



Competition as a Means or an End? Developing a Competition Orientation Framework for Character-Centered Scouting Education

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Abstract

Scouting has traditionally been conceptualized as a character-centered form of nonformal education that promotes leadership, citizenship, service, and personal development. However, contemporary scouting increasingly operates within institutional environments characterized by accountability pressures, performance measurement, and achievement visibility, creating conditions in which competitive success may become a dominant indicator of educational quality. Despite extensive scholarship on youth development, achievement motivation, and mission drift, limited attention has been devoted to explaining how competitive achievement may gradually transform educational priorities within scouting organizations. This article addresses this theoretical gap by developing the concept of Scouting Educational Drift (SED), defined as a gradual shift in which competitive achievement becomes the dominant criterion of success, displacing character formation as the primary educational purpose. Drawing on Institutional Theory, Mission Drift Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, the article develops an integrative conceptual framework that explains the antecedents, dimensions, and consequences of educational drift in scouting. The proposed framework advances existing knowledge by linking institutional pressures, organizational priorities, and motivational processes within a multilevel explanation of educational change. The study contributes a novel conceptual construct, extends mission drift scholarship into youth development contexts, and establishes a foundation for future empirical research on mission sustainability in character-centered educational organizations.

Keywords

scouting educational drift; scouting education; mission drift; positive youth development; self-determination theory

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1. Introduction

Scouting has long been recognized as one of the most influential forms of nonformal education for youth development. Unlike conventional classroom-based instruction, scouting emphasizes experiential learning, leadership development, teamwork, self-reliance, community service, and character formation through progressive engagement in real-world activities. A substantial body of research has demonstrated that participation in scouting contributes positively to character development, civic engagement, social responsibility, leadership capacity, and social capital formation (Stucky *et al.*, 2012; Wang *et al.*, 2015, 2017). These outcomes are consistent with the foundational philosophy of scouting, which seeks to prepare young people not merely for academic achievement but for responsible citizenship and lifelong contribution to society.

The educational philosophy of scouting closely aligns with the Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspective, which views young people as resources to be developed rather than problems to be managed. PYD scholarship emphasizes the cultivation of competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring through supportive developmental contexts (Catalano *et al.*, 2004; Damon, 2004). More recent research has reinforced the importance of organized youth activities in promoting social-emotional development, moral growth, civic engagement, and positive developmental trajectories across adolescence (Boat *et al.*, 2024; Lerner *et al.*, 2021; Zarrett *et al.*, 2021). Within this perspective, scouting represents a distinctive developmental setting because it combines experiential learning, peer interaction, leadership opportunities, and service-oriented activities in a coherent educational framework.

Research on organized youth programs consistently suggests that developmental outcomes emerge not only from participation itself but also from the quality of the learning environment in which participation occurs. Structured activities that foster belonging, meaningful relationships, reflection, and progressive challenge are particularly effective in promoting long-term developmental benefits (Norris & Richter, 2005; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2024; Vandell *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, the success of scouting has traditionally been evaluated through indicators such as personal growth, responsibility, leadership development, cooperation, and community contribution rather than through competitive accomplishments alone.

Despite these educational ideals, contemporary scouting increasingly operates within broader institutional environments characterized by performance measurement, public visibility, and comparative evaluation. Across educational sectors, organizations face growing pressure to demonstrate effectiveness through measurable outcomes that can be easily communicated to stakeholders. Rankings, awards, performance indicators, and public recognition increasingly function as symbolic representations of quality and legitimacy (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Sauder & Espeland, 2009). Scholars have described this tendency as part of a broader culture of performativity and audit-based accountability, in which educational value becomes closely associated with measurable and publicly visible indicators of success (Shore & Wright, 2015).

These developments are not confined to formal education. Nonformal educational organizations increasingly operate within similar accountability environments, where stakeholders often rely on visible achievements to evaluate program effectiveness. As a result, organizations may experience pressure to prioritize outcomes that are easily recognized and celebrated, even when such outcomes only partially reflect their educational mission. Institutional theory suggests that organizations frequently adapt to socially valued indicators of success because these indicators confer legitimacy and external recognition (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Suchman, 1995). Over time, such adaptations may influence not only organizational practices but also organizational definitions of success.

Within scouting, competitive events have become increasingly prominent mechanisms for demonstrating excellence. Competitions can undoubtedly serve valuable educational

purposes by encouraging effort, resilience, teamwork, and skill development. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that competition can enhance performance under appropriate motivational conditions (Murayama & Elliot, 2012). Achievement Goal Theory further suggests that competitive environments may support development when they encourage mastery-oriented goals focused on learning and self-improvement rather than solely on outperforming others (Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Nicholls, 1984; Senko *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, competition itself is not inherently inconsistent with the educational philosophy of scouting.

However, concerns emerge when competitive success gradually becomes the dominant criterion through which educational quality is evaluated. In such circumstances, trophies, rankings, and championship titles may evolve from educational tools into educational objectives. This possibility reflects a broader phenomenon identified in organizational research, where measurable indicators increasingly displace the underlying purposes they were originally intended to serve. (Kerr, 1975) influential argument regarding goal displacement illustrates how organizations may unintentionally reward visible indicators while losing sight of foundational objectives. Similar patterns have been documented in studies of mission-driven organizations, where external pressures and accountability demands can gradually redirect organizational priorities away from their original mission (Ebrahim, 2005; Ebrahim *et al.*, 2014; Grimes *et al.*, 2019).

Recent mission drift scholarship further suggests that such transformations rarely occur through deliberate abandonment of organizational values. Instead, they emerge through cumulative adaptations that appear rational, beneficial, and legitimate when viewed individually but collectively reshape organizational priorities over time (Grimes *et al.*, 2019). This observation is particularly relevant to scouting because many of its most important educational outcomes; including character formation, integrity, leadership growth, and citizenship, are difficult to measure directly, whereas competitive achievements provide immediate and highly visible evidence of accomplishment.

The issue becomes even more significant when viewed through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT argues that sustainable development is most likely when educational environments support autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation and self-directed growth (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Excessive emphasis on external rewards and public recognition may shift motivational orientations toward extrinsic achievement and social comparison, potentially altering how participants define success and personal worth (Vansteenkiste *et al.*, 2020). In the context of scouting, this raises important questions regarding whether competitive recognition strengthens or unintentionally undermines the developmental processes that scouting seeks to cultivate.

Despite the relevance of these concerns, existing scholarship provides limited theoretical explanation of how competitive success may gradually become an educational objective rather than an educational instrument within scouting programs. Scouting research has predominantly focused on developmental outcomes and positive youth development (Lerner *et al.*, 2021; Stucky *et al.*, 2012b; Wang *et al.*, 2017), while competition research has largely examined motivation and achievement outcomes at the individual level (Elliot, 2020; Harackiewicz *et al.*, 2002). Meanwhile, mission drift scholarship has rarely been applied to youth development organizations and scouting education. Consequently, an important conceptual gap exists at the intersection of scouting education, competition, institutional legitimacy, and organizational mission.

