better understand race and racial formation and its ties to legal scholarship in the United States became the caveat for Critical Race Theory scholarship, on which this study is based. There is further discussion of Critical Race Theory later in this chapter.

In order to meet the need of a growing rural and minority population, the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America created an Urban Relationship Service Office that facilitated a program named "Program Outreach," (Banas, 2008; Peterson, 1984), which was developed to expose rural Scouts to the city and vice versa, but was small in scope. A major critique of this program was that it often didn't distinguish between the boys it viewed as having greater need (high risk and those who were simply not White. For example, the program's reports categorize some Scouts as "Feeble-minded, Delinquency Areas, Orphanages, and Settlements" (Banas, 2008, para. 7). According to Banas (2008), many of the Scouts in 'delinquent areas' were Blacks, who were measured as 'special troops' (para. 5). "Instead of embracing Black Scouting, the BSA systematically categorized Blacks, bringing a literal meaning to "racial handicap" as the color of their skin was why they were considered "special" (Banas, 2008, para. 5). After integration, many segregated Black organizations—especially churches—remained segregated, not by law but by choice (Banas, 2008; Mechling, 2001). Separation provided a heightened sense of community and unity that complemented their internal needs, ranging from building self-esteem to leadership (Banas, 2008; Mechling, 2001). According to Banas (2008):

> In the responses immediately following integration, different values and goals emerged based on race and oppression. One young man says, "When applying for a job or trying to enter college being an Eagle Scout is a great advantage."
> "Being White in Winston-Salem, opportunities to go to college and to get a good

job were there. As a Black young person, such opportunities did not always exist, and instead of mentioning college and getting a job, there was a tendency to make more references to the armed services.

"Historically, the military has been one of the few ways Blacks achieved distinction and respect" (Banas, 2008, para. 8). Banas (2008) noted that many Blacks saw this as their only way to eventually get into college or have a good career. "With the aid of the civil rights movement, Black Scouts saw the Eagle Award as a further means of proving their dignity and achievement. Blacks in the first half of the 20th century were not allowed much dignity" (Banas, 2008, para. 12). Black youth found that through excelling in Scouting they would finally have something to be proud of, something that would make them, in at least one realm, equal or even superior to White children (Banas, 2008). "It gave them a sense of identity that was lacking for centuries. They were no longer just 'Boy,' they were an Eagle Scout" (Banas, 2008, para. 12). I can sum up the history of the "Negro" Troop in no better words than that of Banas (2008), who states:

> It is telling that an organization like the National Boy Scouts of America, dedicated from its inception to raising men of high moral strength and conviction supported racism. But at the same time, on a national and local level, the Scouts did have certain leaders that pressed against the grain of society for racial change. In the end, though, our most valuable insight is into the minds of these young black men who wrote of an equal chance for distinction and success in

their Eagle Award essays. This relatively small achievement may have helped and inspired them to push on in their fight for liberty (para. 14).

Banas' comments forced me to look more closely at the mission of the BSA, which clearly states its mission as: "Foster the character development, citizenship training and physical fitness of young people through an emphasis on outdoor program experiences, and in ways to prepare them to be responsible, contributing members of society over their lifetime by instilling values based upon those found in the Scout Oath and Law" (Middle Tennessee Council, BSA, 2008, para. 1). A common-sense notion of this mission would be to simply pass it off as subjective at best, meaning different things with respect to a person's cultural/societal values. Such edicts as those stated in the BSA mission are not those of the boys and men on the ground conducting and participating in the activities; they are more the rhetoric of the national organization (Mechling, 2001).

Were Black boys not worthy of being raised as men of high moral strength and conviction? From a critical theory perspective, one could argue that the BSA operated within the realm of an oxymoron, i.e. their goal to foster the creation of the aforementioned morals and values, but only insomuch as they did not collide with the Jim Crow South or historically racialized views of Black boys who wanted to participate. Raising men of "high moral strength and conviction" is subjective and can be analyzed from multiple perspectives. How then does the BSA decide whether its mission is being fulfilled?

Within a historical framework, more than the perception of racialized concepts of character within the BSA organization there is a question of what "honor" really means. In the BSA's historical treatment of Blacks, have they "obeyed the Boy Scouts Law"? The BSA was based on the values of middle-class Whites and a conception of America that excluded consideration of the needs and perceptions of others, namely Blacks and other cultural groups. The concern for the "American boy" was actually a concern for the White boy, as was witnessed in their initial indifference to the participation of Blacks in scouting.

If the national organization was acting on its "honor" there would have been more of a multicultural awareness in the framing of programs and guides for all Scouts. There would have been concern for all populations, not just those based on middle-class Whites. The 21st century brings new concerns for youth organizations that serve all races, including school retention and graduation rates, gang violence, lack of positive role models, and after school activities. These are some of the concerns that present the BSA with a unique opportunity to serve its population with honor, do their best, do their duty to country, and obey the Scouts' law (Ethnic and Generational Concerns, BSA, 2008).

African American Youth and Careers

The National Center for Education Statistics reported that 53% of all African American students attending Grades 1 through 12 in the United States live in central city urban areas (Middleton, 2001). "Approximately one-half of the African American and

Hispanic college-age population in the U.S. are from families with low incomes below the national poverty level" (Keller, 2001). It must be noted that poverty is associated with increased risk for dropping out of high school or not attending college after high school and students in this situation tend to forego a college education (Middleton, 2001). More often than not, the socioeconomic status of the adolescents' family members will affect their aspirations and future plans (Bryan et al., 2006; Stewart et al., 2007)

National studies have shown that African American students achieve less while in school, attend college less frequently, and have higher unemployment rates when compared to their non-minority counterparts (Griggs, 1992). Students within this context are constantly undergoing situations that affect not only their success in school, but for some, their daily survival. They begin to see themselves as extensions of their parents whereby they never achieve more than their current status. They become confined to the social constructs that place African Americans in jobs considered 'fundamental,' i.e. lower level, which offer little opportunity for professional growth or financial rewards (Murry, 1993). These students become content with just "making a living" and are sometimes unwilling to step beyond their known boundaries and comfort zones. Moving beyond their constructed boundaries would include acquiring employability skills through one education program or another (Murry, 1993).

Critical Race Theory, African American Youth, and Social Justice

When viewed in terms of Critical Race Theory, the research on "Communities of Color" calls into question forming value judgments based on White middle-class communities as the standard by which all others are judged (Yosso, 2005, p. 82). "In understanding racial formation, we see that societies construct rules and practices that define groups in racial terms" (Anderson, 2006, p. 70). These definitions must be dissected if we are to represent those identified as the minority. As a form of oppositional scholarship, CRT challenges the experience of Whites as the normative standard and grounds its conceptual framework in the distinctive experiences of people of color (Matsuda et al., 1993; Taylor, 1998). Taylor (1998) notes that CRT embraces this subjectivity of perspective and openly acknowledges that perceptions of truth, fairness, and justice reflect the mindset, status, and experience of the knower (p. 122).

"CRT ideology maps social reality in an attempt to make "incomprehensible" social situations meaningful, to so construe them as to make it possible to act purposefully within them" (Calmore, 1997, p. 219). Calmore further states that the challenge is to examine how individual and group identities, under broadly disparate circumstances, as well as the racial institutions and social practices that are linked to those identities, are formed and transformed historically by actors who politically contest the social meanings of race.

One aspect of identity formation and transformation, examined through the lens of CRT, is grounded in the realities of the lived experience of racism, which, with wide

consensus among Whites, has singled out, African Americans and others as worthy of suppression (Taylor, 1998). Specifically for African Americans there is a sense of double consciousness that "delineates the conscious perception of people of color as they are perpetually reminded that their lives, their existence, and their concerns are valued differently, when at all, by the White majority (Barnes, 1990, p. 1866). Barnes (as cited in Tate, 1997, p. 1866) states:

> Minority perspectives make explicit the need for fundamental change in the ways we think and construct knowledge.... Exposing how minority cultural viewpoints differ from White cultural viewpoint requires a delineation of the complex set of social interactions through which minority consciousness has developed. Distinguishing the consciousness of racial minorities requires acknowledgement of the feelings and intangible modes of perception unique to those who have historically been socially, structurally, and intellectually marginalized in the United States.

Critical Race Theory and Education

CRT, from an educational standpoint, "argues against the slow pace of racial reform in the United States" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 7). No doubt in part due to cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)*, an interest grew, thereafter, to critically examine race as it relates to schooling. Given that racism, balance of power, and economic and social stratification are constant in everyday life, understanding CRT becomes integral to the complex, intricate, and discrete functions of

racism in the urban school settings (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT holds value in instances where the aforementioned components factor into how we determine adolescent success or failure in school (i.e., the community, family, etc.).

Critical Race Theory and methodology in education share the following elements that form these theorists' basic insights, perspectives, methodology, and pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Stovall, 2005): (a) CRT challenges the traditional claims that educational institutions make about objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity and argues that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society; (b) CRT is committed to social justice and offers a liberating or transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression; (c) CRT recognizes that the centrality of experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination—in fact, critical race theorists view this knowledge as a strength and draw explicitly on the lived experiences of people of color by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, and narratives; and (d) the transdisciplinary perspective: CRT challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism by placing them in both historical and contemporary contexts

As scholars work to understand the educational needs of minority groups, it has been established that the ability to have your "voice" or name your own reality is very

important (Ladson-Billings, 1998). According to the work of Ladson-Billings (1998), the "voice" component provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed. One of the tragedies of the field of education is how the dialogue of people of color has been silenced (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The major question for Blacks thus becomes, "How can we as a people become successful if our voices (opinions, histories, contributions to society, etc.) are not valued within our society?" This idea is systemically perpetuated and passed down through generations of Black society, therefore creating a causal effect from what can be deemed as a self-fulfilling prophecy of its past and assumed role within the dominant culture's version of society (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

In keeping with Ladson-Billings' (1998) tenets I hope to shed light on the role of communities and schools in the education of inner-city Black youth. As we race through the 21st century, methods for helping these youth succeed will take on a new shape and require more than just what is deemed traditional education. As a culture, Blacks learn better through nurturing environments that value the role of Blacks as creators and active participants of society, both inside and outside the classroom.

Critical Race Theory and Social Justice

Unlike some academic disciplines, critical race theory contains an activist dimension, social justice (Delgado & Stefanicic, 2001), which I believe is critical to the study of youth development. It is within this activist dimension that I seek to connect my work with social justice. One of the ways in which we reconcile the movement toward

youth growth and empowerment with our own beliefs about how this "growth and empowerment" process should take place, is to understand the journey through the eyes of Black youth.

Through the lens of social justice we are allowed a peek into the world of Black youth on their terms, some of which can be viewed in the context of moral and ethical beliefs that hold value for Black youths individually and collectively. This speaks to one of the goals of social justice, which is the full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. After much research, I have come to agree with Griffiths' (1998) working definition of social justice, which states: (a) it is good for the common interest where that is taken to include the good of each and also the good of all in the acknowledgment that one depends on the other, and; (b) the good depends on there being a right distribution of benefits and responsibilities. Because this is a working definition and the terms "good" and "right" are debatable ethical evaluations, it has to be applied by human beings who are making evaluative judgments (Griffiths, 1998).

Much of the work of critical race theorists informs us that we cannot arrive at any degree of social justice if the means we employ in pursuing this goal are not also imbued with the principles of this justice (Pizarro, 1998). Cribb and Gewirtz (2001, p. 18) identify three facets of justice: (a) economic justice, defined as the absence of exploitation (having the fruits of one's labor appropriated for the benefit of others) or economic marginalization (being confined to undesirable, poorly paid work or having

access to none); (b) cultural justice, defined as the absence of cultural domination (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one's own), non-recognition (being rendered invisible by means of authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices), and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life situations); and (c) associational justice, defined as the absence of patterns of association among individuals and groups that prevent some people from participating fully in decisions that affect the conditions within which they live and act. Associational justice can be viewed as both an end in itself and as a means to the ends of distributive and cultural justice.

Yet another prevailing issue in the CRT debate is the permanence of racism. As Dubois (1903) stated, "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line" (vii). Though this statement was made over a century ago, it still rings true today. "Race may be America's single most confounding problem, but the confounding problem of race is that no one knows what it is" (Delgado, 2000). Winant (2000) states that the extent of the literature on the race concept alone, not to mention the mountains of empirical studies that focus on racial issues, presents difficulties for any attempt at theoretical overview and synthesis.

Most researchers would agree that "race is a social construct" (Anderson, 2007; Delgado, 2001; Farley & Allen, 1989; Levine, 2006; Omi & Winant, 1994; Valdes et al.,

2002; Zwieg, 2004; Winant, 2000). According to Omi & Winant (1994), "[R]ace is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies. Although the concept of race invokes biologically based human characteristics...selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process.'' In other words, race is composed of fluctuating, decentered complex meanings formed and transformed under the constant pressures of political struggle (Calmore, 1992; Delgado & Stefanicic, 2001; Matsuda et al., 1993; Taylor, 1998).

Racial theory has evolved over time and is shaped by existing race relations in any given historical period (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 11). Omi and Winant (1986) further state that dominant racial theory provides society with "common sense" about race and with categories for identification of individuals and groups in racial terms. Consequently, "despite the long tradition of ethnic and racial conflict in our society, we are without general models, which effectively summarize race relations" (Farley & Allen, 1989, p. 3).

"Challenges to the dominant racial theory emerge when it fails to adequately explain the changing nature of race relations, or when the racial policies it prescribes are challenged by political movements seeking a different arrangement (Omi & Winant, 1986). "Hence, we may unmake it and deprive it of much of its sting by changing the system of images, words, attitudes, unconscious feelings, scripts, and social teachings by which we convey to one another that certain people are less intelligent, reliable, hardworking, virtuous, and American than others" (Delgado & Stefanicic, 2001, p 17).

Omi and Winant (1986) assert that the effort must be made to understand race as an "unstable and decentered" complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle (p. 55).

As a Black, female researcher the topic of race and racism is forever present in various aspects of my life. With respect to the idea that race is a social concept, I find myself in the middle of the debate over the current existence of racism. My roots are deeply seated in the rural South. I have witnessed and been a victim of racism many times over my lifetime, and have seen the effects of institutional, economic, and environmental racism as part of my everyday life. Because of this, I am more acutely aware than some of the ways in which society perpetuates racism personally, locally, and systemically. It has very much affected the lens through which I view the world. It is for this reason I can say that racism still exists.

On the other hand, my current position at a university gives me an opportunity to mentor many Black young adults who feel racism is no longer an issue and do not seem to understand why "we won't just let that go." It is my experience that the students I've worked with seem to have been protected from the effects of racism. It appears to be a foreign concept to them, because they have not personally encountered these issues. They have heard stories about racial problems, but because it has not affected them personally, it is not real to them. If I agree with the prevailing theory that race is a social construct, then I have to belief that for students I work with, racism does not exist. What becomes disheartening to me is that at some point their socially

constructed reality will intersect with someone for whom race and racism are an active part of their reality and in such a way that it will affect their lives negatively. This intersection has the ability to change the lives of those students who have turned a blind eye to racism in two ways; (1) adversely, by negatively influencing their view of the world and future interactions with those of other races, or (2) as an opportunity to learn and grow from the experience by learning to historically situate the incident, understand why it occurred, and critically think through ways it can be prevented from occurring in the future. We must understand that "race," by definition, is a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests. We are constantly imbued with racialized images and concepts, which must be analyzed from our current historical and political concepts.

If we agree that in today's generation, education and vocational preparedness takes multiple forms and must be looked at beyond traditional parameters if we are to ensure the success of all students. Taking this idea a step further, in cases where the 'haves' possess the access to the power, wealth, and privilege allowing them opportunities to the best education, while the 'have-nots' are left to contend with perils of obtaining a share of society's wealth. Lastly if we consider that these issues of power relate to Black parent's struggle to educate their children and transform them into productive members of society. Then, we must look for ways to reconcile the issue such that there is more equity of resources for these students. It is my hope this research project will contribute to this end.

Method and Analysis

There is a growing need to further extend research, as well as explore new avenues as to factors which "will contribute to increased educational and vocational opportunities for the growing body of ethnic urban youth who represent our next generation of workers" (Kenny et al., 2003; Diemer & Blustein, 2007). Chaves et al. (2004) note that scholars have increasingly recognized that vocational development occurs within multiple contexts, which include the influences of social, political, and economic factors. Studies have shown that traditionally, African American students make decisions based on their environment, including their family, and careers deemed most available (and profitable) to them (Chaves et al., 2004; Jackson et al., 2006; Gushue et al., 2006; Kenny et al., 2003).

