



Brotherhood Under Pressure: Reconceptualizing Scout Identity in Highly Competitive Environments

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Abstract

Scouting is widely recognized as a nonformal educational system that promotes character development, leadership, citizenship, and social responsibility through shared experiences and collective participation. Despite the central role of brotherhood within scouting traditions, limited theoretical attention has been given to understanding how competitive environments influence the development and preservation of relational bonds among scouts. Existing research has largely focused on individual developmental outcomes while providing less attention to collective relational outcomes and the processes through which collective identity becomes a developmental resource. Addressing this gap, this conceptual article introduces the construct of Brotherhood Capital and reconceptualizes brotherhood as a collective relational asset. Drawing upon Social Identity Theory, Identity Leadership Theory, Positive Youth Development, and relational capital perspectives, the article proposes the Competitive Pressure–Brotherhood Capital Framework. The framework explains how competitive intensity may increase social comparison orientation, contribute to identity fragmentation, and affect the accumulation of Brotherhood Capital, while identity leadership serves as a protective moderating mechanism. The study contributes a novel construct, integrates previously disconnected theoretical perspectives, and offers a foundation for future research on competition, collective identity, and youth development in scouting and other nonformal educational settings.

Keywords

brotherhood capital; social identity theory; identity leadership; positive youth development; competitive intensity; scouting education

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1. Introduction

Scouting has long been recognized as one of the most influential forms of nonformal education for promoting character development, citizenship, leadership, and social responsibility among young people. Unlike formal educational settings that primarily emphasize academic achievement, scouting seeks to cultivate holistic development through experiential learning, peer interaction, outdoor activities, and community service. The educational value of scouting lies not only in the acquisition of practical skills but also in the formation of moral character, interpersonal competence, and a sense of collective responsibility that supports positive youth development (Catalano *et al.*, 2004; Larson, 2000; Lerner *et al.*, 2005).

A defining characteristic of scouting education is its emphasis on learning through small-group participation. The patrol or team system is designed to encourage cooperation, mutual support, shared leadership, and interpersonal trust among members. Through repeated collaborative experiences, scouts gradually develop a strong sense of belonging and collective identity that transcends individual achievement. Such relational bonds are often reflected in the notion of brotherhood, a core value deeply embedded within scouting traditions across different countries and cultures. Brotherhood represents more than friendship; it embodies a shared commitment to common values, mutual care, and collective growth within a moral community.

Recent scholarship increasingly recognizes that belonging constitutes a critical developmental resource within youth-serving organizations. Beyond facilitating participation, belonging provides psychological security, social connectedness, and identity affirmation that strengthen long-term engagement and well-being. Educational communities that successfully cultivate belonging tend to generate stronger relational ties, higher levels of participation, and more enduring commitments among young people (Allen *et al.*, 2018; Froehlich *et al.*, 2024; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2024). These findings suggest that the social and relational dimensions of youth programs are not merely complementary to learning outcomes but are central mechanisms through which developmental benefits emerge.

At the same time, contemporary scouting environments have undergone substantial transformation. In many educational systems, competitive events have become increasingly visible and influential components of scouting activities. Competitions, jamborees, leadership contests, skill-based tournaments, and performance assessments are frequently used to motivate participation and recognize achievement. When appropriately managed, competitive activities can contribute positively to youth development by enhancing motivation, perseverance, leadership skills, and self-confidence (Bruner *et al.*, 2023; Holt *et al.*, 2017). Competition may also provide opportunities for scouts to demonstrate competencies acquired through experiential learning and collaborative practice.

However, growing scholarly attention has been directed toward the educational consequences of increasingly performance-oriented environments. Researchers have long distinguished between competition as a developmental mechanism and competition as an educational objective. While moderate competition may stimulate effort and achievement, excessive emphasis on rankings, trophies, and external recognition can shift attention away from learning and collective growth toward social comparison and performance validation (Ames, 1992; Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Such shifts are particularly consequential in youth organizations because they may alter the social meanings attached to participation and reshape how members perceive themselves and one another.

The tension between cooperation and competition has been a longstanding concern in educational and social psychology research. Classic work by Deutsch (1949) demonstrated that cooperative and competitive structures generate fundamentally different social dynamics. Cooperative environments tend to foster trust, communication, and collective

problem-solving, whereas highly competitive settings may increase interpersonal comparison and reduce collaborative behavior. Subsequent meta-analytic evidence similarly indicates that cooperative goal structures generally produce stronger peer relationships and greater social cohesion than highly competitive arrangements (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Roseth *et al.*, 2008). These insights are particularly relevant to scouting because its educational philosophy historically emphasizes teamwork, service, and collective development rather than individual superiority.