This article addresses that gap by introducing the concept of Scouting Educational Drift (SED). SED is defined as a gradual shift in scouting education whereby competitive achievement becomes the dominant criterion of success, displacing character formation as the primary educational purpose. Drawing on Institutional Theory, Mission Drift Theory,

Achievement Goal Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, the article develops a conceptual framework explaining how institutional pressures, accountability expectations, achievement visibility, and motivational dynamics may collectively transform educational priorities within contemporary scouting.

The article makes three primary contributions. First, it extends mission drift scholarship into the underexplored domain of scouting education and youth development. Second, it introduces Scouting Educational Drift as a novel conceptual construct that captures the transformation of educational priorities under competitive pressures. Third, it proposes an integrative framework linking institutional legitimacy, accountability structures, motivational processes, and developmental outcomes in nonformal education. By doing so, the article seeks to advance scholarly understanding of how scouting organizations can preserve their character-centered mission while operating in increasingly performance-driven environments.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Institutional Theory and the Reconfiguration of Educational Priorities

Institutional Theory provides a powerful framework for understanding how organizations gradually redefine priorities in response to external expectations and socially constructed standards of legitimacy. Rather than operating solely according to internally determined goals, organizations frequently adapt their structures, practices, and evaluation systems to align with broader institutional norms regarding what constitutes effectiveness, quality, and success (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1987).

A central insight of Institutional Theory is that legitimacy often becomes as important as technical effectiveness. Organizations seek social acceptance because legitimacy enhances stability, reputation, stakeholder support, and long-term survival (Suchman, 1995). Consequently, organizational decisions are often shaped not only by mission-related considerations but also by external expectations regarding appropriate and desirable organizational behavior.

(DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) argued that organizations operating within the same institutional field tend to become increasingly similar through processes of institutional isomorphism. Such convergence occurs because organizations face common pressures from professional networks, regulators, stakeholders, and cultural expectations. Over time, practices that become widely recognized as indicators of excellence are increasingly adopted regardless of whether they directly advance organizational missions.

Recent institutional scholarship has further emphasized the role of measurement systems in shaping organizational behavior. Public rankings, performance indicators, ratings, and competitive benchmarks do not merely evaluate organizations; they actively influence how organizations define success and allocate resources (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Sauder & Espeland, 2009). Through what Espeland and Sauder describe as reactivity, organizations modify behavior in response to being measured. As measurement systems become institutionalized, indicators themselves may acquire symbolic authority and gradually redefine organizational priorities.

This dynamic is closely associated with the emergence of performativity and audit culture. (Shore & Wright, 2015) argue that contemporary organizations increasingly operate in environments where accountability is demonstrated through measurable outputs, rankings, and performance metrics. Within such contexts, organizational value becomes closely tied to visibility, comparability, and quantifiable achievement. Activities that produce observable indicators often receive greater recognition than outcomes that are equally important but less easily measured.

These developments are particularly relevant for educational and youth development organizations. Many educational objectives including character formation, civic responsibility, leadership development, and ethical growth are inherently complex and difficult to quantify. In contrast, awards, rankings, certifications, and competitive achievements provide immediate and publicly visible evidence of success. Consequently, organizations may gradually privilege activities that generate visible achievements because such outcomes are easier to communicate to stakeholders and external audiences.

Scouting organizations are not insulated from these institutional pressures. Although scouting was originally designed as a character-centered educational movement, contemporary scouting increasingly operates within educational ecosystems that value measurable accomplishments and public recognition. Competitive achievements frequently serve as visible signals of program quality for schools, parents, communities, and sponsoring institutions. As a result, scouting units may experience growing pressure to demonstrate excellence through competitive performance.

Importantly, Institutional Theory suggests that such transformations rarely emerge through explicit rejection of organizational values. Instead, they occur through gradual adaptation to institutional expectations that appear legitimate, rational, and beneficial. Over time, repeated emphasis on competitive visibility may reshape how organizational actors interpret educational success. Consequently, institutional pressures create conditions under which educational priorities become increasingly vulnerable to redefinition.

2.2 Mission Drift, Accountability, and Goal Displacement

While Institutional Theory explains why organizations experience pressure to conform to external expectations, Mission Drift Theory explains how these pressures can gradually transform organizational priorities.

Mission drift refers to the process through which organizations progressively move away from their founding purposes as they respond to environmental demands, stakeholder expectations, and accountability requirements (Ebrahim *et al.*, 2014; Jones, 2007). Rather than occurring through abrupt strategic change, mission drift typically develops incrementally through a series of decisions that appear reasonable in isolation but collectively alter organizational direction (Grimes *et al.*, 2019).

A central driver of mission drift is accountability pressure. Organizations increasingly operate within environments where stakeholders demand evidence of effectiveness and impact. Although accountability mechanisms are intended to improve transparency and performance, they may also create unintended consequences when measurable indicators become substitutes for broader organizational purposes (Ebrahim, 2005). Under such circumstances, organizations risk prioritizing what can be measured rather than what truly matters.

This phenomenon is closely related to goal displacement. (Kerr, 1975) classic formulation “rewarding A while hoping for B” illustrates how organizations may unintentionally encourage behaviors that diverge from intended objectives. When rewards, recognition, and legitimacy become tied to particular indicators, organizational actors naturally direct attention toward those indicators. Over time, performance measures may evolve from representations of success into definitions of success themselves.

Educational organizations are especially susceptible to this dynamic because many of their most important outcomes are difficult to observe directly. Character development, moral growth, leadership formation, citizenship, and social responsibility emerge gradually and often resist simple measurement. By contrast, competitive victories, rankings, awards, and public achievements provide immediate evidence of accomplishment. Consequently, visible indicators may become attractive proxies for educational effectiveness.

Recent scholarship suggests that mission drift is particularly likely when organizations face competing institutional logics (Pache & Santos, 2010). One logic reflects the organization's original mission, whereas another reflects external expectations regarding performance, accountability, and legitimacy. When these logics coexist, organizations frequently experience tensions regarding resource allocation, evaluation systems, and strategic priorities.

This perspective is highly relevant to scouting education. On one hand, scouting is guided by a developmental logic emphasizing character formation, self-development, service, and citizenship. On the other hand, scouting increasingly operates within accountability environments that reward competitive visibility and measurable achievement. These competing logics may generate subtle shifts in organizational priorities. Competitive activities originally designed as educational tools may gradually acquire independent value because they provide highly visible evidence of organizational success.

Accordingly, Mission Drift Theory provides a critical bridge between institutional pressures and educational transformation. It explains how external demands for accountability and visibility can gradually reshape organizational definitions of success without requiring formal changes to mission statements or educational philosophies.

2.3 Achievement Goal Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and the Motivational Logic of Competition

Although Institutional Theory and Mission Drift Theory explain organizational-level processes, understanding educational drift also requires attention to the motivational consequences experienced by participants. Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provide complementary perspectives for explaining how educational environments influence individual definitions of success and learning.