For my research study I have chosen to frame who I am as a researcher and by extension how I view this research from within a critical paradigm. Within the critical paradigm there are "varying degrees of social action from the overturning of specific unjust practices to radical transformation of societies" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 201). It becomes important, in terms of social action, for research participants to have control of their futures (Lincoln & Guba, 2000), which means actively engaging in the process. Truth, through the critical paradigm lens, is located in specific historical, economic, racial, and social infrastructures of oppression, injustice, and marginalization (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The critical paradigm, especially as it relates to narrative inquiry, is especially concerned with "voice" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). "As researchers have

become more conscious of the abstracted realities their text creates, they became more simultaneously conscious of having readers 'hear their informants'" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 201).

Narrative Inquiry Method

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the aim of narrative inquiry is to understand and make meaning of experience. Narrative inquiry allows for the examination of value-driven methods to determine the nature and extent of social change, which is one of the aims of critical theory. "Theoretically the main issue for inquirers is to sort out a narrative view of experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 127). "In its fullest sense, narrative inquiry requires going beyond the use of narrative as rhetorical structure, that is, simply telling stories, to an analytic examination of the underlying insights and assumptions that the story illustrates" (Bell, 2002, p. 208). Bell (2002) states that CRT narratives are powerful constructs, which can function as instruments of social control as well as valuable teaching tools.

Narrative inquiry, grounded in diverse disciplines, is seen in a variety of ways and tends to transcend a number of different approaches and traditions such as biography, autobiography, life story and, more recently, life course research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). It is a way of understanding the "lived" experience. A unique characteristic of narrative inquiry is that the focus of analysis is on the people who tell us stories about their lives, with the stories being the means of understanding our participants better. Narrative inquiry argues that

storytelling tends to be closer to actual life events than other methods of research that are designed solely to elicit explanations (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). "Narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of an inquiry than it does a sense of problem definition and solution, i.e. a 're-search' and search again" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 124).

According to Clandinin & Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry takes place within a three-dimensional space with the temporal along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along the third. Within these dimensions the researcher will move in four directions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000): (1 and 2) inward and outward, with inward meaning toward the internal conditions such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions, and outward meaning toward the existential conditions, that is, the environment; and (3 and 4) backward and forward, referring to the temporal—i.e., past, present, and future. To experience an experience—that is, to research an experience—is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways (inward and outward and backward and forward) and to ask questions pointing each way (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Furthermore, any particular inquiry defined by these dimensions will address temporal matters, focus on the personal and the social—as it relates to the study—and occur in specific places or sequences of places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk (2007) state the pros of doing narrative inquiry as: It's relatively easy to get people to tell stories, since most people are pleased to share a story about themselves; collecting in-depth data (thick description) is possible because

this often occurs with ease in narrated events; it is possible to gain in-depth meaning

and reflection because participants are content to reveal themselves in stories and to

reflect on their accounts at a later date as well; and people tend not to hide truths when

telling their stories, or if they attempt to, it usually becomes apparent through thorough

data interpretation.

Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk (2007) identify the drawbacks to narrative inquiry

research as: stories can be difficult to interpret in terms of the relationship between the

storytelling in the interview and the story-making in the presentation of data; decisions

need to be made about whose story it is and how it is interpreted and reinterpreted,

which becomes complicated if the participant disagrees with the presentation or they

wish to include data that may cause them more harm than they realize; researchers in

narrative inquiry must be prepared to protect their participants—sometimes from

themselves. Yet it is also important to acknowledge that disagreement between

participant (narrator) and listener (researcher) can add depth of understanding, or at

least highlight potential misinterpretation that might not otherwise be discerned: It is

often difficult to discern the relationship between the narrative account, the

interpretation, and the retold story; the negotiation of data interpretation and

presentation can be troublesome.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), researchers' personal, private, and

professional lives flow across boundaries into the research site; though infrequently,

and rarely with the same intensity, participant's lives flow the other way. With respect

to this, I brought to this research the bias that if all things were equal, meaning if there were truly a level playing field (within all contexts and parameters), African American students would choose a variety of careers that lead to their success, active participation, and contribution to society. This bias was used to inform my body of research.

Entering and Negotiating the Field

My first objective was to negotiate my entrance into the field with the program gatekeepers and thus gain access to program participants. My initial goal was to conduct focus group interviews with no fewer than five and no more than 12 program participants and follow them up, if needed, with individual interviews. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), part of my negotiation would be explaining myself as the researcher to participants. This was continual throughout the research process. During this act of explaining myself (in response to the participant), clarification and shaping of purpose occurred.

The interviews were to take place over the course of two months. My intention was to familiarize myself and become somewhat immersed in the culture of the program participants, by observing and interacting with the students at their posts[2], such that I became part of the landscape. In doing so, I further hoped to become a more sensitive reader/questioner of situations in an effort to grasp the events, stories, and the narrative threads that twist and turn throughout and appear, to the new and

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[2] Exploring units are called "posts" and usually have a focus on a single career field

inexperienced eye, to be mysterious code (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to

Clandinin and Connelly (2000), intimacy for a narrative inquirer is being able, with

participants, to take at least some of the same things for granted.

Thematic analysis

Contrary to positivist or post-positivist qualitative analysis, which requires the

researcher to state the hypothesis up front, in narrative inquiry the purpose and what

one is exploring or finds puzzling changes as the research progresses (Clandinin &

Connelly 2000). Thus despite the fact that I went into the research to address the

question of how vocational preparedness programs affect the career aspirations of

inner-city Black youth, I remained open to the possibility that the stories provided by my

interviewees could lead me in another direction.

In conducting narrative inquiry research, my aim was to listen to participants'

stories, acknowledge their role in constructing the subsequent narrative, and

acknowledge that people are both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and

telling their stories in words as they reflect on life and explain themselves to others

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). Within the research

process, stories must then be created and recreated in the interview and then

negotiated, so that both I, as researcher, and the participants do not assume that the

stories necessarily reflect a pre-existing reality (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007).

The focus group interviews were guided by a questionnaire each student was

asked to complete prior to the group interview. The questionnaire helped me gather

general demographic information such as age, type of household (single-parent, two

parent, or guardian), level of education of the caregiver, and how the student

determined which "career post" they followed during the course of the Exploring

program. Responses from the questionnaire were used to frame the initial question

used during the focus group interview.

I anticipated subsequent questions that could be addressed in the follow-up

individual interviews such as: (a) how repeat participation (multiple years) would affect

the career decisions of participants, (b) is there an age at which program participation is

vital for influencing the career decisions of participants, and (c) do participants act as

positive spokespersons by way of recruiting both new participants and community

organizations (i.e., industries and businesses) at which posts could be established.

What becomes apparent, in the negotiation and retelling, is that "not only does

explaining ourselves to others help us get clear, but also working with participants'

shapes what is interesting and possible under the field of circumstances" (Clandinin and

Connelly, 2000, p. 73).

I was fully aware that my actions, choice of questions, and responses to the

interviewees shaped the relationship and therefore the way the participants responded

and gave accounts of their experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Bearing this in

mind, I anticipated beginning interviews by asking participants to relay their experiences

in the program. I was also aware that the interviewee's responses to my questions were

dependent on temporal issues such as space and time, and this too could affect the way

they responded (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). To this end, with the assistance of the

program director I negotiated a time and location that was optimal for the participants

and fit the time constraints of the project.

Once the interviews were complete, I positioned the data such that I could (1)

analyze the field text; (2) code the information using descriptive codes such as, but not

limited to, family, community, race/racism, career, self worth, and values; and (3) look

for anomalies and common themes to create the resulting research narrative. According

to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), without the careful positioning of field texts and

explicit acknowledgement of how they are positioned, the research texts ultimately

constructed are open to questions about and criticism of the claims made and meanings

generated. It is important to note that although I had completed preparation for

interviews as a narrative inquirer and solicited repeatedly the stories of participants,

what I received as responses—although powerful and rich in meaning—were not

stories, but rather commentary on the Exploring and Advancement Via Individual

Determination (AVID) programs, critiques, and suggestions for improvement.

I kept accurate field notes and referred to them in order to avoid narrative

relativism and maintain "truth" as seen through the eyes of the participants. In

composing my field notes, I was alert to what my participants did and said as part of

their ongoing experiences and also kept records on how they were experiencing the

experience of being the inquirer (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

Anticipated Results and Implications

There are many different ways a study such as this can be conducted; however, I believe that the narrative inquiry method allows for the participant's voice to come through more clearly and ensures that control of the narrative remains with them. Because I positioned myself within the realms of CRT, any references to CRT were noted as they applied to the stories of the participants. I anticipated this research would reveal factors and issues that today's African American teenagers face, and how much of an affect said factors and issues have on adolescents' vocational aspirations. I further anticipated that this research could be a catalyst to help highlight the importance of vocational preparedness programs for inner-city, urban youth and, quite possibly, produce information that could be modified for use in rural areas as well.

I anticipate that the findings of this study can be used to develop programs that will assist inner-city youth in becoming contributing members of society. I also anticipate that this research will potentially confirm earlier hypotheses of researchers and move forward the conversation on how Critical Race Theory influences education and vocational interests.

In the following chapters, I will make the case for the importance of injecting the voices of African-American youth into the conversation on the importance of career-preparedness program, specifically through the lens of the Boy Scouts of America's Exploring program. In Chapter two I will review the history of the Boy Scouts of America, including controversies surrounding its treatment of homosexuals and atheists and

controversy surrounding the Exploring program itself; in Chapter three I will map the

narrative inquiry method as the basis of the research study; in Chapter four I will

present my findings; and in Chapter five I will discuss the implications of the study and

potential areas for further research.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

In chapter one I gave you an overview of my research study; my goal was to present a road map by which to follow the remaining chapters of this study. I gave the rationale of the problem, the research question and method used to carry out the story concluding with possible outcomes and implications of said study.

In chapter two, we are further exploring a portion of the roadmap laid out in chapter one. In the following I will make the connection between the BSA and the Exploring program, which is under the umbrella of the Learning for Life organization, a wholly owned subsidiary of the BSA. One cannot fully understand how the Exploring program operates without first looking into the history of the BSA, from which the Learning for Life Program was created.

The first section focuses on the history of the original Scouting program and its connections to and differences with the American Scouting organization. I give an overview of how the BSA is organized and the controversies that have sprung up throughout its history. By the end of this section the connection will be clear as to why the Learning for Life program was developed and the Exploring program was moved from the BSA umbrella to Learning for Life. Beyond the controversies, both youth and adult participants have made great strides and accomplishments, some of which are also highlighted in this section.

In the second section, I explore the Learning for Life organization. Because this program is geared mostly to non-traditional Scouts from early childhood through high school, understanding the organizational structure—including its mission, purpose, specialized career programs, and controversies—is important. This will also help the reader to grasp why the Exploring program falls under the Learning for Life umbrella, yet appears very much tethered to the BSA organization.

Boy Scouts of America: 100 Years in Retrospect

A discussion of the Learning for Life program cannot be complete without giving due attention to its parent organization, the BSA, which marks its centennial this year. Its history is one of passion, commitment, loyalty, honor, controversy, racial progress (and regression), and adaptation to the needs of a changing society; it is a story rich with cultural context.

My major challenge has been finding detailed historical data in written form. Though the organization is 100 years old, most written materials have more to do with the development of a Scout (e.g., what it means to be a Boy Scout, how to dress, how to earn a merit badge, etc.) and Lord Baden-Powell, the father of the Scouting movement, than the development of the program in the United States. Because written materials were scarce, due in part to the seemingly private nature of the BSA, a large amount of my research relied on websites and secondary sources.

I use the term "seemingly" because, despite multiple efforts on my part to interact and engage with staff members at the national BSA headquarters over several months, I was deterred at every attempt. I was not fully able, therefore, to verify all of what reported here. Since the national headquarters is located in Texas and I am in Tennessee, my best options for acquiring information were through phone calls and emails to the office—yet even the BSA's archival director declined to return my calls or emails. With this being said, I acknowledge that there may be several ways to present historical information regarding the BSA; however, the following is my interpretation of the available information.

Lord Robert Baden-Powell and the Birth of Scouting

The Scouting movement was born out of a crisis that, in the height of Lord Robert Baden-Powell's service to Britain, led him to establish the ideals for Scouting (Rosenthal, 1986). The Boer War of 1899, which seemed to be a precursor to the issues faced in Britain, was a tragic conflict between English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking Whites for control of South Africa's mineral wealth—the world's richest gold reefs. It was here the idea of Scouting was first introduced in the form of Mafeking Cadets. The cadet corps consisted of 18 boys aged nine and older. After going through training, the cadets played a significant role in helping the British to achieve victory during the war. Some tasks carried out by the corps were delivering messages between the town defenses, assisting as orderlies, helping in the hospitals, and acting as lookouts to warn the British forces when attacks were expected, among other things (African Seeds in

Scouting, 2010, The Mafeking Cadets). It is said that at this point Baden-Powell decided to create a civilian corps of Scouts similar to those at Mafeking as soon as the war was over. Though Scouting is mostly identified with its simplistic relationship with nature, Baden-Powell had a much more grandiose idea of Scouting, in that he chose to include character education in hopes of creating "better men" through active participation in the organization.

Baden-Powell's Scouts would become upstanding and contributing members of society through a regimented program guided by the Scout Law, which states:

- A Scout is Trustworthy—A Scout tells the truth. He is honest, and he keeps his promises. People can depend on him.

- A Scout is Loyal—a Scout is true to his family, friends, Scout leaders, school, and nation.

- A Scout is Helpful—a Scout cares about other people. He willingly volunteers to help others without expecting payment or reward.

- A Scout is Friendly—a Scout is a friend to all. He is a brother to other Scouts. He offers his friendship to people of all races and nations, and respects them even if their beliefs and customs are different from his own.

- A Scout is Courteous—a Scout is polite to everyone regardless of age or position. He knows that using good manners makes it easier for people to get along.

- A Scout is Kind—a Scout knows there is strength in being gentle. He treats others as he wants to be treated. Without good reason, he does not harm or kill any living thing.

- A Scout is Obedient—a Scout follows the rules of his family, school, and troop. He obeys the laws of his community and country. If he thinks these rules and laws are unfair, he tries to have them changed in an orderly manner rather than disobeying them.

- A Scout is Cheerful—a Scout looks for the bright side of life. He cheerfully does tasks that come his way. He tries to make others happy.

- A Scout is Thrifty—a Scout works to pay his own way and to help others. He saves for the future. He protects and conserves natural resources. He carefully uses time and property.

- A Scout is Brave—a Scout can face danger although he is afraid. He has the courage to stand for what he thinks is right even if others laugh at him or threaten him.

- A Scout is Clean—a Scout keeps his body and mind fit and clean. He chooses the company of those who live by high standards. He helps keep his home and community clean.

- A Scout is Reverent—a Scout is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties. He respects the beliefs of others (BSA, 2010; Rosenthal, pp. 109-110).

One of the methods Baden-Powell used to introduce Scouting to the world was character pamphlets, which identified the role of Scouting. The following chart was included in his series (Rosenthal, 1986):

Prevention Better Than Cure				
National Inefficiencies	Causes	Origin	Preventative	Scout Training As Remedy
Irreligion. Indiscipline. Want of Patriotism. Corruption. Disregard of Others. Cruelty	Indifference to Higher Conscience			Additional to Scholastic Education – a systemized development of: (I) Character
Crimes of Violence. Lunacy. Thriftlessness and Poverty.	Drink	Want of Self-Discipline	**(I) CHARACTER**	through Good Environment. Sense of Duty. Self-Discipline. Responsibility. Resourceful-ness. Handicrafts. God through Nature Study. Religion in practice. Fair play. Helpfulness to Others. Personal Service for the Country.
Show Off Loafing and Shirking. Low Moral Standards. Gambling. Illegitimacy. Disease.	Self Indulgence		Education in: and in	
Ill-Health. Squalor. Infant Mortality. Mental Deficiency. Physical Deficiency.	Irresponsibility and ignorance on the part of Parents	Want of Hygienic And Physical Knowledge	**(II) Physical Health**	(II) Health through Outdoor practices, not mere drill. Responsibility for own physical development up to standard. Health and Hygiene in practice

"What Baden-Powell had in mind was never as simple as a set of rules and games but rather a coherent, self-contained system of education intended to shape the entire life of the boy and to implant in him a set of values and even emotional responses that would make him most useful to the state" (Rosenthal, p 10). For Baden-Powell, Scouting was much more than simply an organization; it was a new way of thinking and engaging with society—one Baden-Powell hoped would carry boys into adulthood.