Achievement Goal Theory proposes that individuals evaluate competence according to different goal orientations (Nicholls, 1984). Mastery-oriented goals emphasize learning, self-improvement, competence development, and personal growth. In contrast, performance-oriented goals emphasize social comparison, normative evaluation, and demonstrating superiority relative to others (Ames, 1992; Elliot & McGregor, 2001).

Research consistently shows that mastery-oriented environments are associated with persistence, adaptive learning behaviors, deeper engagement, and positive responses to challenge, whereas performance-oriented environments are more likely to increase social comparison and contingent self-worth (Hulleman *et al.*, 2010; Senko *et al.*, 2011). Importantly, AGT does not suggest that competition is inherently detrimental. Rather, the educational consequences of competition depend on how success is defined and interpreted.

This distinction is particularly relevant to scouting. Traditional scouting philosophy encourages individuals to compare themselves with their previous capabilities rather than with the performance of others. Progression systems, merit development, leadership practice, and experiential learning are fundamentally mastery-oriented because they emphasize continuous self-improvement. In this sense, scouting historically reflects a developmental rather than a comparative model of achievement.

Self-Determination Theory extends this analysis by explaining why certain educational environments promote more sustainable forms of motivation. According to SDT, optimal development occurs when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Educational settings that satisfy these psychological needs tend to foster intrinsic motivation, internalization of values, and long-term engagement.

Recent developments in Basic Psychological Need Theory further suggest that environments emphasizing external validation and status recognition may weaken autonomous forms of motivation when achievement becomes primarily contingent upon external approval (Vansteenkiste *et al.*, 2020). Excessive emphasis on rankings, trophies, and public recognition can encourage individuals to pursue activities for external rewards rather than developmental growth. Although such incentives may increase short-term effort, they may also alter how participants define success and personal worth.

The integration of AGT and SDT provides important insights for understanding educational drift in scouting. From an AGT perspective, increasing emphasis on competitive rankings may shift participants from mastery-oriented to performance-oriented definitions of success. From an SDT perspective, growing dependence on external recognition may strengthen extrinsic motivational orientations while weakening intrinsically meaningful engagement.

Taken together, these theories suggest that educational drift is not merely an organizational phenomenon. It is also a motivational phenomenon that influences how participants understand achievement, learning, and self-development. As organizational priorities become increasingly aligned with competitive outcomes, motivational environments may likewise shift toward social comparison and external validation.

Collectively, Institutional Theory, Mission Drift Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, and Self-Determination Theory provide a multilevel explanation for the emergence of educational drift. Institutional Theory explains the pursuit of legitimacy, Mission Drift Theory explains the reconfiguration of organizational priorities, Achievement Goal Theory explains changing definitions of success, and Self-Determination Theory explains shifting motivational orientations. The integration of these perspectives establishes the theoretical foundation for the development of Scouting Educational Drift (SED) as a distinct conceptual construct.

To establish a coherent theoretical foundation for Scouting Educational Drift (SED), the four theories reviewed in this section are synthesized according to their explanatory focus, analytical level, and contribution to understanding how educational priorities may gradually shift within contemporary scouting contexts.

Table 1. Mapping of Theoretical Foundations and Explanatory Roles in Scouting Educational Drift

Theory	Core Concept	Level of Analysis	Role in Explaining SED
Institutional Theory	Legitimacy, institutional pressure, and conformity to socially valued indicators	Organizational	Explains why scouting organizations increasingly prioritize visible achievements and competitive success as markers of educational quality
Mission Drift Theory	Goal displacement, accountability pressures, and mission reprioritization	Organizational	Explains how competition-centered indicators may gradually displace character-centered educational objectives
Achievement Goal Theory	Mastery orientation versus performance orientation	Individual	Explains how definitions of success shift from self-development toward comparative achievement and ranking
Self-Determination Theory	Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; autonomy, competence, and relatedness	Individual	Explains how increasing emphasis on external recognition may alter motivational orientations and educational engagement

Source: Developed by the authors based on Meyer and Rowan (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Suchman (1995), Ebrahim (2005), Ebrahim *et al.* (2014), Grimes

Table 1 demonstrates that Scouting Educational Drift (SED) cannot be adequately explained by a single theoretical perspective. Instead, the phenomenon emerges from the interaction of institutional pressures, organizational reprioritization, changing definitions of success, and motivational processes. Together, these theories provide a multilevel explanatory foundation for understanding how competition-centered evaluation may gradually reshape the educational purpose of scouting.

3. Conceptual Gap Analysis

The preceding review suggests that existing scholarship provides valuable insights into youth development, organizational adaptation, and achievement motivation. Nevertheless, the literature remains fragmented in explaining how competitive pressures may transform the educational purpose of scouting itself. Although relevant theoretical components exist, they have rarely been integrated into a framework capable of explaining shifts in educational priorities within scouting organizations. Three interrelated gaps are particularly evident.

3.1 Scouting Research Explains Developmental Outcomes but Not Educational Reorientation

Scouting scholarship has consistently documented the developmental benefits of participation. Studies have linked scouting involvement to character development, civic engagement, leadership growth, social capital formation, and positive youth development outcomes (Stucky *et al.*, 2012c; Wang *et al.*, 2015, 2017). More broadly, research on organized youth activities demonstrates that developmental contexts can promote social-emotional growth, moral development, and community contribution (Boat *et al.*, 2024; Lerner *et al.*, 2021; Zarrett *et al.*, 2021).

While these studies provide strong evidence regarding the benefits of scouting participation, they largely assume that scouting organizations remain consistently aligned with their original educational mission. Consequently, the literature explains what scouting produces but provides limited insight into how scouting defines success under changing institutional conditions. The possibility that educational priorities themselves may be gradually reoriented has received comparatively little scholarly attention.

3.2 Competition Research Explains Motivation but Not Educational Purpose

A second limitation emerges within the competition literature. Achievement Goal Theory and related research have generated extensive knowledge regarding mastery goals, performance goals, motivation, and achievement outcomes (Elliot, 2020; Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Senko *et al.*, 2011). These studies demonstrate that competitive environments can produce both beneficial and detrimental outcomes depending on how success is defined.

However, competition research predominantly focuses on individual-level consequences. The central concern is typically how competition influences learning, motivation, persistence, and performance. Much less attention has been devoted to how competition becomes institutionalized within educational organizations and subsequently influences organizational definitions of success. As a result, existing scholarship provides limited explanation of how competitive structures may gradually reshape the educational purpose of youth development programs such as scouting.

3.3 Mission Drift Research Explains Organizational Change but Neglects Scouting Education

Mission drift scholarship offers perhaps the closest theoretical foundation for understanding educational transformation. Research has demonstrated that organizations frequently

experience tensions between mission fulfillment, accountability demands, and externally valued performance indicators (Ebrahim, 2005; Ebrahim *et al.*, 2014; Grimes *et al.*, 2019). These studies show how measurable outcomes may gradually displace broader organizational purposes.

Despite its relevance, mission drift research has focused primarily on nonprofit organizations, social enterprises, and hybrid organizations. Educational youth organizations and scouting movements in particular remain largely absent from this conversation. This omission is theoretically significant because scouting organizations exhibit many conditions associated with mission drift: multiple stakeholders, accountability pressures, competing institutional logics, and educational outcomes that are difficult to measure directly.

Moreover, existing mission drift theory does not fully explain how organizational shifts become translated into changes in educational meaning. In scouting, the critical issue is not simply whether organizational priorities change, but whether competitive achievement becomes embedded as a dominant educational criterion that influences how success is interpreted by leaders, participants, parents, and institutions.

3.4 Toward the Concept of Scouting Educational Drift

Taken together, these gaps reveal an important blind spot in current scholarship. Scouting research explains developmental outcomes but largely overlooks educational reorientation. Competition research explains motivational consequences but pays limited attention to organizational purpose. Mission drift research explains organizational transformation but has not been systematically extended to scouting education.

This fragmentation creates a need for a concept capable of integrating institutional pressures, accountability expectations, organizational priorities, and motivational processes within a single explanatory framework.

The preceding analysis reveals that existing scholarship provides only partial explanations of the phenomenon examined in this study. Although scouting research, competition research, and mission drift scholarship offer valuable insights, they remain theoretically disconnected. Figure 1 illustrates how these fragmented streams converge and highlights the conceptual space addressed by Scouting Educational Drift (SED).

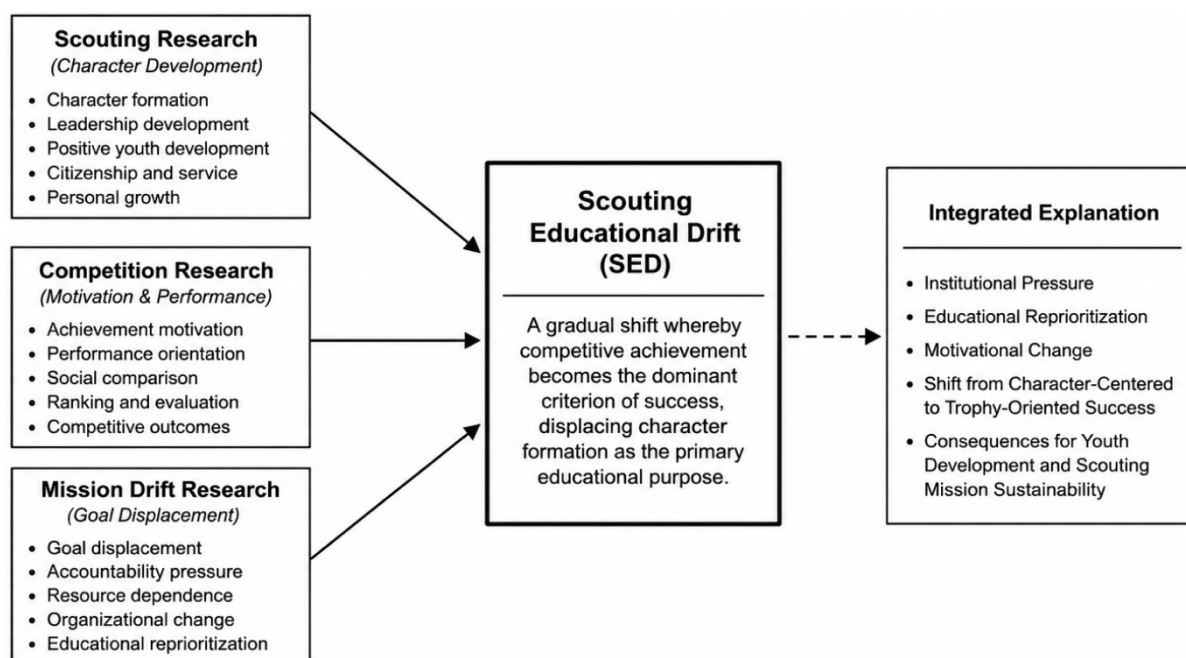


Figure 1. Conceptual Positioning of Scouting Educational Drift (SED)

Source: Developed by the authors based on Polson et al. (2013), Wang et al. (2015), Wang et al. (2017), Ebrahim (2005), Ebrahim et al. (2014), Grimes et al. (2019), Elliot and McGregor (2001), Senko et al. (2011), and Sommet and Elliot (2020).

Figure 1 positions Scouting Educational Drift (SED) at the intersection of three previously disconnected streams of scholarship. Scouting research explains developmental outcomes but provides limited insight into changing educational priorities. Competition research explains motivational and performance consequences but rarely addresses organizational purpose. Mission drift research explains organizational reorientation yet has seldom been applied to scouting education. By integrating these perspectives, SED provides a conceptual bridge linking institutional pressures, educational evaluation, and motivational processes, thereby establishing a new theoretical lens for understanding educational transformation within contemporary scouting contexts.

To address this need, this article introduces Scouting Educational Drift (SED), defined as a gradual shift in scouting education whereby competitive achievement becomes the dominant criterion of success, displacing character formation as the primary educational purpose.

Unlike traditional mission drift, which focuses primarily on organizational deviation from mission, SED specifically captures the transformation of educational meaning and evaluation within scouting contexts. The concept therefore extends mission drift scholarship into youth development while simultaneously linking organizational and motivational explanations of educational change. The next section develops the dimensions and mechanisms of SED and proposes a set of theoretical propositions explaining its emergence and consequences.

4. Conceptualizing Scouting Educational Drift

The preceding analysis suggests that contemporary scouting increasingly operates at the intersection of character-centered education and performance-oriented institutional environments. While competition can support learning and development, existing literature provides limited explanation of how competitive achievement may gradually become an educational objective rather than an educational instrument. To address this limitation, this section develops the concept of Scouting Educational Drift (SED) by defining its domain, identifying its core dimensions, and proposing a set of theoretical propositions.

4.1 Defining Scouting Educational Drift

This article defines Scouting Educational Drift (SED) as *a gradual shift in scouting education whereby competitive achievement becomes the dominant criterion of success, displacing character formation as the primary educational purpose.*

SED does not imply that scouting organizations intentionally abandon their educational mission. Rather, it describes a process of educational reprioritization in which competitive accomplishments increasingly function as the primary basis for evaluating program quality, participant success, and organizational effectiveness.

The concept differs from traditional mission drift in two important respects. First, mission drift typically focuses on organizational deviation from founding purposes, whereas SED specifically concerns the transformation of educational meaning and evaluation within scouting contexts. Second, SED incorporates both organizational and motivational dimensions. It captures not only how organizations redefine success but also how participants gradually internalize competition-centered interpretations of achievement.

Accordingly, SED should not be understood as opposition to competition. Competitions remain educationally valuable when they support learning, cooperation, leadership development, and personal growth. Educational drift emerges only when competitive outcomes become the dominant lens through which educational success is interpreted.

4.2 Core Dimensions of Scouting Educational Drift

To facilitate conceptual clarity and future empirical investigation, SED is proposed as a multidimensional construct consisting of four interrelated dimensions.