How the Boy Scouts of America is Structured

More than a private organization, the BSA should be thought of as a corporate entity[3]. It is funded through private donations, membership dues, corporate sponsors, and special events (Better Business Bureau, 2010, BSA). The BSA is owned by the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America and is led by the National Executive Board, which is composed of a volunteer board of directors. The National Council serves as the organization's administration and is staffed by paid professionals. The Council, along with its affiliated Learning for Life programs, oversees the design and implementation of all Scouting programs. The Council also sets and maintains quality standards in training, leadership selection, uniforming, registration records, literature development, and advancement requirements. According to the BSA's 2008 Report of the Treasurer, the BSA serves approximately 2,979,000 youth members in its registered programs. The Exploring program, specifically, had 146,564 youth participants in 2008

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[3] The discussion in the following sections is specifically about the national organization and is not reflective of regional, district, or local policies.

(Learning For Life, 2008, Annual Participation Summary). Through its regional offices,

the BSA monitors the performance of 308 local councils, inspects camp facilities, holds

training conferences for volunteers and staffers, administers personnel policies, and

manages compensation and benefits programs for local councils (Better Business

Bureau, 2010, BSA)[4]. The Middle Tennessee Council Boy Scout Council has 290 troops

under its umbrella.

From the beginning of Scouting in the United States, the BSA has employed paid

organizers and depended on a constant stream of donations for their salaries, which

was contrary to Baden-Powell's conception of Scouting. Jeal (1990) noted that, under

the direction of Chief Scout Executive James West (1911 – 1943), BSA moved further

away from the traditional model of Scouting developed by Baden-Powell to a model

based on bureaucratic control and business. "By paying all his Scout officials as

members of an 'organized profession'—West, according to Baden-Powell—had lost the

altruistic spirit of a 'voluntary movement' in which individuals give their time to serve

their community" (Jeal, 1990, p. 489). West was adamant about "Americanizing" the

Scouting movement. His involvement with the YMCA is said to have been instrumental

in how he ran the Scouting Organization. One of his first goals was to change the Scout

Oath and Law in a way he believed better fit the American boy. As stated on the BSA

Discrimination.org website (2009),

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[4] A map of the regions and areas is located in Appendix A

The YMCA men in the Scouts gave the organization a distinctly Protestant orientation. In the rewrite of the Scout promise, they successfully lobbied for the inclusion of a line requiring the boy to be "physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight." This line spoke to the significance of the Y's emblem, a triangle representing spirit, mind, and body which, in turn, referred to the organization's goal of furthering "all round development." The Y men thought it particularly important that the BSA incorporate this line in the promise because they regarded Christ as the perfectly developed man and, therefore the ideal role model for youth, ALL youth.

BSA and God

As mentioned previously, because of James West's connections to the YMCA the issue of God and religion became a pivotal part of both the Scout Oath and Law, with "A Scout is Reverent" being added to the Scout Law in 1911. According to the Scout Law, to be reverent is described as: "A Scout is reverent towards God. He is faithful in his religious duties. He respects the beliefs of others" (Scout, 2009, p. 24). Under West's leadership and during the creation of the "Americanized" Scouts, the new Boy Scout organization drafted their Declaration of Religious Principles, which is a part of the organization's charter and is also included in the bylaws (Bsa-discrimination.org, 2010, Review of BSA Religious Policy). The most recent version of the Declaration (1991) states:

The Boy Scouts of America has a definite position on religious principles. The following interpretative statement may help clarify this position. The Boy Scouts of America:

1. Does not define what constitutes belief in God or the practice of religion.

2. Does not require membership in a religious organization or association for enrollment in the movement but does prefer, and strongly encourages, membership and participation in the religious programs and activities of a church, synagogue, or other religious association.

3. Respects the convictions of those who exercise their constitutional freedom to practice religion as individuals without formal membership in organized religious organizations. In a few cases, there are those who, by conviction, do not feel it necessary to formally belong to an organized form of religion and seek to practice religion in accordance with their own personal convictions. Every effort should be made to counsel with the boy and his parents to determine the true story of the religious convictions and practices as related to advancement in Scouting. Religious organizations have commended the Boy Scouts of America for encouraging youth to participate in organized religious activities. However, these same organizations reject any form of compulsion to enforce conformity to established religious practices.

4. If a boy says he is a member of a religious body, the standards by which he should be evaluated are those of that group. This is why an advancement committee usually requests a reference from his religious leader to indicate whether he has lived up to their expectations.

Throughout life, Scouts are associated with people of different faiths. Scouts believe in religious freedom, respecting others whose religion may differ from theirs. Scouting believes in the right of all to worship God in their own way (BSA's Religious Principles, 2010, The BSA Declaration of Religious Principle).

It must be noted that Baden-Powell, in his creation of the World Scouting program, never excluded atheists. According to Scouting For All (2000), in Baden-Powell's writings he made it clear that he believed through the Scouting experience, a young boy or girl would hopefully find his own spirituality and possibly a belief in God, but never said to exclude children from Scouting if they did not believe in God (Scouting For All, 2000, Frequently Asked Questions). However, the BSA takes the position that "Only persons willing to subscribe to this Declaration of Religious Principle and to the Bylaws of the BSA shall be entitled to certificates of leadership" (Boy Scouts of America, 2010, Manual for Chaplain Aides and Chaplains).

It is important to note that beyond the aforementioned requirement that those desiring to participate in the Scouting program must adhere to the Scout Oath, Law,

and Declaration of Religious Principle, there is no requirement to adhere to any

particular religious beliefs or ethos. The BSA officially recognizes religious emblems for

over 38 faith groups. According to Scouting for All (2000), BSA assumed control of the

religious awards, formerly administered by the denominations themselves, and has

actually told one denomination, the Unitarian Universalist Church, that it could not

present its award because its manual included materials that the BSA disagreed with on

homosexuality and atheism—thereby prohibiting that denomination from teaching its

beliefs to boys in Scouting (Scouting For All, 2000, Frequently Asked Questions).

BSA and Homosexuals

The world became more aware of the controversy within the BSA over

homosexuality in 2000 when the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the BSA on the issue

of banning homosexuals from all aspects of Scouting. However, the battle between

homosexuals and the BSA had been waged in the courts since the early 1980s.

Although the BSA was used to receiving attention for such aspects as service projects

and the varied accomplishments of its members, the fallout from the Supreme Court

ruling began to shine a negative light on the organization.

The road to the Supreme Court decision began with the 1999 ruling by the New Jersey

Supreme Court, which unanimously ruled that the BSA was a public accommodation

and therefore subject to New Jersey civil rights laws (BSA-Discrimination.org, 2009).

The findings in this case meant the "BSA Councils in the State of New Jersey had to

comply with state civil rights laws which prohibited discrimination on the basis of

sexual orientation" (BSA-Discrimination.org, 2009). According to BSA-

Discrimination.org (2009), a unanimous ruling by a state Supreme Court on a state law

is rarely reviewed by the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1998, however, the California Supreme

Court ruled that the BSA was not a business establishment and therefore not subject to

California's civil rights law—the Unruh Civil Rights Act—which prohibits discrimination

on the basis of sexual orientation. With two seemingly conflicting rulings, the U.S.

Supreme Court agreed to settle the legal question.

While the BSA has publicly defended its stance on homosexuality for more than

30 years, according to BSA-Discrimination.org (2009) only a handful of internal

documents, dating from 1978 to the early 1990s, refer to the exclusion of gay youth

and adult members and staff. Furthermore, BSA-Discrimination.org (2009) found that

none of these documents was ever circulated among youth or adult members, or even

made available upon request. What may be the most troubling about the BSA's policy is

the fact that there is no such reference to a ban on homosexuals in the Congressional

Charter, Scout Out, The Scout Law, The Scouting Bylaws, the Exploring Code or any

other formal document that is seen by its members or volunteers. Instead the BSA

developed a statement on homosexuality, which reads:

> Helping America's youth to become personally fit has always been one of the
>
> primary objectives of the Boy Scouts of America. Inherent in personal fitness
>
> concepts are concerns about sexuality, sexual identity, and sex roles. Our
>
> organization recognizes the importance of individuals making responsible,

informed decisions about these important areas of personal development. Such

personal choices are an integral part of a healthy self-concept—a foundation for

one's future well-being. The development of human sexuality is viewed as a

lifelong process encompassing one's thoughts about oneself in sexual terms;

how one interrelates with those of the same sex and the other sex; how one

perceives and participates in sexual interactions. Central to this development is

the issue of moral values—that is, the personal value system that determines

how an individual feels, behaves, and interprets experiences. Sound input at

early stages in life gives children a solid foundation upon which to base adult

relationships. Education for sexuality belongs in the home. Parents should be the

primary sexuality educators of their children, particularly in the early years. In

the home, the most sensitive information as well as family and religious values

can be shared. However, positive education in sexuality is not provided in many

homes. Only a small percentage of mothers and fathers contribute first sex

information to their children. The bulk of such learning is obtained from peers,

the media, and literature. Scouting participants often find themselves in the right

place at the right time to respond to questions from youth members. They

should be prepared to do this with sensitivity and accuracy, but they should not

attempt to do counseling. They should reinforce rather than contradict what is

being taught in the family and by the youth's religious leaders (A Statement

Concerning Human Sexuality, BSA, 2009)

It is important to note the earliest BSA documentation that mentions homosexuals specifically was issued in 1978. There were two references that year; the first, dated February 13, 1978, was on the subject of "Homosexual Unit Members" and the second was dated March 17, 1978 (Discrimination.org, 2009). "BSA testified that both memoranda were issued in response to inquiries asking that the BSA express 'its official position to the field' on, among other things, the appointment of homosexual volunteer and professional leaders" (Discrimination.org, 2009, Policy on Homosexuals). In the last 30 years the BSA has remained firm in their position on homosexuality, and reaffirmed it in a 1991 statement that reads:

> For more than 80 years, the Boy Scouts of America has brought the moral values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law to American boys, helping them to achieve the objectives of Scouting. The Boy Scouts of America also places strong emphasis on traditional family values as being necessary components of a strong, healthy society. The Scouting program is designed to be a shared, family experience. We believe that homosexual conduct is inconsistent with the requirements in the Scout Oath that a Scout be morally straight and in the Scout Law that a "Scout be clean in word and deed," and that homosexuals do not provide a desirable role model for Scouts. Because of these beliefs, the Boy Scouts of America does not accept homosexuals as members or as leaders, whether in volunteer or professional capacities. Our position on this issue is based solely upon our desire to provide the appropriate environment and role models which reflect Scouting's

values and beliefs. As a private membership organization, we believe our right to determine the qualifications of our members and leaders is protected by the Constitution of the United States (BSA Policy on Homosexuals, 2009).

The National Boy Scouts of America identifies itself as a private, nonprofit, religious organization. This is verified through their use of God in the varying aspects of their organization's national makeup, including, but not limited to reference to God in the Scout Oath ("To do my duty to God"); the BSA Bylaws, which contain the statement, *"*The Boy Scouts of America maintain that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing his obligation to God....The Boy Scouts of America, therefore, recognizes the religious element in the training of the member but it is absolutely nonsectarian in its attitude toward that religious training*";* and the Scout Law, which states in part, "A Scout is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties. He respects the beliefs of others."

Based on this it can be discerned that what is meant by "traditional family values," as referenced in the above statement and with consideration given to the religious foundations of the organization's founding members, are those from the Judeo-Christian bible. This work only recognizes marriage as being between a man and women and homosexuality as an act against God. This strong tie to Christian values is what draws many to Scouting[5]. There is an understanding that the BSA stands for the

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[5] Of all BSA chartered organizations—units that deliver programs to their youth members, as well as the community at large—which include civic, faith-based, and educational organizations, 66.9 % are chartered to faith-based organizations.

same type of morals/values as do the families supportive of this stance and the majority

of the organizations that implement its programming. Theirs is a culture based on

biblical truths such as the preservation of marriage and family, decency and morality,

the sanctity of human life, and stewardship. Thus, to them, their position is simple:

Homosexuality is against God, and therefore homosexuals cannot serve as adequate

role models.

The BSA specifically states, "We believe that homosexual conduct is inconsistent

with the requirements in the Scout Oath that a Scout be morally straight and in the

Scout Law that a Scout be clean in word and deed," as the reason homosexuals cannot

be adequate role models for Scouts. According to *The Boy Scout Handbook* (2009), the

Scout Oath describes "morally straight" as the following: "Your relationship with others

should be honest and open. Respect and defend the rights of all people. Be clean in your

speech and actions and faithful in your religious beliefs. Values you practice as a Scout

will help you shape a life of virtue and resilience" (p. 23). A definition of what is meant

by the word "clean" in accordance with the Scout Law is offered up in the Handbook. It

states: "A Scout keeps his body and mind fit. He chooses friends who also live by high

standards. He avoids profanity and pornography. He helps keep his home and

community clean" (p. 25).

What is most confusing about the BSA's use of these statements as justification

for the stance against homosexuals is that these statements do not speak to why

someone's preference in a sexual partner is relevant to their worth as role models. The

values mentioned in both the Scout Oath and Law are those possessed by people of all races, classes, and genders; however, because the BSA is a private organization, it is free to pass this moral judgment and exclude homosexuals.

In a 2000 press release the BSA stated, "Boy Scouting makes no effort to discover the sexual orientation of any person" (Scouting.org, 2010). No written material completed for youth membership or participation in a Scouting program or adult leadership position makes inquires as to the sexual orientation of the applicant. Though all local councils, Scouting units, and sponsors are required to adhere to national BSA policies as a condition of their charter, many have taken a more liberal stance regarding the interpretation and implementation of the policy on homosexuality. Many have taken the U.S. Armed Forces' "don't ask, don't tell" approach, which means that as long as homosexuals are not "avowed," the BSA should not question or investigate their sexual orientation.

BSA and Litigation

The BSA continues to win court cases both in regard to homosexuality and atheism because it asserts its constitutional right, as a private organization, to freedom of association. Technically, the Constitution does not speak directly to this right; however, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *NAACP v. Alabama* (357 U.S. 449, 1958) that freedom of association is an essential part of the Freedom of Speech Amendment because, in many cases, people can engage in effective speech only when they join with others.

Though several legal settlements have resulted in federal support being withdrawn, in other cases the support has continued. Despite their openly discriminatory policies the federal government, in some instances, continues to use taxpayer dollars to support BSA initiatives with little regard to those Americans who may be against their tax dollars going to support this organization. One of the BSA's most vocal opponents, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), has represented multiple individuals in litigation against the national BSA. The ACLU has also taken legal action to stop local, state, and federal government from supporting the Scout organization. Because of the BSA's designation as a religious organization, the ACLU takes the position that governmental organizations serving as the chartered organizations (sponsors) for Scouting units is in violation of the separation of church and state.

 As a result of the ACLU's work in establishing legal precedent, in 2005 the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America decided to transfer thousands of charters issued to operate Boy Scout troops and Cub Scout packs from local government entities across the nation to private organizations (Americas Civil Liberties Union, 2005). According to the ACLU (2005), "The Boy Scouts decision came in the wake of the Pentagon's agreement in November 2004 to cease direct sponsorship of hundreds of Boy Scout units on military facilities across the United States and overseas, resulting from a negotiated settlement agreement with the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois."

BSA Support

By way of fighting back against litigation brought by not only the ACLU but by other individuals and state and local groups, the federal government enacted legislation in support of the BSA. Both branches of Congress have overwhelmingly passed resolutions and acts in support of the BSA. A 2004 resolution in the House, for instance, recognized "the Boy Scouts of America for the public service the organization performs," and in February 2005 the House passed a resolution stating that "the Department of Defense should continue to exercise its long-standing statutory authority to support the activities of the BSA, in particular the periodic national and world Scout jamborees. In 2001, both the House and Senate approved the Boy Scouts of America Centennial Commemorative Coin Act.

With respect to the Learning for Life subsidiary, local BSA councils do not always have a separate 501c(3) non-profit status for their Learning for Life programs by which to indemnify themselves against any legal actions (Scouting for All, 2010). Thus when applying for grants, the local Learning for Life subsidiaries often must use their local BSA Council's tax identification numbers, which often cause difficulties with grant-making agencies that do not desire to affiliate with the BSA because of their policies on religion and homosexuality.

A Good Turn

"A good turn is more than simple good manners; it is a special act of kindness" (Boy Scouts Handbook, 2009, p. 27). Despite all the controversies presented above, the

BSA cannot be denied acknowledgment for all the good accomplished not only through the national organization's efforts but also by its many participants. Scouts, in my opinion, above all else stand for good. Their slogan "to do a good turn daily" is not just words. Young Scouts are taught to live this every day. These "turns" can come in many forms from helping someone cross the street to neighborhood cleanups, walking for "Race for the Cure," helping with conservation, saving a life, helping out after floods or other disasters, and beyond. Over the past 100 years, the BSA has served more than 114,304,329 youth, awarded approximately 117,649,303 merit badges and awarded 2,043,375 Eagle Scout honors (100 Years in Review, 2010, FactSheet).