4.2.1 Outcome Displacement

Outcome displacement refers to the gradual replacement of developmental outcomes with competitive outcomes as the primary indicators of educational success.

Traditional scouting evaluates success through character growth, leadership development, responsibility, citizenship, service, and personal improvement. However, these outcomes are often difficult to observe and assess directly. Competitive achievements, in contrast, provide visible and socially recognized evidence of accomplishment. As organizations increasingly rely on trophies, rankings, and championship results to demonstrate effectiveness, competitive indicators may begin to substitute for broader educational objectives. Character formation remains symbolically important, yet operational attention becomes increasingly concentrated on competitive performance.

4.2.2 Comparative Self-Worth Orientation

Comparative self-worth orientation refers to the tendency for educational success to be evaluated through social comparison rather than personal development.

The traditional scouting philosophy emphasizes progressive self-improvement, where individuals are encouraged to become better than they were previously. Educational drift alters this orientation by increasing the salience of rankings, superiority, and competitive distinction. Under these conditions, personal value becomes increasingly linked to relative performance rather than developmental progress. Success is interpreted less as growth and more as victory.

This dimension represents the psychological manifestation of educational drift at the individual level.

4.2.3 Brotherhood Erosion

Brotherhood erosion refers to the weakening of cooperative identity, mutual support, and collective growth within scouting communities.

Scouting has historically relied upon peer relationships, teamwork, and shared developmental experiences. The patrol system itself is grounded in collaboration and interdependence. However, when competitive differentiation becomes increasingly important, social relationships may be reinterpreted through a competitive lens. Peers become comparative reference points rather than developmental partners, and cooperation risks becoming instrumental rather than intrinsically valued.

This dimension captures the social consequences of educational drift and highlights how competition-centered evaluation may gradually reshape the relational culture of scouting.

4.2.4 Extrinsic Achievement Dominance

Extrinsic achievement dominance refers to the increasing influence of externally validated success over intrinsically meaningful developmental engagement.

Scouting traditionally encourages participation through experiences associated with service, adventure, mastery, leadership, and contribution. These activities are consistent with intrinsically oriented forms of motivation. However, when public recognition, rankings, awards, and competitive prestige become dominant sources of validation, participants may increasingly engage in scouting for external rewards rather than developmental purposes.

This dimension reflects the motivational component of educational drift and links organizational priorities to changes in participant motivation.

To enhance conceptual clarity and facilitate future empirical investigation, Scouting Educational Drift (SED) is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct. The four dimensions identified below capture the organizational, psychological, social, and motivational manifestations through which educational drift becomes visible within contemporary scouting environments.

Table 2. Dimensions of Scouting Educational Drift (SED)

Dimension	Definition	Primary Manifestation	Theoretical Anchor
Outcome Displacement	The gradual replacement of developmental outcomes by competitive outcomes as the primary indicators of educational success.	Success increasingly measured through trophies, rankings, awards, and championship results rather than character development.	Mission Drift Theory
Comparative Self-Worth Orientation	The tendency to evaluate personal success through social comparison rather than individual growth and self-improvement.	Greater emphasis on outperforming others, ranking positions, and competitive distinction.	Achievement Goal Theory
Brotherhood Erosion	The weakening of cooperative identity, mutual support, and collective growth among scouts.	Peers increasingly viewed as competitors rather than developmental partners.	Positive Youth Development Perspective; Achievement Goal Theory
Extrinsic Achievement Dominance	The increasing influence of externally validated achievements over intrinsically meaningful developmental engagement.	Participation motivated by recognition, awards, prestige, and public approval rather than learning and service.	Self-Determination Theory

Source: Developed by the authors based on Kerr (1975), Ebrahim (2005), Ebrahim et al. (2014), Grimes et al. (2019), Nicholls (1984), Ames (1992), Elliot and McGregor (2001), Deci and Ryan (2000), Ryan and Deci (2020), Vansteenkiste et al. (2020), Catalano et al. (2004), and Lerner et al. (2021).

Table 2 operationalizes Scouting Educational Drift (SED) as a multidimensional construct encompassing organizational, psychological, social, and motivational dimensions. Collectively, these dimensions illustrate that educational drift extends beyond organizational reprioritization and also affects how participants interpret achievement, relationships, and personal development. This multidimensional specification strengthens the conceptual distinctiveness of SED and provides a foundation for future scale development, construct validation, and empirical testing across diverse scouting contexts.

4.3 Theoretical Propositions

Building upon the preceding discussion, five propositions are advanced to explain the emergence and consequences of Scouting Educational Drift.

Proposition 1

Institutional pressures, accountability expectations, and achievement visibility positively contribute to the emergence of Scouting Educational Drift.

As competitive accomplishments become highly visible indicators of legitimacy and effectiveness, scouting organizations are increasingly likely to prioritize competitive outcomes within their educational practices.

Proposition 2

Scouting Educational Drift reduces the centrality of character-centered educational outcomes within scouting programs.

As competitive success becomes a dominant criterion of evaluation, developmental objectives such as character formation, citizenship, service, and leadership development become increasingly secondary in educational decision-making.

Proposition 3

Scouting Educational Drift contributes to the erosion of brotherhood and cooperative identity among participants.

The increasing importance of comparative achievement encourages social differentiation and weakens the collective orientation historically associated with scouting communities.

Proposition 4

Scouting Educational Drift strengthens extrinsic motivational orientations among scouts.

Educational environments that emphasize public recognition, rankings, and external rewards are more likely to encourage externally regulated forms of motivation than intrinsically meaningful developmental engagement.

Proposition 5

Scouting Educational Drift weakens self-development-oriented learning processes.

As educational success becomes increasingly associated with comparative achievement, mastery-oriented learning and progressive self-improvement become less central to participants' understanding of success.

4.4 Conceptual Contribution

The concept of Scouting Educational Drift contributes to the literature in three ways.

First, it extends mission drift scholarship into the underexplored domain of scouting education and youth development. Second, it integrates institutional, organizational, and motivational explanations of educational change within a single conceptual framework. Third, it redirects scholarly attention from developmental outcomes alone toward the processes through which educational success is defined and evaluated.

The preceding discussion demonstrates that Scouting Educational Drift (SED) is not a single-dimensional phenomenon but a multidimensional construct encompassing organizational, psychological, social, and motivational transformations.

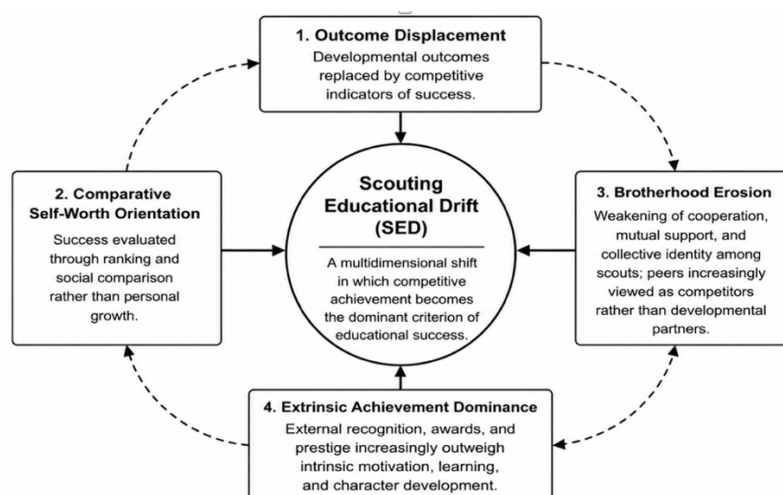


Figure 2. Conceptual Structure of Scouting Educational Drift (SED)

Source: Developed by the authors based on Kerr (1975), Ebrahim (2005), Ebrahim et al. (2014), Grimes et al. (2019), Nicholls (1984), Ames (1992), Elliot and McGregor (2001), Deci and Ryan (2000), Ryan and Deci (2020), Vansteenkiste et al. (2020), Catalano et al. (2004), and Lerner et al. (2021).

Figure 2 conceptualizes Scouting Educational Drift (SED) as a multidimensional construct rather than a singular organizational condition. The four dimensions represent distinct yet interrelated manifestations of educational drift. Outcome displacement reflects organizational reprioritization, comparative self-worth orientation captures psychological changes in success evaluation, brotherhood erosion represents relational consequences, and extrinsic achievement dominance reflects motivational transformation. Together, these dimensions explain how competition-centered evaluation may gradually reshape the meaning of educational success within scouting. This conceptual specification strengthens the theoretical distinctiveness of SED and provides a foundation for future empirical operationalization and construct validation.

Most importantly, SED highlights that educational transformation can occur without formal changes to organizational mission statements. Scouting may continue to espouse character formation as its central purpose while simultaneously evaluating success through increasingly competition-centered criteria. Recognizing this distinction is essential for understanding how character-centered educational movements adapt, and sometimes drift, within performance-driven institutional environments.

5. Proposed Framework

The central argument of this article is that educational drift in scouting emerges through a multilevel process linking institutional environments, organizational priorities, and participant motivation. Building upon Institutional Theory, Mission Drift Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, the proposed framework positions Scouting Educational Drift (SED) as the key mechanism through which external pressures influence educational outcomes.

5.1 Antecedents of Scouting Educational Drift

The framework identifies three interrelated antecedents that increase the likelihood of educational drift: institutional pressure, stakeholder expectations, and achievement visibility.

First, scouting organizations operate within broader institutional environments that increasingly value measurable indicators of success. Competitive achievements, rankings, awards, and public recognition function as visible signals of organizational quality and legitimacy (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Shore & Wright, 2015). As these indicators become institutionalized, scouting units experience growing pressure to demonstrate excellence through competitive performance.

Second, educational priorities are shaped by stakeholder expectations. Parents, schools, community leaders, and scouting authorities frequently seek evidence that programs are effective and successful. Because competitive achievements are highly visible and easily communicated, stakeholders may unintentionally reinforce competition-centered definitions of success. Consequently, organizational actors receive stronger incentives to pursue measurable accomplishments than less visible developmental outcomes.

Third, competitive achievements possess a level of visibility that character development outcomes often lack. Leadership growth, citizenship, responsibility, and integrity typically emerge gradually and are difficult to quantify. By contrast, trophies, rankings, and championship titles provide immediate and publicly recognizable evidence of accomplishment. This asymmetry increases the attractiveness of competition-centered evaluation systems.

Collectively, these antecedents create conditions under which scouting organizations may gradually redefine educational success according to competitive achievement rather than developmental growth.

5.2 Scouting Educational Drift as a Mediating Mechanism

The proposed framework conceptualizes SED as the central mediating mechanism linking institutional influences to educational consequences.

Importantly, the framework does not suggest that competition itself causes negative outcomes. Competitive activities may remain highly beneficial when embedded within mastery-oriented educational environments. Educational drift emerges only when competitive achievement becomes the dominant criterion for evaluating success.

At this stage, organizational attention, recognition systems, leadership evaluation, and resource allocation increasingly favor activities associated with competitive performance. Character formation remains part of the official educational narrative, yet operational priorities become progressively oriented toward visible achievements. This process reflects a form of educational reprioritization in which educational value becomes increasingly interpreted through competition-centered metrics.

SED therefore represents the mechanism through which institutional pressures are translated into changes in educational meaning, organizational behavior, and participant experience.

5.3 Consequences of Scouting Educational Drift

The framework proposes four primary consequences of educational drift.

The first consequence is character erosion, whereby character-centered outcomes become less central within educational planning and evaluation. Although character development remains symbolically important, it receives decreasing attention relative to competitive performance.

The second consequence is brotherhood reduction. As comparative achievement becomes increasingly salient, relationships among participants may shift from collaborative development toward competitive differentiation. Shared identity and mutual support become secondary to comparative status.

The third consequence is extrinsic motivational orientation. Consistent with Self-Determination Theory, increased emphasis on external rewards and recognition encourages participants to pursue success through externally validated achievements rather than intrinsically meaningful developmental experiences (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Vansteenkiste *et al.*, 2020).

The fourth consequence is reduced self-development orientation. Participants become increasingly concerned with outperforming others rather than improving themselves. Consequently, mastery-oriented learning and progressive self-improvement become less influential in shaping educational engagement.

Together, these outcomes represent a gradual departure from the traditional educational philosophy of scouting, which emphasizes character formation, cooperation, service, and continuous self-development.

5.4 Integrated Conceptual Model

Building on the integration of Institutional Theory, Mission Drift Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, Figure 3 presents the proposed conceptual framework of Scouting Educational Drift (SED). The model explains how institutional and organizational pressures influence educational priorities and ultimately shape developmental outcomes within contemporary scouting environments.

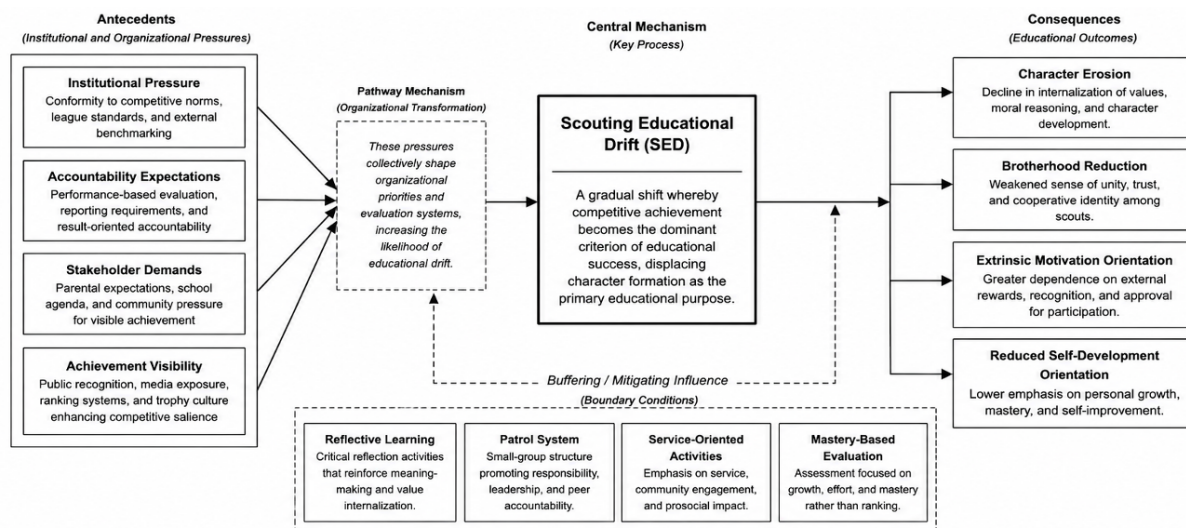


Figure 3. Integrated Conceptual Framework of Scouting Educational Drift (SED)