The federal government has also shown support of the BSA through the passage of legislative acts. The Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act, for instance, enacted in 2002, requires public elementary and secondary schools, local educational agencies (LEAs), and state educational agencies (SEAs) that receive U.S. Department of Education funding to provide any group officially affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America (this includes the organization's Learning for Life subsidiary) equal access to school facilities before or after school hours (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Both houses of Congress have overwhelmingly passed resolutions and acts in support of the Boy Scouts of America.

Learning for Life and the Exploring Program

During the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, several BSA councils organized innovative, non-traditional programs called In-School Scouting (Wikipedia, 2010; K.

Brissom, personal communication). "Participating public schools (usually in low-income neighborhoods) invited the BSA and other partnering organizations to provide programs as part of the school curriculum. Critics of In-School Scouting complained that these programs were not "real Scouting," and "there were occasionally difficulties in maintaining partnerships between these youth-serving agencies in delivering school programs to both boys and girls" (Wikipedia-Learning for Life, 2010; K. Brissom, personal communication). Learning for Life was created in 1991 as a solution to these issues.

Learning for Life, a BSA subsidiary, serves youth through public schools and educational organizations with specially developed curriculum and distinctive programs separate from traditional Scouting activities such as hiking or camping. Learning for Life has developed curriculum programs for students from early childhood programs through high school. As noted on the Learning for Life website (2010):

1. The Seekers' Program (Early childhood-Grade 2) "offers an integrated approach to character development designed for Early Childhood through 2nd grade youth" (LFL website). The program blends character development, life skills, academic learning, and outdoor experiences into a comprehensive program geared to help students successfully handle the complexities of contemporary society, reinforce social skills, critical and creative thinking, ethical decision making, conflict resolution, and build their self-esteem. The 8 core character traits promoted in the Seekers' Program are: 1) Respect, 2)

Responsibility, 3) Honesty/Trust, 4) Caring/Fairness, 5) Perseverance, 6) Self-Discipline, 7) Courage, and 8) Citizenship.

2. The Discoverers' Program (Grades 3-4) combines character development, life skills, academic learning, and outdoor experiences specifically designed for third and fourth grade youth. It mirrors the Seeker's Program by providing an integrated approach to character development. The age appropriate, grade specific lesson plans focus on the same 8 character traits as the Seekers' Program: 1) Respect, 2) Responsibility, 3) Honesty/Trust, 4) Caring/Fairness, 5) Perseverance, 6) Self-Discipline, 7) Courage and 8) Citizenship. Life Skills with topics on Youth Protection, Hobbies and Art lesson plans are also part of the Discoverers Program. Each of the third and fourth grade books has 61 lessons plans focusing on many of the same themes as the Seekers' Program; however, lesson plans progress in difficulty and cognitive level. Lessons focus on critical thinking, conflict resolution, perseverance, courage, interpersonal skills, and ethical decision making.

3. Specifically designed for the cognitive and developmental levels of fifth and sixth grade students, the Challengers' Program continues Learning for Life's character education emphasis by integrating components of both the Seekers' and Discoverers' Program. The Challengers' Program focuses on the same 8 character traits as Seekers' and Discoverers: 1) Respect, 2) Responsibility, 3) Honesty/Trust, 4) Caring/Fairness, 5) Perseverance, 6) Self-

Discipline, 7) Courage, and 8) Citizenship. Life Skill themes such as Money

Management and Fire Safety are an added feature. Lesson plans feature

themes such as Accepting Consequences, Conservation, Ethnic Heritage,

Meeting Deadlines, Gangs, Never Give Up, What Is Freedom?, Respecting

Differences, Violence Prevention, and Sticking to What's Right. The themes

instill in youth the importance of respecting the rights of all people and

prepare youth to participate in and give leadership to American society.

4. The Builders' Program is for students in the seventh and eighth grades. It is a

comprehensive, four-tier blend of elements focusing on Character Education,

Career Education, Building Relationships, and Citizenship. The Builder's

Program introduces Learning for Life's career preparedness emphasis, while

reinforcing character, relationship building and citizenship. Youth learn the

benefits of being employed and how to recognize obstacles, make mature

and ethical decisions, and deal responsibly with their decisions. This program

is designed to provide community role models to motivate and interact with

the youth. Role models meet with a specific class (e.g., English, social studies,

and math) and discuss the relationship of that subject to a work situation.

These role models, with backgrounds similar to those of the youth, share

their personal paths to success, including the pitfalls and the high points. In

addition, many of the same value-added features included with the Seekers',

Discoverers', and Challengers' Programs are also part of the Builders'

Program, including community speakers, mentors, outdoor experiences, field

trips, and teacher training.

5. Because of the various forms and levels of disabilities that schools encounter,

    the Learning for Life special-needs curriculum, Champions, is sometimes

    supplemented with the elementary, seventh- and eighth-grade, and senior

    high school Learning for Life program materials. In this way, Learning for Life

    is tailored to fit the needs of each individual class and participant and is

    certain to be age-appropriate. The special-needs curriculum teaches youth

    with mental disabilities/challenges the life skills they need to achieve self-

    sufficiency.

6. The Navigators' Program is designed to extend the learning experiences

    taught through Learning for Life's Builders' Program for seventh and eighth

    grade students. Just as the word "navigator" implies, the program serves to

    guide youth in making a successful transition from high school to real-world

    endeavors, including post-secondary education, acquiring a job, being a

    productive citizen, and establishing and maintaining positive relationships

    with others.

The Learning for Life program is designed to support schools and other youth-

serving organizations in their efforts toward preparing youth to successfully handle the

complexities of today's society and to enhance their self-confidence, motivation, and

self-worth (About Learning for Life, 2010). Learning for Life also serves as a conduit to

help youth develop social and life skills, assists in character development, helps them

formulate positive personal values, and prepares youth to make ethical decisions that

will help them achieve their potential (About Learning for Life, 2010). Though all aspects

of the Learning for Life program hold value, this research study will only focus on the

Exploring program component.

Because the BSA organized Learning for Life as an independent subsidiary,

participants in Learning for Life programs are not subject to traditional membership

requirements such as honoring the Scout Oath and Law and membership restrictions,

e.g., gender requirements, other than minimum age requirements. This allows the BSA

to provide in-school programs to students who don't normally fit the historic Scouting

model. "The Learning for Life organization consists of a leadership team of national

Learning for Life volunteers including specialized committees for the various Exploring

programs [which will be identified later in the text], and is supported by seasoned senior

executive professionals" (Wikipedia-Learning for Life, 2010; K. Brissom, personal

communication). These people are responsible for developing the curriculum and

national programs for Learning for Life and advising and providing support to the

Learning for Life field offices across the United States and overseas (Wikipedia-Learning

for Life, 2010; K. Brissom, personal communication). According to the Learning for Life

website (2010) its aims are identified as follows:

AIMS OF LEARNING FOR LIFE			
Encourage a desire for life-long learning	**Foster the acquisition and application of personal and social skills**	**Prepare tomorrow's workforce through exposure of career management skills**	**Develop engaged citizens**
Reinforcing academic proficiencies	Building interpersonal skills	Offering career information	Increasing the appreciation of the American democratic system
Developing communication abilities	Facilitating leadership development	Fostering career planning	Participating in service learning experiences
Enhancing life skills	Coaching character development	Presenting opportunities for career experiences	Preparing responsible individuals for each life role (life role as a member of a family, community, nation and world and as a worker)
Exposure to healthy life style habits	Influencing cultural competency and recognition of diversity	Developing employment skills	
Emphasizing continued educational achievement	Teaching problem solving and decision making skills	Cultivating the use of resources, information & technology	

In 1998, the work-based Exploring program, which includes Exploring posts and their members, was transferred to the Learning for Life subsidiary. Exploring provides career-awareness programs to schools and other youth-serving organizations. It is a particular draw for students who don't necessarily care to be a member of a club and thus the career model could be adapted to meet the needs of the participants, by creating posts in the career areas that meet the needs of local "career clubs". Almost

every one of the 308 BSA councils has at least one Exploring post, and the majority of

the councils have school-based Learning for Life programs (Wikipedia-Learning for Life,

2010; K. Brissom, personal communication). The day-to-day support for Learning for Life

and Exploring programs is provided by the council through one or more certified

executives, either full-time Learning for Life professionals or, equally often, through

BSA-commissioned professionals, all of whom are employees of the local BSA council

(Wikipedia-Learning for Life, 2010; K. Brissom, personal communication).

The Exploring program is based on five areas of emphasis: Career Opportunities,

Leadership Experience, Citizenship, Character Education, and Life Skills. The Program has

identified specific methods to meet the needs of its participants that include voluntary

association between youth and adults; ethical decision making; group activities;

recognition of achievement; the democratic process; and curiosity, exploration, and

adventure. Because Exploring is voluntary, there is an assumption that participants are

receptive to new ideas, experiences, and relationships (Learning for Life, 2005). "These

relationships provide a connection to new ways of thinking and acting as well as a new

identity as a responsible young adult" (Learning for Life, 2005). Exploring provides

numerous opportunities for youth to make effective and ethical decisions. Exploring

activities are interdependent group experiences and therefore success depends on the

cooperation of all group participants. According to the Learning for Life website (2005),

recognition might come through formal awards, but it also is achieved through the

acknowledgment by peers and adults of a young person's competence and abilities.

"Exploring posts provide exposure to democratic ideals and skills that are needed

throughout life" (Learning for Life, 2005). In the final programming method identified by

Exploring, curiosity is encouraged in all activities and experiences of the participants. A

"sense of exploration and adventure is developed through new experiences that provide

opportunities for youth to acquire new skills and participate in action-oriented

activities" (Learning for Life, 2005).

Exploring posts are organized by businesses and community groups for youth

interested in investigating specific careers. According to the Learning for Life website

(2005), more than 100 different specialties have been organized, such as the following:

Arts and Humanities	The Arts and Humanities specialty area includes posts that are organized around interests in arts and hobbies, acting, commercial art, drama/theater, fashion design/modeling/buying, interior design/decoration, jewelry/watch-making, and movie directing/producing
Aviation	Aviation specialty encompasses a range of programs, including maintenance, operations, construction, flight attendants, airport management, and aerospace. The Federal Aviation Administration supports this growth, along with aviation organizations, unions, and industries
Business	Through the Business specialty area, young adults become prepared for many types of careers, from accounting to financial planning. Many posts organize their program around knowledge of business planning and practices in addition to career preparation
Communications	This specialty is endorsed by the Broadcast Education Association, International Association of Business Communicators, National Association of Broadcasters, National Press Photographers Association Inc., Public Relations Society of America, and Women in Communications. The Exploring program can serve as an effective outreach program that exposes high school students to careers in communications and public relations
Engineering	Many national engineering societies endorse this specialty area of Exploring. Its goal is to promote post programs that open and

	expand Explorers' understanding of the many opportunities in engineering and technology
Fire/Emergency Services	This specialty is endorsed by International Association of Fire Chiefs, National Volunteer Fire Council, U.S. Fire Administration National Fire Academy, and local fire authorities. Posts are organized around interests in fire/emergency services, civil defense, first-aid/ambulance corps, fire fighting, rescue service, paramedic, EMT, and volunteer fire fighting. The national Fire/Emergency Services Exploring committee conducts every odd number year the national Fire/Emergency Services Exploring conference, which is open to all fire/emergency services Explorers and post Advisors
Law and Government	The American Bar Association and other organizations support the high interest of many youth in law or government participation through Exploring. Law Day activities, mock trials, and other law-related activities provide firsthand experience in America's legal and court system
Law Enforcement	This specialty is endorsed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the National Sheriffs' Association and is helped by other national law enforcement organizations and industries. Departments and Explorers gain first-hand knowledge of each other. Explorers can support many community-based programs of the department. The post program is supported by national law enforcement competitions and academies
Medical and Health Careers	The American Medical Association and other national health organizations support the establishment of posts in hospitals, clinics, medical centers, schools, and other health-care organizations. These posts render valuable community service and give members an insight into a variety of career opportunities
Science	The Science specialty area includes posts that are organized around interests in general science, anthropology, archaeology, a career as an astronaut, astronomy, biochemistry, biology, chemistry, computers/programming, conservation/ecology, environmental science, wildlife/fish management, and zoology/zoo direction
Skilled Trades	The Skilled Trades specialty area includes posts that are organized around interests in auto repair, cosmetology, electrical, carpentry, and construction, to name a few
Social Services	The Social Services area includes posts that are organized around interests in social service, adult care, child care, drug/alcohol counseling, exercise attending, funeral direction, home economy, librarian work, museum curation, school counseling, social work, teaching, volunteer work, youth organization volunteerism, and

	disabled career profession
Others	In addition to the above, other popular Exploring post specialties include conservation, computers, music, rescue, radio-TV, architecture, photography, and journalism

BSA does not own or operate the Exploring posts. Posts are owned by "chartered" organizations (businesses and community groups). Informally, the term "franchise" helps to explain what is meant by a chartering organization, in that it implies local ownership while still using the corporation's name and resources, i.e. the BSA. According to Scouting for All (2010) as part of a chartering organization's responsibility to carry out the chartering agreement, the organization is expected to conduct the Scouting program according to its own policies and guidelines as well as those of the BSA, in accordance with the BSA's Charter and Bylaws. The BSA goes on to state that a chartering organization must agree to recruit competent adult leaders. The choice of advisors, committee members, and especially the chartered organization's representative, is made by the chartered organization. However, The National Council of the BSA has veto power over these appointments (Scouting for All, 2010). According to the Membership/Relationship Committee Guide, the BSA maintains a list of current "unacceptable" categories for appointments, e.g., homosexuals or agnostics (Scouting for All, 2010).

In cases where local government agencies have chartered posts, e.g., police departments, fire departments, or county offices, this essentially makes the discrimination required by the BSA both an act and a statement of the local

government. This violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits

employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. In

this regard, BSA has initiated litigation in which adult leaders have been asked to step

down from their roles in a chartered post because they were homosexual or agnostic,

and municipalities have been sued for violating Title VII by sponsoring the program.

Conclusion

As we progress into the methods chapter of this study, my hope is that the

reader now has an understanding of the Learning for Life program and its connections

to the BSA. The structure of the Learning for Life program, including its mission,

purpose, specialized career programs, and controversies, have been spelled out.

Because the Learning for Life program is a subsidiary of the BSA, and would not exist on

its own, it was important to not only connect the Exploring program with the BSA but

also provide a brief history of the parent organization. As was mentioned above,

information and resources on both the BSA and Learning for Life organization were

gathered from some secondary sources due to the lack of availability of primary

information. I acknowledge there are many different ways to present these two

subjects; however, I have presented the information in a way that suits my research.

The remaining chapters include Chapter three, where the narrative research method

used for this study is described; Chapter four, where I provide a narrative look at African

American participants in the Middle Tennessee Council Exploring program; and Chapter

five, where I conclude with my findings and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 3
Methods

In chapter two it was my hope to convey the story of the BSA. Trying to understand these cultural norms has led me on an interesting journey, one I wish to begin developing in chapter three and throughout chapter four. I shared in chapter two how I have come to understand the Learning for Life program and its connections to the BSA. The structure of the Learning for Life program, including the mission, purpose, specialized career programs, and controversies has been spelled out in hopes of providing enlightenment on the very core of how this 100-year-old organization operates. The fluid nature of collecting narrative data from multiple sources allows for a wide variety of sources, including the secondary sources used due to the lack of availability of primary information.

In chapter two I also noted there are many different ways to present the aforementioned subjects; however, because my intention is to present an experience-centered and culturally oriented narrative, it is important that my readers are able to envision and understand the culture of the BSA. The goal of chapter three is to continue exploring the narrative of BSA and introduce my focal point, African American youth. I will explore my experience navigating the boundaries of the Scouting organization, describe the means by which I will analyze collected field texts, and introduce those whose stories I hope to portray.

Methodology

Narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has there been a people without narrative. All classes, all humans, all groups have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by and with different even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, the narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself (Barthe, 1983, pp251-252).

Such are the narrative experiences of the research participants in this study. Every life lived is storied in some way, shape or form. As a narrative researcher, I feel it my duty to represent this marginalized population and by doing so restore a sense of narrative power and authority to the youths telling their stories. According to Bell (2002), narrative inquiry rests on the assumption that we as human beings make sense of random experiences by the imposition of story structures on them. We select those elements of experience to which we will attend, and we pattern those chosen elements in ways that reflect stories available to us. Narrative is not an objective construction of life—it is a rendition of how life is perceived.

There are many ways in which a life can be storied in narrative form, however, "unlike other qualitative research perspectives, narrative research offers no overall rules about suitable materials or modes of investigation or the best level at which to study

stories" (Andrews, 2008, p. 1). This creates a fluidity that allows me to mix, combine, and/or overlap analysis, methods of investigation and theoretical frameworks that suit the needs of my research participants. The narrative inquiry method allows me to attempt to capture the entire story of the respective participants, whereas other methods tend to communicate understanding of studied subjects or phenomena at certain points within themes or conceptual frameworks, but frequently omit the important "intervening" and "insignificant" details that help to create a much richer contextual story (Webster, 2007). Other methods, such as quantitative methods, also frequently overlook complex issues, which are, for instance, considered significant by the participants in the research (Webster, 2007). "This happens because quantitative methods tend not to have the scope to deal with complex-centered human issues" (Webster, 2007, p. 3).

By using the narrative inquiry method I am able to analyze a story to determine its told structure in terms of how the story functioned for the teller, who is producing them and by what means—which in this instance is through interviews. The mechanisms by which they are consumed, as well as how narratives are silenced, contested, or accepted can also be understood through the narrative method (Webster, 2007, p. 2). This is important because it offers a more holistic view of how the storytellers make meaning and share information;. "The practice of narrative research…is always interpretive, at every stage" (Josselson, 2006, p. 4).

Within the experience-centered approach to narrative, I have framed my work with the underpinning of narratives being sequential and meaningful in that all sequential and meaningful experiences that people produce are included (Andrews, 2008). The stories can include events as well as experiences, and may also be more flexible regarding time. These stories may also be defined by theme rather than structure, which means the order in which the story is told may not be as important as the themes/main ideas that present themselves (p. 42). The stories presented may occur in multiple temporal and contextual frames, going beyond the past-tense, first-person recounting to include present and future stories about others as well as oneself (Andrews, 2008, p. 42).

Thematic analysis recognizes that one's understanding of people and events changes; stories have many meanings, and are never the same when told twice. A second underpinning is that the narratives produced are human and deeply social, not just because they always involve hearers as well as speakers, but because storytelling constitutes and maintains sociality. Third, within this form of narrative I have the opportunity to "'re-present' experience, reconstituting it, as well as expressing it through means of co-construction, contextual framing and multiple and changing story lines" (Andrews, 2008, p. 44).

Finally, from a foundational standpoint, narrative seeks to display transformation and change; experience-centered narrative research "rests on a phenomenological

assumption that experience can, through stories, become part of consciousness"
(Andrews, 2008, p. 44).

The ability to be reflexive in thematic analysis suggests that the meaning of a
text can be found within its cultural, historical, and literary context (Andrews, 2008). As
it concerns this study, the process begins with a description of the interviews using
thematic coding. From this description I will develop and test theories that give a
predictive explanation of the stories, moving back and forth between the interviews
themselves and generalizations about them. Though no one theory or truth will emerge
I will continually check the evolving interpretations against relevant materials and
actively seek contrary cases. I expect and will argue for multiple valid interpretations
and multiple narrative truths. The purpose of this analysis is not to look for objective
meaning of text, but meaning of text for people in situation.

Life at the boundaries

In narrative research, "the researcher's experience is always a dual one, always
the inquirer experiencing the experience and also being a part of the experience itself"
(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p 81). As is the case in narrative research, the purpose and
what is found puzzling tends to evolve as the research progresses (Clandinin & Connelly,
2000). My initial purpose, as outlined in Chapter one, seemed to be straightforward:
making meaning from the African American participants' experiences in the Exploring
program, as related to their career aspirations. I stated my goal as: "To help represent

Black youth participating in a vocational preparedness program, through an exploration

of how vocational preparedness programs affect the career aspirations of Black youth."

A research puzzle developed when I attempted to make meaning, with respect

to social and cultural significance, of my participant's narratives in light of their stated

experiences. In my consideration of how these students' experiences would be

represented, in relation to the analysis, I kept in mind the uncertain, changeable nature

of the written, spoken, and visual symbol systems. This means that stories are distanced

from the happenings they described and have many meanings (Andrew, 2008). I quickly

had to acknowledge that to become comfortable with my narrative journey and the

stories produced by the participants, I needed to accept the there are no fixed rules for

narrative studies; nor are there rules for assigning meaning to what is being said.

In an effort to stay true to the ethical standards set forth not only for qualitative

research methods but also that of the University's institutional review board, my story

begins with the process of entering and negotiating the field. As stated in Chapter one,

my first objective was to negotiate my entrance into the field with the program

gatekeepers and thus gain access to program participants. I was excited to move

forward with my stated mission in hand and start the process of selecting participants

with the cooperation of the organization's gatekeeper, Sue. I envisioned a random

selection, via a populated list, of participants based on my research criteria: minority

high school students, varying socioeconomic status levels, parents from varied

education background (GED to graduate degree), and a mix of students from first year

participants to multiple years. I also planned, as stated in Chapter one, that I would

conduct focus group interviews with no fewer than five and no more than 12 program

participants and follow them up, if needed, with individual interviews.

What I came to learn during the process of arranging my research interviews is

that life along the boundaries is sometimes riddled with unique challenges. Sue

explained to me that reaching this specific population was going to be difficult because

they did not keep such records readily available; no one was tracking student

participants in the program. I came to understand that because the BSA is primarily a

volunteer organization, no one had the time to keep such records—not that they did not

believe in the value of documentation, but under their present circumstances it was not

possible to manage.

We then negotiated a way for me to reach my general population, African

American high school students, with the hopes that some of the respondents would

meet the remaining qualifications. Sue also made me aware of the difficulties she had in

reaching the parents of program participants, and stated that it might be difficult for me

to get respondents in light of my ethical responsibility to acquire the permission of the

parents for their children to participate. Because of this it became apparent that I would

not be able to spend the two months I had planned to use familiarizing myself and

becoming somewhat immersed in the culture of the program participants so as to

become part of the landscape. Instead, once the students were identified and

committed to the interviews, I found myself conducting individual interviews, rather

than focus groups interviews, over four days, and with no outside interaction with the participants.

Sue said she would handle the initial contact with program participants by "pleading my case" and encouraging them to participate. I was tasked with writing an email that explained my research question, what I hoped to accomplish and what my expectations would be of them. Since these emails were being sent to students from predominately Black schools in the Metro-Nashville area—yet the majority of Scouting and Exploring post staff members are White—I believed that positioning myself would aid in my search for research participants. In hopes of connecting with my audience as well as to establish my cultural and racial authority to conduct this study, I identified myself as a Black female graduate student from a rural town in Texas. I also explained my connections to the Scouting organization.

Three different emails were sent to the parents of participants under 18, participants under 18, and former participants who were 19 and older. Multiple email attempts, using various incentives, were necessary to achieve the minimum number of participants for the study. My hope was to get a minimum of five students and no more than 12 to participate in the study. From more than 100 emails sent, only five responses were received, two from parents and three from interested students under 18. While I worked to secure interviews with those who responded to Sue's email, Sue began to send personal emails to students she specifically remembered having been awarded a

scholarship in the hope that her personal contact would encourage them to participate. Her personal and direct phone calls secured two more students for the study.

I followed the original plan to negotiate a time and location that was most optimal for the participants with the assistance of the program gatekeeper and with respect to the time constraints of this research project. Two interviews were conducted in Nashville with the high school-aged participants and the remaining three interviews were held on the University of Tennessee campus, where these participants were students. We decided on a location that was convenient for them, the Black Cultural Center. Though I was only expecting to conduct two interviews there, one student brought a friend who had also participated in the program and was willing to meet with me.

As stated in Chapter one, my aim in conducting narrative inquiry research was to listen to participants' stories and understand how they made meaning of their experiences. Despite the changing circumstances I was able to meet this goal. Initially I believed I could ask one question during the focus group interview that would guide the interview session based on information collected via a questionnaire. Given that I was only able to conduct individual interviews, I chose instead to use semi-structured questions in a way that allowed the stories and experiences of the students to unfold. I assumed initially students who liked the program, if given the opportunity, would readily tell their stories. What I found instead were teenagers who spoke in short sentences and seemingly did not have very much to say. To help encourage the

participants to tell their stories and feel more comfortable in the environment, the interviews took on a more conversational tone, with the ideas being fleshed out through co-construction. This approach seemingly put the participants at ease and allowed them to talk more openly, if even a small amount, about their experiences in the program.

Although narrative inquiry as presented by Clandinin and Connelly was the original framework for my research methodology, the data collection moved me in a different direction towards the thematic framework cited by Andrews. Whereas Clandinin and Connelly talk about narrative inquiry in terms of a three dimensional space that addresses temporal matters, focused on the personal and the social as they relate to the study, and occurs in specific places or sequences of places, this requires the telling and retelling of stories by means of co-construction with the narrators. Because the interactions with the research participants did not produce stories, I would not be able to create a narrative representation.

Instead, Andrews provided a way to view data using thematic analysis. Andrews' framework also allowed me to take into consideration every part of the student's experiences as meaningful and important. Certain codes stood out in the interview transcripts and are further expounded on in Chapter four.

To my surprise, only females volunteered to participate in the study. This may also come as a surprise to the reader, given that the BSA is an all-male organization. As mentioned in Chapter two, the Learning for Life organization, which manages the Exploring program, is under the umbrella of the BSA and is open to both male and

female participants. According to Sue, in the Metro-Nashville Scout district, 60-70% of

participants are female. Sue also stated:

> If they were to market the program as Boy Scouts, it could deter many students
>
> thinking Scouts is not "cool," etc., and Boy Scouts is so different it seems
>
> pointless to make it a big deal. At the first meeting we tell all participants that it
>
> is a subsidiary program of the Boy Scouts, but we tell them that it is completely
>
> separate—no uniforms or high adventure activities. Ours is career based. This is
>
> how we deal with it and I feel like since we have the 5th largest program in the
>
> country, we are probably smart not to mention it....Some councils run Exploring
>
> like Boy Scouts or they have a lot of police and fire programs...which tend to be
>
> like Scout groups. Ours is more unique in that we have a variety of careers and
>
> they don't meet as often as fire or police, but they still get the opportunity to
>
> learn about a career. I am sure some councils mention that it is a part of BSA, but
>
> they should remember that it is a subsidiary meaning that LFL [Learning for Life]
>
> and Exploring do not have the same membership "standards" that traditional
>
> Scouting has (Sue, personal communication, October 26, 2009).

Although this statement is contrary to what my research has shown me,

specifically as it relates to her statement regarding membership standards, I believe it is

an important piece of the story describing the relationship between Scouting, the

Learning for Life subsidiary, and the efforts to recruit students, specifically minority

students, into the program. In Chapter two this idea is contradicted in the discussion of homosexuals/agnostics/atheist participation in Scouting and the Exploring program.

Conclusion

In Chapter four it is my intention to help the reader make sense of the participants' lived experience. Unlike in traditional methods of inquiry rooted in grounded theory, my intention is not to create a set of knowledge claims to be deemed as historic truths or that will incrementally add to the knowledge in the fields of cultural studies and career exploration (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I will focus on temporality as the central feature—what is true at a specific time and moment—of my research with respect to my foundational grounding in critical race theory and cultural studies.

I will conclude in Chapter five by offering insight into my process of "re-searching" and continually "re-thinking" those thoughts. I will not offer a problem definition or solution but possibly a different mirror by which similar studies may take place. In terms of critical race theory (CRT), I mentioned in Chapter one that much of the research that has been done on the academic and vocational development and behavior of minority youth has been criticized because the theories and concepts on which it is based were derived from studies of middle class Whites (Griggs, 1992; Chaves et al., 2004). I went on to acknowledge that these studies cannot truly represent the needs of minorities; however, my hope is that this study will contribute to the fields of education, career development and Critical Race Theory. Because I presented CRT as a way of

framing my study and not as a means of thematic analysis, it will not be used as part of

my methods section in Chapter four, but instead revisited in Chapter five as a way of

contextualizing my findings.

Chapter Four
Research Finding

In Chapter three, I identified the method by which the data would be analyzed. I noted that just as the life lived is ever-changing and evolving so too did my research. Further, as stated in chapter three, chapter four will focus on temporality as the central feature –what is true at a specific time and moment- of my research study with respects to my foundational grounding in critical race theory and cultural studies. I will not be making any broad generalization about minorities, career exploration, or broad assessments of or value-added statements about the effectiveness of the Exploring program. My focus will be specifically on those students who participated in this study and their feelings at the current time of the interview. I will present a unique glimpse into the history of their respective lived experiences. This representative work will be sequential and meaningful in that all sequential and meaningful stories of personal experience that the students expressed are included (Andrews, 2008).

Participants

This study consists of interviews with five female young adults, participating(ed) in Exploring posts across Metropolitan Nashville, TN. For the sake of anonymity their names have been changed in this study. Two students are current high school students; Kalvry, and Destanie and the remaining three students – Ashley, Layla and Mariah are first-year university students. All students attend(ed) predominantly Black high schools within the urban Nashville area. Three interviews were done individually (two high

school students and one university student) and the remaining two university students were interviewed together, because they attended high school together they felt more comfortable participating in a dyad rather than speaking separately. In the case of the two university students, I took on the role of an interested outsider, observing their interplay and dialogue while occasionally interjecting to move the conversation forward. All of the resulting conversations produced rich details and descriptions, which will be brought forth in the chapter.

Recall in chapter one, I began my research with the goal in mind of represent Black youth participating in a vocational preparedness program, specifically the National Boy Scouts of America's Exploring program. I also stated, the actions and choices made as far as careers are concerned, cannot always be attributed to what appears to be an individuals' line of surface reasoning. I discovered through my research that it is important to delve deeper into the lives of these youth to see what frames the decisions they make- to hear their stories. Using reflexivity to explore cultural context and attention given to the variations in the subjective experience, which influences them, the following analysis looks at participant's stories in terms of perceived barriers both internal and/or external to occupational goals, perceived advantages, societal influences, influence of significant others, and career self-efficacy.

What became most interesting from a research perspective was the lens by which these students viewed their respective exploring experience –how they chose to frame their personal stories. To this end, I will work to present a multilayered evidence

representative of all the participants and subdivided by the themes: Advancement Via

Individual Determination (AVID), career-self efficacy, significant others who have

influenced career choices, and experiences that have influenced career choices,

perceptions of exploring and what they want to see happen/change in the Exploring

program. Informed by my earlier work on narrative analysis, I allowed my initial set of

codes to evolve just as the comments shared in the interviews. I want to note that in

chapter one I did not limit myself to my initial perceptions. I believed the initial codes

(family, community, race/racism, career, self worth, and values,) would stand out. In the

following text, the intent of those codes is still captured in the prevailing themes.

The "Lived" Experience

As I mentioned in chapter three, the interviewees were pooled from a targeted

population of AVID participants and those receiving Navigator's scholarships. This

population was chosen because the gatekeeper knew I could best gain access to the

Black youth I wished to interview through this avenue. Program participants'

information is not currently kept in a database with identifiers such as race, class, and

gender so by specifically targeting student participants who participated in AVID and

those who received the Navigator's Scholarship the gatekeeper was sure I would be able

to capture my audience.

AVID is a college-readiness system designed to increase the number of students

who enroll in four-year colleges. AVID seeks "to close the achievement gap by improving

the performance of all students, especially those who have not traditionally succeeded

in completing college entrance requirements: students who are underrepresented in four-year colleges and universities, students in the academic middle, students who are the first in their family to go to college" (AVID, 2010, About)

AVID is a national program. The curriculum is used at school all around the U.S. The program begins at the elementary school level and goes through high school. In middle and high school, the college readiness system targets a core population of students who enroll in an AVID elective class. According to the AVID website (2010), their formula for success is simple—raise expectations of students and with the AVID support system in place, they will rise to the challenge.

The Navigator's Scholarship program is not a national AVID scholarship but a local scholarship program created by Shoney's restaurant and COI Foodservice in 2005 (Exploring, 2010, Navigator's Scholarship). The Learning for Life program of the National Boy Scouts of America later partnered with these two entities to award a scholarship to qualified AVID members. To qualify for a scholarship, students must have participated in an Exploring program post or job shadowing experience, a community service project, and various AVID activities held during school hours. Everyone who participates in the AVID program is not guaranteed the Navigator scholarship.

I bring this to light because AVID and the Navigator's scholarship program played a major role in the academic and vocational identity of four of the five students interviewed. The fifth student came to know about the Exploring program through her guidance counselor. AVID is very much a part of the interviewee's identity that the

subject of AVID, in the sense of their respective stories, took precedence of Exploring in our conversations. Therefore, to understand the participants we must also understand the role of AVID in their lives. I began each conversation by simply asking how each student came to participate in the Exploring program.

Theme 1: *Advancement via Individual Determination* opens our narrative by way of situating the story and showing from what position these students speak.