Source: Developed by the authors based on Meyer and Rowan (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Suchman (1995), Ebrahim (2005), Ebrahim et al. (2014), Grimes et al. (2019), Nicholls (1984), Elliot and McGregor (2001), Deci and Ryan (2000), Ryan and Deci (2020), and Vansteenkiste et al. (2020).

Figure 3 presents Scouting Educational Drift (SED) as a multilevel mechanism linking institutional environments to educational consequences. Institutional pressures, accountability expectations, stakeholder demands, and achievement visibility collectively increase the likelihood that competitive achievement becomes the dominant criterion of educational success. Once educational drift emerges, scouting programs may experience a gradual reduction in character-centered priorities, cooperative identity, intrinsic engagement, and self-development orientation. The framework further suggests that these consequences are not inevitable. Protective educational mechanisms, including reflective learning, mastery-based evaluation, service-oriented activities, and the patrol system, may buffer the effects of educational drift and help preserve the character-centered mission of scouting.

The model suggests that the educational consequences associated with competition are not direct effects of competition itself. Rather, they emerge when institutional and organizational conditions encourage competitive achievement to become the dominant criterion of educational success. By positioning SED as the mediating mechanism, the framework provides a theoretically integrated explanation of how character-centered scouting may gradually evolve into competition-centered scouting despite maintaining its formal educational mission.

The framework also establishes a foundation for future empirical research. Specifically, it offers a basis for examining how institutional environments, accountability systems, and motivational climates interact to influence the long-term sustainability of character-centered scouting education.

6. Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this article was to explain a phenomenon that has received limited attention in scouting and youth development scholarship: the gradual transformation of educational priorities from character formation toward competitive achievement. By integrating Institutional Theory, Mission Drift Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, the article introduced Scouting Educational Drift (SED) as a conceptual framework explaining how institutional pressures, accountability expectations, and achievement visibility may reshape educational definitions of success within contemporary scouting.

The proposed framework suggests that the most significant challenge facing scouting is not competition itself, but the possibility that competition becomes the dominant lens through

which educational value is interpreted. This distinction is important because scouting has historically been designed as a developmental movement centered on character, citizenship, leadership, service, and self-improvement. When competitive achievement becomes the primary criterion of success, educational priorities may gradually shift even while formal mission statements remain unchanged.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

6.1.1 Extending Mission Drift Theory into Educational Contexts

The first contribution of this article is the extension of mission drift scholarship into the domain of youth development and nonformal education. Existing mission drift research has largely examined nonprofit organizations, social enterprises, and hybrid organizations facing tensions between social missions and external accountability requirements (Ebrahim *et al.*, 2014; Grimes *et al.*, 2019). Comparatively little attention has been devoted to educational organizations whose core objectives involve long-term developmental outcomes rather than immediately observable performance indicators.

The concept of SED demonstrates that mission drift can occur through changes in educational evaluation rather than through explicit changes in organizational mission. Scouting organizations may continue to endorse character formation as a central objective while increasingly evaluating success through competition-centered indicators. This distinction advances mission drift scholarship by highlighting how organizational priorities can be transformed through shifts in meaning, measurement, and evaluation.

More broadly, the framework suggests that educational drift may represent a wider challenge within nonformal education. Programs designed to foster developmental outcomes often operate within accountability environments that privilege measurable achievements. Future research may therefore examine whether similar forms of educational drift emerge in other youth-serving organizations.

6.1.2 Bridging Institutional Theory and Youth Development Research

A second contribution lies in connecting institutional explanations of organizational behavior with contemporary youth development scholarship.

Recent Positive Youth Development (PYD) research increasingly emphasizes that developmental outcomes are shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by the quality of developmental systems and institutional contexts in which young people participate (Lerner *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, reviews of organized youth activities highlight the importance of supportive environments, meaningful relationships, and developmental opportunities in promoting moral, civic, and social-emotional growth (Boat *et al.*, 2024; Zarrett *et al.*, 2021).

The SED framework extends this perspective by suggesting that institutional environments also influence how educational success is defined. Developmental outcomes are not produced solely by program participation; they are shaped by organizational priorities, accountability structures, and evaluative norms. Consequently, institutional pressures may indirectly influence youth development by altering the educational environments through which developmental experiences are delivered.

This argument contributes to an emerging systems-oriented understanding of youth development by positioning organizational legitimacy and accountability structures as important contextual influences on developmental processes.

6.1.3 Integrating Organizational and Motivational Perspectives

A third contribution concerns the integration of organizational and motivational explanations of educational change.

Previous studies have often examined organizational adaptation and youth motivation as separate domains of inquiry. Institutional and mission drift theories typically focus on organizational behavior, whereas Achievement Goal Theory and Self-Determination Theory focus on individual motivation and learning. The SED framework brings these perspectives together by proposing that organizational definitions of success influence the motivational climates experienced by participants.

This integration is particularly relevant in light of recent developments in Self-Determination Theory. (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Vansteenkiste *et al.*, 2020) argue that educational environments influence development through their capacity to support or frustrate basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The framework proposed here suggests that educational drift may alter these motivational conditions by increasing dependence on external validation, social comparison, and performance-based recognition.

As a result, institutional pressures are not merely organizational phenomena; they may ultimately shape how young people define achievement, competence, and personal growth.

6.1.4 Advancing Scouting Education Scholarship

The final theoretical contribution concerns scouting research itself.

Most existing scouting studies focus on the positive outcomes associated with participation, including leadership development, civic engagement, social capital formation, and character growth (Stucky *et al.*, 2012c; Wang *et al.*, 2017). While these contributions remain important, they largely assume that scouting continues to operate according to its traditional educational philosophy.

The concept of SED shifts attention toward a different question: how educational purposes are defined, maintained, and transformed within changing institutional environments. This perspective encourages scholars to move beyond evaluating whether scouting works and toward examining the conditions under which scouting remains aligned with its developmental mission.

In doing so, the framework establishes a new conceptual agenda for scouting education research centered on educational purpose, institutional influence, and mission sustainability.

6.2 Practical Implications

The framework also offers several practical implications for scouting leaders, educational institutions, and policy actors.