Ashley   Okay I heard about the program through this place called AVID, which is advance via individual determination. It's a college prep class, and it was kinda like part of our curriculum that we had to participate in the Exploring 'cause Navigators and AVID work together. So I – my freshman year I signed up for the cosmetology program, but I never went. My AVID class introduced me to a lot of things like – I mean I always was smart. Like I kinda think that's why I'm undecided 'cause I waited so long to start thinking about what I wanted to do. But as far as colleges and stuff, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Navigators and AVID"…With the Navigator Scholarship you have to – the part of you have to do at least one Exploring post or a job shadowing and then the rest is based on how much community service you do and your educational and how good your interview go [to get the scholarship]…So everyone

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in the AVID program, if they want a scholarship, they're going to

do at least one post.

When I asked Layla and Mariah to tell me how they came to be a part of Exploring, they

gave a very similar response; however the way in which it was phrased led me to believe

this interview/conversation would be different:

Layla	AVID is advance via individual determination, which is the college
and	preparatory class in high school, like underprivileged high schools
Mariah	such as Maplewood or Stratford. And basically what it is it gets
	you ready for college. It goes through processes and things that
	you'll need to know and things you need to do in order to get "
	into college and stay in and…[interjection by Mariah] But that's
	how we were introduced by it because the Navigator
	Scholarship; so you have to do Exploring post to even like be
	considered – a recipient of the Navigator Scholarship.

As for Kalvry and Destanie, their foray into Exploring came about in a different

way, through the guidance counselor's office.

Kalvry	…So in high school – when I got into high school and my freshman
	year they [counselor] had like a little – a planning sheet or
	whatever, and you would tell what you want to do and bubble in
	different careers or whatever you were interested in.

Destanie   Okay. Well I'll start off. I go to Antioch, and one day my guidance

counselor told me about it. And I was very excited 'cause I want –

I started off wanting to be an attorney, and I've always had a

passion for law. I'm the captain of my debate team at school; so

debate was – it kinda tags into law. So I wanted to be a lawyer,

and I went to the first meeting or orientation about the Exploring

program, and I was so excited. I was kind of nerdy about it.

Concerning recruiting students for the Exploring program there is not one set

way in which the Learning for Life program (LOL) works to achieve this mission.

Considering one goal of the LOL program is to provide experiences that help young

people mature and prepare them to become responsible adults, finding multiple means

to reach youth is a necessity to program success and a vital component of this outreach

service. Each school is sent a questionnaire with a list of career options that run the

gamut from school-teachers, police officer to medical professionals and more. Each

student is encouraged to explore their current and potential interests. If a student

identifies themselves as having interests in law, like Destanie, those students are given

an opportunity to further explore his or her interests through an Exploring post.

The natural progression of the respective conversations led me to ask the

students whether they had considered careers before participating in AVID or their

Exploring posts. It is believed that "from a social cognitive perspective, the extent to

which people believe that they have the capacity to perform certain behaviors

determines how likely they are to engage in those behaviors (or, alternatively, to refrain

from doing so)" (Gushe, et.al. 2006). With consideration given to challenges faced by

many students in the African American community when envisioning and planning their

potential career paths such as lack of accessible role models, systematic racism, and a

scarcity of economic resources within his or her communities, schools and families

developing a vocational identity takes on new meaning. When asked about their

thought on careers during the interviews, responses from the high school student were

generally mixed.

Theme two: *Career Self – Efficacy.*

Ashley seemed to be very much in the beginning stages of career decision

making – still sorting through ideas/careers for which she has a slight interest. When

asked had she ever thought about careers before starting the Exploring program, she

replied;

Ashley　　Not really. My AVID class introduced me to a lot of things like – I

　　　　mean I always was smart. Like I kinda think that's why I'm

　　　　undecided 'cause I waited so long to start thinking about what I

　　　　wanted to do. But as far as colleges and stuff, I wouldn't be here if

　　　　it wasn't for Navigators and AVID.

Kalvry appeared to have always known, up to this point, what she wanted to do with her life. She had been at East Literature Magnet School since she was in the fifth grade and in her words,

Kalvry   I want to be a pediatrician, and I kinda started that – like I really like working with kids and stuff, and so that's how I kinda chose that career or whatever... And so most of the stuff I bubbled in [on the planning sheet] was about medical field and stuff; so that's how I got into the Baptist Exploring program, and I went there...Well, when I first brought it my mother like how I wanted to be – at first I said a nurse practitioner, which I could still be a nurse practitioner. But I first said a nurse practitioner then I said like a pediatric nurse...I like working with kids. Like this summer I'm gonna start a babysitting service kind of thing....I would try to do the business and financial stuff. I want to own my own clinic.

At the time of the interview, Destanie seemed to have the most thought-out career plan – a divorce lawyer

Destanie Over the summer I did an internship with Judge Michaels [name changed], and I know for a fact I want to be a divorce attorney... I just wanted to become a divorce lawyer. I've seen so many people go through divorces and so many women get treated the wrong way, and I just want it changed, and I feel like I can change it.

When Mariah and Layla were asked about career interest previous to being involved in the Exploring program an interesting interplay took place between them though their response was directed at me:

Layla   I didn't even think about college.

Mariah   Oh, very little.

Layla   It wasn't in my vocabulary at all, period. I was just trying to get through high school. I was just excited to be in school.

Mariah   Yeah, that's what they [teachers at Maplewood High School] promote, just getting a diploma actually.

Layla   Right. Like my mama, she wanted me to go to college, but she'd be proud if I just got my high school diploma 'cause it's not just something that you actually…[Mariah completes sentence] See everyday

Layla   Right.

Mariah   In those communities.

Layla   And if you're a person, a Black person in my community and you get your high school diploma then you're above – you beat all odds 'cause they expect for you not to get a high school diploma, to drop out, get pregnant, stuff like that. But if you beat that odds then you're good basically, and that's all that they expect from you. Not really high expectations. They don't expect for you

to go to college or enter college. They just expect for you to get a high school diploma.

Mariah   Yeah, so it was the same way with me. I knew I wanted to go to college, but I wasn't preparing myself to go to college. I mean I was making straight A's and stuff like that, but it was like I wasn't like studying for the ACT or looking at colleges or looking into colleges and seeing what I had to do to get into college. I just knew I wanted to go; so the AVID program is what actually prepared us to do that.

Mariah   So you need to be in the AVID program 'cause they saw potential in me to actually go to college; so that's when they just started introducing me to Miss Smith [name changed] (guidance counselor) or whatever like that; so that's how I became in the program [Exploring].

Mariah and Layla associated having a career with going to college yet even in saying this neither of them named a potential career they may have been interested in pursuing. What was most important (how they were deemed "successful") to them as well as members of the community was simply that they finished high school. Mariah and Layla attend Maplewood High School. This high school population consists of 81% Black students. Approximately 846 of the 1020 students qualify for free or reduced lunch, which is a means by which the federal government identifies impoverished

families. This scarcity of economic resources, family attitudes toward careers, and the

lack of motivation/inspiration as described in the conversation above may lead to the

mindset that simply having a high school diploma is enough. This mindset may also

impede students ability to think beyond having a job to a career (Luzzo, 1993, 1995;

McWhirter, 1997; Swanson, Daniels, & Tokar,1996; Swanson & Tokar, 1991a, 1991b).

Both Mariah and Layla made mention of "those communities" and race however

in the context of an interested third party. "High levels of poverty are found in many

inner-city neighborhoods, which are characterized by high rates of unemployment and

violence and a corresponding lack of access to resources, such as civic organizations and

health care facilities, that promote positive development" (Gallay & Flanagan, 2000, as

cited by Kenny, et. al., 2003). Although Mariah and Layla recognized these two issues,

community and race, as barriers to career efficacy they do not identify themselves as

having those issues or concerns. They were mentioned in the context of a passing

thought, perhaps even in a sense of justifying the mindset of their community. Mariah

and Layla recognized the importance of going to college and acknowledged the AVID

program as a means to achieving the goal.

For urban adolescents, the family represents an important source of support and

extended family members are particularly important for many minority youth, whose

identities are closely tied to home and community (Kenny, et. al., 2003). A third

question I asked of the research participants revolved around the influences of

significant others in their lives.

Theme three: *Influence – Significant Others*

Four of the five participants mentioned their mothers or other women as significant influences in their lives. Layla and Mariah's conversation was interesting in that they appeared to come from similar backgrounds and family dynamics.

Interviewer	You all brought up a point earlier that I'd like to touch on if you don't mind (Mariah and Layla shaking their heads in agreement). You were talking about at home and how your parents are always just proud that you graduated from high school 'cause there's the expectation in that area just that you graduate high school. Did your folks talk about careers? Did they have any kind of influence on what you're doing now?
Mariah	No, 'cause I was actually like the first person to graduate and go to college; so my mother always told me, she's like, "Make sure you have a trade." So it was like in case you did not make it to college, make sure you could do something else. So she's a cosmetologist; so that was her trade because she didn't go to college. So it was like, I don't know, I kinda pushed myself to go to college. It wasn't like influence from them 'cause they really couldn't give me information. They really couldn't help me out; so Miss Smith was the one who helped me out because they didn't know anything about college applications. I really didn't even

know how to fill it out at first. So I had to go to Mrs. Smith to like

help me fill out scholarships and applications for college because

my mother just looked at it and was like, "I did not know what this

is talking about."

Layla   Yeah. "Go ask your counselor."

Mariah   Yeah. "Go ask somebody at school."

Layla   Yeah. My mother, she was familiar with it, but she's old. She was
              born in '64 …

Layla   Things are different. Her twin – she's a twin. Her twin went to

              college; so every time I asked her about some scholarship or

              something, "Go ask your auntie." And my auntie, she's always

              busy. She has this and that. But I would say I pushed myself too

              because she really couldn't give me no information, and she's into

              home health. She has a good trade I guess you could say that. I

              don't want to do that because she still struggles and I don't –

              that's what I want to do. I want to have a steady career, and that's

              not steady to me 'cause if her patient dies, she has to find another

              patient and all that stuff and it's just too much. So I told myself

              that I would be the opposite of my mother and try to be better

              than her. She always told me, "Don't try to be like me. Try to be

              better than me." So that's what my focus was, and without AVID I

wouldn't – I probably wouldn't be nowhere. I didn't even know

what the ACT was until I was in AVID.

Ashley's grandmother was a major influence in her life. She participated in a job

shadowing activities at her grandmother's workplace. When asked if anyone at home

supported her interest or did someone help her when it came to considering careers,

she replied; "I live with my granny; so it's kinda like, "Whatever you want to do, we're

behind you." For Kalvry's mother, "the dollar talks" cpncerning choosing a career.

Regarding Kalvry's desire to be a nurse practitioner then the change to a pediatric nurse,

she stated the following

Kalvry   …mother was like "well, doctors make more money." And so I was

like, "But nurses get to do more it seems like." So I was just like,

"Well, it doesn't matter." So she kinda like – she was like –

influenced me basically 'cause they make more money, and that

was the bell right there.

Destanie told her mother she wanted to be a lawyer and her mother was really

supportive and encouraging; She always tells me, "Whatever you set your mind to,

you're gonna do it." Destanie also mentioned that she had many family members

involved in some way in the justice system. Destanie's mother was also an influence;

Destanie   So it was my mother a lot [influence on careers], and I have an

uncle named Gary, and he helps me a lot too. He works

downtown. He's in the legal stuff, and I'm not really sure. He's not

a lawyer, but I'm not sure what he does. But he always gives me this inside information, and my godmother, she's a judge.

Destanie was the only interviewee who mentioned having outside influences on her career decision, beyond the AVID program.

Destanie   His name was Mr. Jones [name has been changed]. He was a history teacher, and he always kinda debated with me. Like he always made it hard for me to – like if I said something, he always made me explain or prove it or something like that. And I couldn't stand him for that, but eventually he signed me up without me knowing for the debate team. And when I got on the debate team, the coach of the debate team, she saw something in me that I guess I didn't even see in myself. And she told me – she was like, "You're gonna be a lawyer." I was in the ninth grade and I was the number one debater in Metro. So I mean – and I wasn't even trying hard. It was just I have a passion for seeing justice and getting my point across. You know? And so I just know it's what I'm supposed to do.

Once students had positioned themselves with respect to their individual stories, the discussion turned to the Exploring program. My first question for these students was for them to tell me their perception of the Exploring program. ***Theme four****: Perceptions of the Exploring Program*

In general the Exploring program was considered of value to four out of the five interview participants, yet there was variation in how the value was perceived

Ashley …it gave a lot of information, but I kinda – it was kinda boring. So I went 99% of the time, but I kinda wish it was more kinda hands on I guess, like trying to put us in a classroom or something like that

Ashley participated in an education exploring post.

Ashley Oh, I think it's good because, like I said, with me, I was undecided; so when I went for the education program it gave me salaries. They told you a lot about it like we talked about the different schools. We talked about TSU and here [university], and they told me which would be my best option. That's the only reason why I came here is I thought I wanted to be a teacher, but it kinda – but that's because they had the five-year program. So it gave you a lot of information, and it helps you decide if that's what you want to do or not.

Her main issue with the program as a whole was the lack of hands-on experience.

Ashley Like I guess when I thought about the education program, I thought maybe we was gonna go kinda like sit in the class and watch what a teacher does. Well, it was at night time, but some of

the programs [other exploring posts], I know can be during day time; so I figured that

Interviewer   uh hum

Ashley   'Cause I know with the cosmetology program, I went like the first few days, and we actually was in the salon setting and we was doing hair. So I thought it would kinda be like that.

Interviewer   But how was it?

Ashley   We was just kinda like sitting at a table, and they had like PowerPoint slides and tell us different salaries. And one time they had teachers and – what's the people called? Guidance counselors come in and talk to us about their daily experience and stuff; so it was just kinda more like a lecture.

Kalvry's experience in her program was quite the opposite of Ashley's. Kalvry enjoyed the hands-on experience her post at the hospital provided.

Kalvry   We worked with the babies – or we saw the babies, and we learned different vocabulary words, and we did vascular stuff and just CPR and stuff like that, and it was fun. It was entertaining. It was an experience, and I feel like it helped. And we did like emergency stuff like what you would do in case of an emergency and stuff like that. And it helped me in many ways 'cause I want to learn more and a lot, and I want to learn enough; so it helped…we

got to see it and she explained different stuff and then we got to

put on one of those pregnancy vests, and it was fun, and it was an

experiment…I liked everything. It was fun. It was interesting.

Destanie also loved every part of it.

Destanie   I don't have any dislikes at all. It was great. I loved all of it. I liked

meeting with people. I met with, like I said, different attorneys

and I made a lot of connections. I networked a lot. They made you

feel really important like from the time you got there. They were

very nice, and they explained everything. I never felt

overwhelmed, and it was just a really good program. They took it

very slow. They made sure everybody understood, everybody was

on the same page. The mock trial, it was fair and they showed you

how to do it nicely, how to be nice in the courtroom. So it was just

great.

Layla and Mariah were the most critical in their opinion of the Exploring program. Both

were very vocal about their concerns. On being able to sign up for posts:

Layla   Like I would signed up and I wouldn't get a email or if I signed up

too late it wasn't anymore available, and so my other option was

only job shadowing.

Mariah   They were like too full. So you have to like go to a different one. 'Cause I know in my Exploring post, I signed up to do biomedical engineering, and it said it was too full; so I had to go to research, something similar to it. So that's when I went to go job shadow Molly [name change] at Vanderbilt…Yeah. So it's kinda like difficult 'cause wasn't really sure if you were gonna get the post.

Layla   They fill up quick. It was a good number of 'em, but they fill up really quick or like some of 'em got cancelled or they were like too far for people to go.

Mariah   But they had to just choose something that they weren't that interested in just to see – just to get the scholarship or just to like be considered for it…It was just like – they might have like what the Exploring post is [on the website], but it's only a certain amount of words; so it really didn't tell you what it was about. And I know in my Exploring post it was kinda unorganized 'cause it was ran by students; so I think the leader of it or whatever, he was a senior in high school. And the vice-president was like a freshman or something; so the person that was actually supposed to be over it, she was just kinda in the corner and lettin' them run it and stuff like that. So they had to set up everything for it; so with them being in charge it was kinda like we didn't receive

emails until like the day of. And I know I had a job; so like… That was kind of conflicted; so I was like well, maybe if they would have sent it like two weeks ahead or a week ahead or something I could like tell my manage or something, but it never worked out that way. Until like the night before or the day of …When we were in AVID and I was like, "What the? I don't know if I'm gonna be able to go."

Layla   People would be coming in class talking about, "Did you receive a email?" We'd be like, "No, we don't when we're supposed to go." And Miss Smith was like, "You all gotta get it done." And we're just like, "They haven't sent us nothing." It was very unorganized when we had to do the Exploring post; so that's why I took myself out of it and did the shadowing.

Mariah   It's kinda like you have to be on them. You have to probably get their numbers and call them and see what time and what specific place, location or whatever that the Exploring post is. I know mine they changed room to room.

With all the negative feedback being given, I felt obligated to ask, if it weren't for the scholarship attached to participation would they have participated in an Exploring post, to which they replied;

Layla   I probably would have did the job shadowing [a second option

which AVID students could use to meet the scholarship

requirement], but Exploring post is what I had to do, and if I didn't

have to do it, I wouldn't have done it.

As for Mariah;

Mariah   … The Exploring post – the job shadowing, yeah, but the Exploring

post, no. 'Cause the job shadowing actually was like with her the

whole day. I didn't want to leave. I was doing my own labs and

collecting my own data and stuff like that, but the Exploring post

reminded me of school too much. I was like, "I just left school."

Their collective assessment of fellow classmate's experience;

Layla   Some people were like, in class, like I would ask them how their

Exploring post was. They're like, "It was a waste of time. Like it

was too much time consuming. It wasn't worth it."

Mariah   Yeah, it's like half of the stuff in there was like why are you

discussing it. It wasn't really prepared I don't think.

Layla   Yes, very unorganized.

Mariah   But some weren't, and she wasn't; so like the person that was

over it wasn't. So it was kinda sometimes we were like, "Why is

this person coming and talking to us about research if he has

nothing to do with research," type stuff. So half the time I'm just

sittin' there like, "Is this gonna be beneficial to me since I'm trying

for research, being a biomedical engineer?" And sometimes I felt

that it wasn't very beneficial. Or the time period was like too

short; so it was kind of a waste of gas just to go out there for

probably like 1five, three0 minutes when it's supposed to be like

an hour to two hours.

To summarize the purpose of this study I will defer to the voices of the students on

ways the Exploring program can be improved.

Theme five: *What would you like to see happen in the Exploring program?*

Ashley   As far as the programs, I think they all should be more hands on

because you don't – like when you're doing those programs if

you're actually considering that career, you won't know how it is

unless you do hands on things. Like with the education, I wouldn't

know that I really didn't want to be a teacher until I did the job

shadowing at my school. And like the cosmetology when I got

there I was like, "No, hair is not for me."…I think they all should

have a little more hands on 'cause I know my friend, she did one

at – was it at Vanderbilt? It was a biology one, and they actually

got to dissect and stuff like that….I think I would target more

people who are undecided like me and tell them, "If you truly are

undecided but you're considering something that you should do

this because it'll help you get a better insight into what the career is like, how much money you'll be making, what it involves, things like that."

Interviewer	How would you go about identifying those undecided students?
Kalvry	I think they do a good job with the interest inventory. Like they should make all students do the interest inventory that way you can find their interest, and then I might have a section on there like, "Are you strongly into this or not?" Just think that's how they should do it.

Kalvry also likes the program and recognizes its value. She sees the program stretching to a grander scale.

Kalvry	I like the program, but I think they should have a camp maybe. I don't know. Like longer I guess, and like where they get maybe kids from all over to come and do it. 'Cause I mean the kids that were there, I see them almost every day. And just from, not different counties, but maybe different states. Close like Border States. You know? Or to come in one state and have like a really big thing.
Interviewer	That would be neat
Kalvry	Yeah. Maybe like – I don't know. Just a big function about it I guess. It doesn't have to be a camp, but it could be maybe like a

weekend, a whole weekend or something. And you just like learn

just different stuff about the medical field. And maybe like one

day have like how do you get into it, how do you start it, and what

different colleges…I don't want them to stop 'cause there's other

– like when I go off to college and start doing it, I would like to

participate in helping kids to get where they want to be and what

they want to be and do what they want to do.

For Destanie, a positive addition would be additional opportunities to network and

engage with professionals in industry.

Destanie   A lot of networking, like I said, with judges and attorneys. Make

sure that – I would want to make sure that the Explorers knew

how to network 'cause I've learned through the Exploring

program that networking is a big skill. It helps a lot; so that would

be my number one thing. Make sure that these Explorers know

how to network, know how to get business cards, know how to

look a person in the eye, shake their hand…I think that the

program should continue. I don't think it should stop. I don't think

that they should ever stop it because they help a lot of kids with

it. I liked it.

Again, Layla and Mariah were the most vocal on suggestions that could be made to enhance the program. When asked what could be done differently to make the program a success, Layla and Mariah replied;

Mariah   Well, I know for mine, like the research Exploring post, I would not just have them in a lecture hall. I would actually have them in a lab actually seeing what they would have to do to be a researcher or a biomedical engineer. Not just like sit there in a lecture. Because I mean the information that they're giving you, you can like go Google it for yourself. So it's kinda like redundant 'cause people in there, they probably already know about what they're trying to do in life; so I'm pretty sure they research biomedical engineering up before they came to the Exploring post. So I would do more hands on things like group activities or lab experiments or something like that just to liven it up a little 'cause I wasn't getting anything from it…I wasn't excited about it any longer 'cause I was just like is this what you do all day. I thought Exploring post was supposed to be like showing me what a researcher or a biomedical engineer does; so I kinda lost interest in it.

Layla   I wouldn't have did it [Exploring] if it wasn't for the Navigator

Scholarship because it was a requirement, and I just was trying to

get that done.

Mariah   So without AVID I would have never known what an Exploring

post was….And I would have never known what Navigator

Scholarship was; so yeah, AVID is like the main thing. I would

actually tell you if they do not change the Exploring program that

they should probably make it mandatory to have the job

shadowing and the Exploring post…Because the stuff that I took

from the Exploring post, it did help me in the job shadowing

because the information that they would give me that – about the

terminology that I did not know of. When the biomedical engineer

was talking to me, I could understand what she was saying.

Interviewer   So in saying that – okay. So I hear you saying if they're gonna

keep it [Exploring], if they don't change it people aren't gonna do

it anymore."

Layla   Yeah. Because it's hard to get into – like the registration process is

ridiculous. You don't know when you're supposed – like the dates

you're supposed to sign up and then the website is very

complicated and like –

Mariah   Like scattered all over the place.

Layla   Yeah, it's very unorganized. It's like it's really hard. That's my

problem. If it's unorganized, I don't want to do it.

Mariah   It's hard to read.

Layla   Yeah, you don't know what you're doing, and they send you

emails. They don't let you know what's happening, and they

finally send you emails like the end of the Exploring posts, and you

done missed.

Mariah   With me, I needed the money.

Layla   One more thing is if I would have did both I probably would have

been better off. Exploring post, like she said, they do help you out,

but they're just unorganized. But, if they got everything figured

out and fixed and all the little problems fixed, it would be very – it

would like be a very big help.

Mariah   And this would be another suggestion. If they're not gonna do

either or, they could actually have people that they could shadow

in the Exploring post; so one person assigned to like a specific

amount of people in a group or something. Something like that so

that they would have like a connection so it wouldn't be too many

people. There'd probably be like four to a group or something. No

more than five and they'd just talk to that person one-on-one, get

that contact, and shadow them that way instead of just like

talking the whole time. Actually they were to like get the information and apply it to what the person is talking about in the job shadow; so that'll probably be easier also 'cause it's kinda like killing two birds with one stone.

Layla   Yeah. Our senior year, and we were kinda a little late on stuff. Yeah, a little late. And I think that's a big thing. Like they didn't send us anything talking about, "You need to sign up for the Exploring post at this time. This is where you go." They didn't really give us a guideline of how to go about it, and when we went on there – my problem was I couldn't really understand the website.

Layla   And like how to figure it out. It was like really confusing, and you didn't know if they was supposed to send you something so that you'll know where the place will be at, when you were supposed to meet. 'Cause when you signed up, it was like a date or it was like if you signed up for a certain thing it was when they would let you know. It was to be announced, and you would never receive anything about when they had actually set the date and stuff like that; so that was a big problem.

Conclusion

In Chapter four I presented a narrative of my research findings. This study consisted of five participants in the Learning for Life Exploring program. Two are current high school students in the Middle Tennessee Council and three are university students. By way of in-depth interviews, individual and group, rich details and descriptions were brought forth describing each participant's lived experience as it related to the career development processes and participation in the Exploring program. What I found was that the actions and choices made as far as careers are concerned, cannot always be attributed to what appears to be on the surface. In this case, a surface issue was participation in the Exploring program. However, beneath each student's surface level reasoning for participation in the program lie a much deeper story. Within the context of their stories five major themes surfaced. For the first theme, Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID), the majority of the student participants in this study would not have been aware of the Exploring program had it not been for the AVID. Its role in the lives of these students appears to have been instrumental in shaping their career awareness and self efficacy as it relates to college and career preparedness. In regard to theme two Career Self-efficacy (as stated above), if consideration is given to challenges faced by many students in the African American community when envisioning and planning their potential career paths such as lack of accessible role models, systematic racism, and a scarcity of economic resources within his or her communities, schools and families, developing a vocational identity thus

takes on new meaning. I asked the participants to examine what helped create their desire to follow a certain career path. Of the five participants, three had considered career paths beyond high school before participating in AVID or the Exploring program. The remaining two attributed AVID, not Exploring for helping to develop career goals. As for theme three, Roles of significant others in career development, for all of the participants, women, whether it was a mother, aunt or grandmother, played a significant role in these young women's career development. Regardless of the method, i.e. through positive reinforcement or a sort of indifference, their attitudes and level of support motivated these students to press forward. Outside influences also were revealed to have played a role in crafting the career efficacy of these students. As for theme four, Perceptions of the Exploring program, once the students positioned themselves in relation to how they obtained knowledge and chose careers we progressed to a discussion about the Exploring program. The opinions were very dichotomous in that the students really liked it or they thought it needed to be completely restructured. There was consensus about the usefulness of the Exploring program students who are undecided about their career choice or need extra information regarding a perspective career. For theme five, "What would you like to see happen in the Exploring program?" there appeared to be a common thread throughout all the interviews that the program has value. A common thread was the emphasis on more hands-on experiences. The major complaint was lack of organization.

In chapter five, I will conclude this study with an analysis of the data and offer recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 5
Analysis and Recommendations

The goal of this research is to help represent Black youth participating in a vocational preparedness program, specifically the National Boy Scouts of America's (BSA) Exploring Program in Nashville, TN using interviews, journals, and rich, thick descriptions. With respect to the fact that the impact of history and resulting present circumstances on the lives of African American people very much effects the decisions they make today, consideration must be given to how young African youth make career choices. One major concern, in the field of career development was that not enough attention was being paid to how African American youth made career choices. Instead information used in the past has been based on those of middle-class White youth. The actions and choices made where careers are concerned cannot always be attributed to what appears to be an individual's line of surface reasoning. Consideration must be given to issues and concerns such as lack of accessible role models –both within and outside the home, systematic racism, and a scarcity of economic resources within his or her communities, schools, and families. Within these contexts (but not limited to), developing a vocational identity takes on new meaning and one must delve deeper into the lives of these youth to see what frames the decisions they make.

As presented in chapter one, there is a growing need to further extend research that will contribute to increased vocational opportunities for the growing body of ethnic urban youth who represent our next generation of workers. In light of this fact, this

research study specifically addressed; how vocational preparedness programs effect the career aspirations of Black youth, within the context of the Middle Tennessee Council Boy Scout's Exploring program- a work-site based program. Using the lens of narrative inquiry and cultural studies it was my hope to further the field of career development through the voices of its key players, African American youth.

The research was conducted using the narrative inquiry methodology approach. Narrative inquiry provides a space for the examination of value-driven methods to determine the nature and extent of social change, which is one of the aims of critical theory. In chapter three I noted that by using the narrative inquiry method, I am can dissect a story to determine its structure in terms of how the stories function, who is producing them and by what means. The mechanisms by which they are consumed as well as how narratives are silenced, contested, or accepted also can be understood through the narrative method (Webster, 2007, p. 2). "The practice of narrative research…is always interpretive, at every stage" (Josselson, 2006, p. 4). As a narrative researcher, I believed it my duty to represent Black youth are part of the marginalized minority population. By doing so my hope was to restore a sense of narrative power and authority to the youths telling the stories.

Analysis

With respects to my foundational grounding in critical race theory and cultural studies, the thematic analysis of the data will focus on temporality as the central

feature. I will not make any broad generalization about minorities, career exploration, or broad assessments of or value-added statements about the effectiveness of the Exploring program. Instead my focus is specifically on those students who participated in this study and his or her feelings at the current time of the interview. In chapter four, I presented what I hoped was a unique glimpse into the history of his or her respective lived experiences. This representative work was created in a way deemed sequential and meaningful in that all sequential and meaningful thoughts expressed of personal experience are included. As a means of additional analysis and explanation, I will explore in relation to meaning and social significance, how the Exploring program affects the participant's career preparedness.

Within the context of his or her stories four major themes surfaced around the ideas: (1) Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID), (2) Career Self-efficacy, (3) Roles of significant others in career development, (4) Perceptions of the Exploring program, and the question; what would like to see happen in the Exploring program? As stated in chapter four, in relation to the first theme Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) the majority of the student participants in this study, would not have been aware of the Exploring program had it not been for the AVID. Its role in the lives of these students appears to have been instrumental in shaping his or her career awareness and self efficacy as it relates to college and career preparedness. Developing a vocational identity must take on new meaning if consideration is given to theme two -"career self-efficacy". In light of this consideration, credence should be given to

challenges faced by many students in the African American community when

envisioning and planning his or her potential career paths such as lack of accessible role

models, systematic racism, and a scarcity of economic resources within his or her

communities, schools and families. I asked the participants to examine what helped

create his or her desire to follow a certain career path. Of the five participants, three

had considered career paths beyond high school before participating in AVID or the

Exploring program. The remaining two attributed AVID, not Exploring for helping to

develop career goals. As for theme three, Roles of significant others in career

development, for all of the participants, women, whether it was a mother, aunt or

grandmother, played a significant role in his or her career development. Regardless of

the method, e.g. through positive reinforcement or a sort of indifference, his or her

attitudes and level of support motivated these students to press forward. Outside

influences also were revealed to have played a role in crafting the career efficacy of

these students. Theme four addressed Perceptions of the Exploring program. Once the

students positioned themselves in relation to how they obtained knowledge and

choose careers, we progressed to a discussion about the Exploring program. The

opinions were very dichotomous in that the students either liked it or they thought it

needed to be completely restructured. There was an area of general consensus

regarding the usefulness of the program to undecided students and the need for extra

information regarding a perspective career. Finally regarding theme five, "What would

you like to see happen in the Exploring program?" there appeared to be a common

thread throughout all the interviews that the program has value. A common thread

that the program needs to be more hands-on emerged. The major complaint was lack

of organization.

Beyond themes expressed by the research participants, the following underlying

factors also came to light;

(1) Giving voice to Black youth which are part of the marginalized minority

population and restoring a sense of narrative power and authority to the youths

telling the stories

The intended purpose of this research, to represent this specific group of young

adult females, was accomplished, because the narrative methodology gave me and

research participants the freedom to let the story go where it wanted to go, students

could speak to what concerned them most. For Ashley, Kalvry, and Destanie (high school

students) open-ended questions were used to push the story forward. During these

interviews we stayed focused on the Exploring program and related experiences they

deemed important to his or her career exploration. With Mariah and Layla (the college

students) the interview took on a different form. The college students interacted with

each other, and with me, in a way that was more reflective of the entire experience.

They saw themselves as interested outsiders who moved beyond their years of

participation to college. These ladies view of the experience appeared to be more

holistic in its storied form. Layla and Mariah framed the value of his or her experience in

terms of the AVID program and its role in helping them achieve his or her goal of going

to college. They were specific in his or her descriptors of the programs worth in relation to his or her value system - a means to an end. They displayed body language that showed a sense of comfort with their surroundings and an ease of language, which showed they were comfortable talking about the subject. When asked to give recommendations on ways the program could be improved, the research participants did not hesitate to indicate systematic and programmatic issues with the program. They also stated they believed the Exploring program has fundamental value to those undecided about their career choice.

The high school students' reflections were was more situational and temporal – how they felt at the current time of participation. These students, though not as critical or reflective of his or her program experience still appeared confident in his or her ability to speak freely and openly about his or her stories. The high school students' stories focused on what they thought about the specific post they just completed.

Each research participant appeared confident in their respective ability to tell their story. They also felt comfortable with my ability to listen and represent them fairly. The conversations were frank and each participant was allowed to speak for as long as deemed necessary to tell accurately tell their story.