For scout leaders and adult volunteers, the findings highlight the importance of distinguishing between competition as a developmental tool and competition as an educational objective. Competitive activities can provide valuable opportunities for leadership development, teamwork, resilience, and skill acquisition. However, educational value is maximized when competitive experiences are embedded within reflective learning processes that emphasize personal growth and collective development.

For schools and sponsoring institutions, the framework suggests the need for broader evaluation systems capable of recognizing developmental achievements that extend beyond competitive performance. Recent research demonstrates that belonging, supportive relationships, and developmental engagement are critical predictors of positive youth outcomes (Boat *et al.*, 2024; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2024). Assessment systems that focus exclusively on trophies and rankings may therefore overlook many of the outcomes that make scouting educationally valuable.

At the organizational level, scouting associations may benefit from developing recognition systems that place greater emphasis on leadership practice, community service, citizenship, environmental stewardship, mentoring, and character development. Such initiatives would

help align organizational incentives with the foundational philosophy of scouting while preserving the motivational benefits associated with competitive participation.

Finally, parents and communities play an important role in shaping educational expectations. When achievement is interpreted primarily through comparative performance, young people may become increasingly dependent on external validation. Encouraging broader definitions of success that value effort, integrity, contribution, and self-improvement may help reinforce developmental orientations that are central to scouting education.

6.3 Future Research Directions

The concept of Scouting Educational Drift opens several avenues for future research.

First, empirical studies are needed to develop and validate measurement instruments capable of assessing the dimensions of SED. Such work would enable systematic investigation of educational drift across different scouting contexts and organizational settings.

Second, comparative studies could examine how educational drift varies across national scouting systems, educational cultures, and accountability environments. Because institutional pressures differ substantially across contexts, the prevalence and consequences of SED may also vary.

Third, longitudinal research could investigate whether educational drift influences long-term developmental outcomes associated with scouting participation. Such studies would provide important evidence regarding the relationship between organizational priorities and youth development trajectories.

Finally, future research should explore potential protective mechanisms that help preserve character-centered education. Leadership approaches emphasizing reflective learning, mastery-oriented evaluation systems, youth participation, and service-based recognition may reduce the likelihood that competitive achievement becomes the dominant educational objective. Identifying such mechanisms would contribute not only to theory development but also to the long-term sustainability of scouting as a character-centered educational movement.

7. Conclusion

This article began with a concern that has received surprisingly limited scholarly attention despite its practical relevance to contemporary scouting: the possibility that competitive achievement may gradually become the dominant criterion through which educational success is defined. Although scouting has historically been established as a character-centered form of nonformal education dedicated to citizenship, leadership, service, and personal growth, increasing pressures for visibility, accountability, and measurable performance have created conditions in which competitive accomplishments may acquire disproportionate educational significance. Existing literature has provided valuable insights into positive youth development, achievement motivation, institutional adaptation, and mission drift; however, these streams of research have remained largely disconnected in explaining how educational priorities themselves may be transformed within scouting organizations. To address this gap, the present study sought to develop a theoretically grounded explanation of how institutional pressures, organizational dynamics, and motivational processes interact to reshape educational definitions of success in contemporary scouting.

The primary contribution of this article lies in the introduction of Scouting Educational Drift (SED) as a novel conceptual construct. Defined as a gradual shift in scouting education whereby competitive achievement becomes the dominant criterion of success, displacing

character formation as the primary educational purpose, SED extends existing scholarship in several important ways. First, it expands mission drift theory beyond its traditional focus on nonprofit and hybrid organizations by demonstrating how drift may occur through changes in educational meaning and evaluation rather than through explicit abandonment of organizational missions. Second, it contributes to youth development scholarship by shifting attention from developmental outcomes alone toward the institutional and organizational conditions that shape how such outcomes are valued, measured, and prioritized. Third, it advances scouting education research by introducing a conceptual lens through which scholars can examine not only whether scouting produces positive outcomes, but also how educational purposes are maintained, negotiated, and transformed over time.

The study further advances knowledge through the integration of Institutional Theory, Mission Drift Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, and Self-Determination Theory into a single explanatory framework. Rather than treating organizational adaptation and participant motivation as separate phenomena, the proposed model demonstrates how accountability expectations, legitimacy pressures, stakeholder demands, and achievement visibility may collectively influence organizational priorities and, ultimately, participant experiences. By positioning SED as the mediating mechanism linking institutional environments to educational consequences, the framework offers a multilevel explanation of how character-centered educational movements may gradually evolve toward competition-centered orientations while preserving their formal commitments to character development. This conceptual integration contributes to ongoing efforts within youth development and nonformal education research to better understand the interaction between institutional structures and developmental processes.

The framework also generates important practical implications. For scouting organizations, the findings highlight the need to distinguish clearly between competition as a developmental instrument and competition as an educational objective. For educational institutions and policymakers, the study underscores the limitations of evaluation systems that rely excessively on visible achievements while overlooking less observable but educationally significant outcomes such as character formation, citizenship, leadership growth, belonging, and service. More broadly, the study suggests that accountability mechanisms should be designed in ways that preserve alignment between organizational missions and evaluation systems, particularly in educational settings where many important outcomes are developmental, relational, and difficult to quantify.

At the same time, several limitations should be acknowledged. As a conceptual paper, the study does not provide empirical evidence regarding the prevalence, intensity, or consequences of Scouting Educational Drift across different scouting contexts. The proposed dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of SED remain theoretically derived and therefore require empirical validation. Furthermore, the framework has been developed primarily from literature on scouting, youth development, organizational theory, and educational motivation; additional insights may emerge from related fields such as educational policy, institutional governance, and comparative youth studies. These limitations, however, should be viewed not as weaknesses of the framework but as opportunities for cumulative theory development.

Future research should therefore focus on validating the conceptual dimensions of SED, developing robust measurement instruments, and examining the framework across diverse cultural, institutional, and national scouting contexts. Comparative studies could investigate how accountability environments shape educational priorities in different youth organizations, while longitudinal research could explore the long-term developmental implications of educational drift. Equally important, future scholarship should examine potential protective mechanisms including mastery-oriented evaluation systems, reflective learning practices, service-based recognition structures, and youth-centered leadership approaches that may help sustain character-centered educational missions in increasingly

performance-driven environments. Such efforts would not only refine the SED framework but also contribute to broader discussions concerning the sustainability of developmental education in contemporary society.

Ultimately, the significance of this study extends beyond scouting itself. As educational and youth-serving organizations worldwide face growing demands for measurable performance, the tension between developmental purpose and visible achievement is likely to become increasingly salient. The concept of Scouting Educational Drift offers a theoretical foundation for understanding this tension and for recognizing that educational transformation often occurs not when missions are formally abandoned, but when definitions of success gradually change. By bringing attention to this process, the study contributes to a broader conversation about how educational institutions can preserve their formative purposes while navigating contemporary cultures of accountability, competition, and performance. In this sense, safeguarding character-centered education is not merely a challenge for scouting organizations; it is a critical challenge for the future of developmental education itself.

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