(2) AVID as a significant influencer

What became apparent through listening to the stories of my young narrators is how vitally important the AVID program is to his or her career development. The natural pairing of services provided by the AVID program in conjunction with an

Exploring experience provides a symbiotic relationship for student participants. The BSA is constantly looking for ways to increase its enrollment and outreach in communities and schools through traditional BSA programming and LOL programs. In terms of recruiting purposes for Learning for Life programs, AVID programs are a fertile recruiting place. This fact is due in part to the requirement of AVID that students must attend career awareness programs in the form of either job shadowing or an Explorer post to be considered for the Navigator scholarship. For some AVID students this may mean the difference in being able to afford college and not being able to attend. In turn the BSA uses the Exploring program as a means of recruiting high school students and more specifically minority students. Many of the schools in Metro –Nashville are predominantly Black and have an AVID program that makes them an excellent avenue to increase his or her minority recruitment. Layla and Mariah's conversation, in chapter four, critiques this relationship. His or her concerns bring up the next point of analysis; the structure and organization of the Learning for Life program.

(3) Structure and organization of the Learning for Life program

What is apparently lacking, according to the student's perceptions, is cohesion across the Exploring program posts. According to the student's stories there was consensus in the value of the program but inferences where made about structural changes needed. Youth leadership/mentorship by Exploring post alumni was mentioned by Layla and Mariah as an area of concern as well as systemic issues such as effective communication between Exploring post leaders/organizers and participants,

ease of website use i.e. being user-friendly and intuitive, common rules/best practices

shared by each post. All students expressed a desire to interact with a more diverse

group of students from throughout the city, region, and state. Though it is expected for

a new organization to have some of these fundamental issues, it is not expected of a

100 year old organization nor its umbrella organizations.

Consensus was noted regarding the usefulness of the Learning for Life program

for undecided students and those students in need of extra information regarding a

perspective career. Finally in terms of theme five, "What would you like to see happen

in the Exploring program?" there appeared to be a common thread throughout all the

interviews that the program has value. A common thread appeared in that the program

needs to be more hands-on. Another major complaint was lack of organization among

the Exploring posts, respectively. It appears the breakdown may be a lack of

understanding where the students are concerned is that posts are run by volunteers

and not paid staff members. This should not concern program effectiveness however it

may be the case that these volunteers may not be vested. They may be doing the best

they can to provide an excellent experience for the students with limited staff, funding,

and time. The positive experience; however is not always translated as such to the

students but perhaps instead, or at least for these particular students it is coming off as

lack of cohesion and organization.

(4) The role of Black women as significant others in the career decisions of

participants

I find it significant when speaking about career role models, only one student

mentioned a male and that was only as an afterthought. Each participant identified their

mother as motivators of his or her career choice in both positive and negative aspects.

Each student noted that they went to their mother to discuss career options as a way of

validating career decision. In listening to his or her stories I gathered that mothers were

the influencers and decision makers in their households. Destanie, Ashley, and Kalvry

valued the opinions of their mothers/grandmothers and saw them as a useful resource

in reaching their career goals in terms of providing resources, opportunities for them to

further explorer their career interests, or simply encouraging them to follow their

dreams. None of these young ladies mentioned the educational background of their

parent(s) so no generalizations can be made regarding the correlation between the

education of his or her parents and his or her career interest. Layla and Mariah's

reflection on his or her mothers, respectively, as career influences appeared to be

disheartening however to them it was just matter of fact. As stated in chapter four,

their mothers were simply happy with them for having completed high school. There

appeared to be no greater aspiration beyond completion of high school. They attributed

this mindset to the norms of their community/area. In some of their areas cases of a

scarcity of economic resources, indifference among family member's attitudes toward

careers and the lack of motivation/inspiration can be found.

(5) Career choice – trade versus careers

In chapter one I stated my bias as; if the playing feel was equal, meaning if there was indeed a level playing field (within all contexts and parameters), African American students will choose a variety of careers that lead to his or her success, active participation, and contribution to society. My research participants collectively challenge my bias in the discussion of careers. In simply talking to them I understood that in the case of this study, as demonstrated in chapter four, these girls offer a unique perspective on how they come to choose careers. I believe more than a level playing field, the environment and attitudes of significant others in the lives of the participants toward jobs versus a career greater factors in the decision making process.

Mariah was the first person to graduate and go to college in her family. It was important to her mother that she had a trade – something that she could always be able to do if college didn't work out. Mariah's mother didn't challenge her to think beyond the realms of a trade because that is where she stopped. She is a cosmetologist. Layla, similarly, had not been encouraged to attend college. She received little help and encouragement from her mother but was instead told to talk to her aunt who had attended college. Though her aunt had attended college she still was encouraged to consider a trade and not a career.

Layla however, did want a career and likened it to job stability and not having to worry about finances. She specifically mentioned that her aunt's job was only as stable as her patient's health – she is a home health nurse. If her aunt's patient dies she has to

go out and look for more work. Layla wants more stability than this and therefore is compelled to attend college simply to overcome her family's circumstances.

Kalvry brought to light an important point, and that is the almighty dollar talks! Kalvry initially was focused on being a pediatric nurse however her mother's response to her career choice was not to encourage her in this area but to remind her that doctors make more money and she should consider that job instead. She mentioned that when her mother started talking about the money that could be earned it caused her to change her mind. Little credence was given to whether or not she was interested in becoming a doctor, if her high school was preparing her academically for the challenges of becoming a doctor or what was so wrong about becoming a nurse.

Looking Backward and Forwards at the Research

I believe the mission of this research was accomplished; I provided an opportunity for five Black youth to discover his or her voices by way of adding to the conversation on career preparedness programs. Five unique narratives immerged exploring the lived experiences of those participating. I feel confident that because I was a Black female speaking with Black females this eased any doubts the participants may have had in regard to meeting with me. The students were given an opportunity to voice his or her concerns and points of contentment with the program in a way that can help strengthen the program in the future. The narrative method was also a strong feature of this research. Giving the students an opportunity to speak freely and openly, without

judgment, allowed for richer conversations and deeper understanding of the participant's lived experiences.

National Boy Scouts of America and Girls

One of the over-arching anomalies, to some may be the lack of male participation in this study. In the beginning, I too made the general assumption that because Learning for Life is a Boy Scouts program and operated out of the Middle Tennessee Council Headquarters (not as a separate entity) that I would mostly be dealing with boys. As noted in chapter two, The BSA was chartered with the purpose of promoting the ability of boys to do things for themselves and others, to train them in Scoutcraft, and to teach them patriotism, courage, self-reliance, and kindred virtues. The Girl Scouts USA operates under a similar Congressional charter for the benefit of girls. As a result, the BSA created the Exploring program under the LOL organization, which is designed to provide a variety of programs for both boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 21. According to personal communication with a LOL staff member (October 18, 2010), the LOL program does not maintain demographic information by race, class, and gender. This makes it difficult to identify whether having more females participate than males would be a norm or the vice, statistically speaking.

This lack of record keeping by both the local Scout council and the national LOL program make it difficult to make any type of assertions or general assumptions based on race, class, and gender. What can be ascertained only is at the time I was recruiting

for my study, despite e-mails going out to both males and females participating in the

program females only chose to participate.

Reflections on the Research Process

While in the process of setting up and conducting interviews and dually

attempting to make meaning of the history and social significance of the National

Scouting organization as it relates to the Explorer program, I struggled with the

reliability of information available to me. To think that a national organization with a

100-year history would have an issue with documentation became troubling to me. I

came into this research with the idea that I would celebrate the National Boy Scouts of

America by sharing all the positive attributes of the organization with the community at

large. Things that seemed so clear from a distance and prior to my fieldwork as

understandable, researchable, and interpretable in theoretical terms lost their precision

as I walked in the midst of the study and during the field experience.

In terms of framing the context of the Exploring program within the structure of

the National Boy Scouts of America, I encountered multiple issues that turned out to be

wrought with political and controversial ideologies that challenge societal norms. After

six months of making multiple calls to the national office on multiple occasions, being

transferred around to whoever was thought to "be able to help" yet receiving no help, I

knew I would be left to my own devices to define this iconic organization. I will note that

Sue was as helpful as possible however she admitted she really could speak only for the

Middle Tennessee Council office. As a researcher I understood my duty to present a

fuller and more developed picture of the organization to help frame the significance of minority participation in the program.

As a researcher I am not only interested in what surfaces as a significant contribution to the study but I am also interested in the "absence of" and its role in the research process. I began this study with the idea that race/racism and issues of discrimination would come into play with the group of African American students. What surprised me was that it seemed like a non-issue to the participants. During the interviews with Layla and Mariah, the ladies made mention of what was expected of them coming from a low-income area, however it was never an issue of race to them. This begs the question I began addressing in chapter one, does racism still exist. Just as I stated in chapter one, I am still in the middle of this debate on whether or not racism still exists. What I am left to ponder and grapple with is whether or not these students lack of perceived awareness of racism is a good thing. If this absence of awareness means the younger generation is moving toward a more multicultural and pluralistic society.

I also found the absence of young men in my research to be intriguing. I went into this study believing the connection with National Boy Scouts of America would lead to a least some young male participants. To my surprise not a single young man responded to my inquiry. I was told by Sue that up to 70% of the Exploring program participants were young females. This fact begs the questions, where are the young men? Answers to this question may be found in current research that examines the

crisis among Black male youth in terms of education, socialization, criminalization, moving beyond daunting obstacles such as neighborhoods plagued with drugs, gangs, and crime, etc. As for the Exploring program, I am left to wonder are the aforementioned issues plaguing the level of participation among young Black men. Could it be an issue concerning limited numbers of Black role models not only in the Exploring program but also, perhaps, a bigger issue of whether there are Black role models in leadership positions within the Middle Tennessee Council?

Last the absence of young Black male presence in Exploring led me to an acute awareness of the absence of the Black voice in general in the Boy Scout organization. As I sought to tell the story of the Boy Scouts there was a lack of print material detailing the Black experience in Scouting. I was pleasantly surprised to encounter many older Black male and female Scout leaders who wanted to tell me his or her story, they wanted me and those who may read my work to what contributions Black troops had made to Scouting. They wanted to share his or her continual struggles and success within the Scouting organization, all this in hope of preserving "our" place in history and encouraging others to continue his or her movement. I hope to represent, respectively, these silenced voices in my future work.

Weaknesses of the Study

In order for an "outsider" to obtain more information to present a more accurate and wider reaching study; the National Boy Scouts of America must become more transparent. I was also concerned with the lack of record keeping maintained on both

the regional and national level in both the national organization and Learning for Life program. In the Learning for Life program, little regard has been given to critical issues- specifically race, class, gender, and socio-economic status- necessary in making a study like this rich and meaningful. It is hard to believe that BSA, which has made statements concerning their goal of increased diversity, does not maintain these critical pieces of information. This lack of transparency made it very difficult to verify source information, get help answering questions from employees in the national office, and generalize to a broader group.

A second constraining issue to this study was limited access to students because the district BSA office did not have the staffing to maintain a database of participants. The research participants were not randomly selected or specifically targeted from the larger population. Because I wanted to work with Black youth, database files identifying AVID participants and those receiving the Navigator's Scholarship where used because the gatekeeper happened to have kept the lists from the previous year.

Recommendations

Based on both my personal "lived" experience in conducting the research, navigating the boundaries of the National Boy Scouts of America as well as interactions with Middle Tennessee Council Scouting office, and the narrative stories of the participants' I recommend the following:

For the Exploring Program directors

1. Consideration must be given to the fact the BSA is a mostly volunteer organization. Thus the volunteers may not strictly adhere to the edicts set forth by the Learning for Life program on how Exploring posts should be run. For the sake of uniformity and a more holistic experience for all participants, better oversight should be put in place. This should be considered in the form of more frequent program/post evaluations.

2. If youth leaders will be used, then training should take place whereby students feel confident guiding and directing his or her peers in activities. Student participants should also be told the role of the youth leaders and what role the youth leaders will play in his or her experience.

3. Consistency in the length of the program experience should be established

4. Experiential learning opportunities should be consistently offered across all posts.

For Further Research

1. I recommend, if possible, group interviews with students in the same socio-economic class be conducted as opposed to individual interviews. My experience allowed me to recognize that students may not be as comfortable talking individually as they would be in a group setting

2. I recommend conducting a study using college students who participated in the program to get a clearer picture of how this program has affected their career choices, if at all. During college, most students solidify their career path. If the Exploring program had any affect it may be more visible with this group of students.

3. I recommend looking at this study through the lens of social cognitive theory in combination with career development theory for richer texts. This will aid in creating a more holistic view of how students were aided by the program if at all.

4. If possible I would recommend conducting this study with a larger cohort of participants from a more diverse population e.g. socio-economic status, educational attainment, class, and gender.

Finally, attention must be given that stories have temporal and special significance. If I were to conduct this same study with the same group of students, asking the same question there is a possibly that the outcome could be completely different. I am a young, Black, female professional who interviewed adolescent, Black females. If a person from another ethnic or gender group conducts this study, the outcomes may have been different. To conclude, although I believe this program is beneficial. I defer to the voices of the specific participants for whom my purpose was to

empower in saying that the program is fundamentally sound however the Learning for

Life organization may want to consider some internal restructuring.

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Appendix

APPENDIX A

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA Regions AND AREAS

Boy Scouts of America regions as of 1992

For administrative purposes, the BSA is divided into four regions—Western, Central, Southern and Northeast. Each region is then subdivided into areas.

Each region has a volunteer president, assisted by volunteer officers and board members, and the day-to-day work of Scouting is managed by the regional director, assistant and associate regional directors, and area directors. Regions and areas are subdivisions of the National Council and do not have a corporate status separate from the BSA.

- **Central Region** covers all of Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, Wisconsin, and parts of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, Virginia, and West Virginia.
- Northeast Region covers all of Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Puerto Rico, Transatlantic Council, and the Virgin Islands, and parts of Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia.

- **Southern Region** covers all of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee, and parts of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.
- **Western Region** covers all of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, Far East Council and the Pacific Basin, and parts of Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Texas.

APPENDIX B

FAITH-BASED CHARTED ORGANIZATIONS

The 24 faith-based organizations with the largest Scouting youth membership
Source: 2009 Boy Scouts of America Local Council Index, using December 31, 2009,
membership data. (http://www.scouting.org/About/FactSheets/operating_orgs.aspx)

Name of Organization	Total Units	Total Youth
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	37,682	405,676
United Methodist Church	11,391	369,733
Catholic Church	9,022	286,779
Presbyterian Church	3,767	125,638
Lutheran Church	4,120	120,913
Baptist Churches	4,342	107,060
Episcopal Church	1,263	41,739
United Church of Christ, Congregational Church	1,296	39,154
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	1,261	34,229
Community Churches	1,107	30,774
Other churches	975	23,837
Church of Christ	573	15,356
Evangelical/independent churches	303	7,081
Church of God	117	5,945
Jewish synagogues and centers	190	4,228
Church of the Nazarene	166	4,098
Reformed Church in America	134	4,064
The Salvation Army	185	3,436
African Methodist Episcopal	201	2,970
Church of the Brethern	117	2,948

Assemblies of God	93	2,374
Pentecostal Churches	142	2,168
Islam, Muslim, Masjid	89	1,767
Community of Christ	61	1,720
Buddhist Churches of America	61	1,615

APPENDIX C

CIVIC CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

The 20 civic organizations or groups with the largest Scouting youth membership
Source: *2009 Boy Scouts of America Local Council Index*, using December 31, 2009,
membership data (http://www.scouting.org/About/FactSheets/operating_orgs.aspx)

Name of Organization	Total Units	Total Youth
Groups of citizens	4,356	123,864
Business/industry	3,286	71,404
American Legion and Auxiliary	2,710	71,016
Lions International	2,522	70,384
Other community organizations	2,121	54,503
Rotary International	1,461	44,888
Fire departments	1,352	33,982
Kiwanis International	1,023	32,240
VFW, Auxiliary, Cootie	1,116	31,497
Community centers, Settlement houses	1,282	28,452
Boys' and Girls' Clubs	775	27,697
Elks lodges (BPOE)	833	22,910
Nonprofit agencies	579	15,744
Athletic booster clubs	610	14,605
Chambers of commerce, business associations	535	14,006
Playgrounds, recreation centers	542	13,985
Homeowners' associations	360	11,130
YWCA, YMCA	430	10,374
Optimist International	283	9,450
Conservation Clubs/Izaak Walton League	357	8,251

APPENDIX D

EDUCATIONAL CHARTERD ORGANIZATIONS

Source: *2009 Boy Scouts of America Local Council Index,* using December 31, 2009, membership data (http://www.scouting.org/About/FactSheets/operating_orgs.aspx)

Name of Organization	Total Units	Total Youth
Parent-teacher groups other than PTAs	4,415	170,581
Private schools	3,160	99,831
Parent Teacher Associations/ Parent Teacher Organizations	1,920	74,678

Vita

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