From a social identity perspective, belonging to a group provides individuals with a sense of meaning, self-definition, and psychological security (Ellemers *et al.*, 2002; Tajfel *et al.*, 1971). Group membership shapes attitudes, behaviors, and interpersonal relationships by creating a shared understanding of who “we” are. Strong identification with a group often promotes solidarity, trust, and willingness to act for collective benefit (Cameron, 2004; Leach *et al.*, 2008). Within scouting contexts, these processes may contribute to the development of brotherhood by strengthening emotional attachment to the scout community and reinforcing commitment to shared values. Consequently, changes in group dynamics that undermine collective identification may also weaken the social foundations upon which brotherhood is built.

Emerging evidence further demonstrates that participation in organized youth activities contributes to positive developmental outcomes partly because such settings provide opportunities for meaningful relationships, peer support, and social integration (Bouchard *et al.*, 2023a; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2024). A strong sense of social connectedness has been associated with greater resilience, psychological adjustment, engagement, and civic participation among adolescents (Allen *et al.*, 2018; Froehlich *et al.*, 2024). Yet despite these findings, scholarly attention has focused predominantly on outcomes such as leadership development, competence acquisition, and achievement, while comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how youth organizations preserve and reproduce the relational foundations that sustain these outcomes.

Despite the centrality of brotherhood within scouting discourse, academic literature has not yet developed a comprehensive conceptual framework explaining how competitive environments influence the formation and maintenance of brotherhood among scouts. Research on social identity provides important insights into group belonging and cohesion, while studies on youth development emphasize the benefits of participation in organized activities. Similarly, the emerging literature on identity leadership explains how leaders cultivate collective identity and group commitment (Haslam *et al.*, 2022; Steffens *et al.*, 2021). However, these streams of research remain largely disconnected in explaining how increasing competitive pressures may reshape scout identity and transform interpersonal relationships within scouting communities.

This gap is theoretically significant for at least three reasons. First, scouting education is fundamentally group-based, making collective identity a central mechanism of its educational effectiveness. Second, competition has become increasingly institutionalized within many scouting contexts, yet its implications for brotherhood remain poorly understood. Third, existing conceptualizations of youth development tend to emphasize individual outcomes, leaving collective relational outcomes underexplored. Furthermore, current literature frequently treats belonging, cohesion, trust, and civic engagement as separate outcomes rather than interconnected dimensions of a broader relational system. As a result, there is limited theoretical guidance for understanding how educational communities transform collective identity into durable developmental resources.

To address this gap, this article reconceptualizes brotherhood as a form of collective relational resource embedded within scout identity. Drawing upon Social Identity Theory, Positive Youth Development, and Identity Leadership perspectives, the paper introduces the concept of Brotherhood Capital, defined as the collective social and moral resource

generated through shared identity, mutual trust, collective responsibility, and commitment to scouting values. Building on this concept, the article proposes a conceptual framework explaining how competitive intensity may influence social comparison processes, identity fragmentation, and the preservation of brotherhood within scouting environments.

By developing the concept of Brotherhood Capital and linking it to contemporary debates on competition and youth development, this paper contributes to scouting education literature in three ways. First, it provides a theoretical vocabulary for examining brotherhood as a distinctive educational outcome. Second, it integrates previously disconnected theoretical traditions into a unified conceptual framework. Third, it offers a foundation for future empirical research examining how scouting organizations can balance competitive activities with the preservation of collective identity and character-oriented educational objectives.

2. Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Gap

2.1 Social Identity and the Educational Significance of Brotherhood

Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides one of the most influential frameworks for understanding how individuals define themselves through group membership. Originally developed by Tajfel and colleagues, the theory argues that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their perceived membership in social groups (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971). Group affiliation is therefore not merely a descriptive category but also a source of meaning, belonging, emotional security, and behavioral guidance. Subsequent developments in social identity scholarship have demonstrated that identification with a group shapes attitudes, emotions, norms, cooperation, and collective action (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Ellemers *et al.*, 2002).

Within educational and youth development settings, social identity assumes particular importance because learning frequently occurs through participation in social groups rather than through isolated individual experiences. Group membership creates opportunities for shared experiences, mutual influence, collective learning, and identity construction. Strong identification with a group encourages individuals to prioritize collective interests, comply with shared norms, and engage in behaviors that support group cohesion (Hogg, 2001). Consequently, social identity functions not only as a psychological mechanism of self-definition but also as a social mechanism through which educational communities generate trust, solidarity, and collective responsibility.

Recent research further suggests that social identity contributes to educational engagement through the development of belonging. Belonging has increasingly been recognized as a fundamental human need and a critical developmental resource that links participation experiences to well-being, resilience, and long-term engagement (Allen *et al.*, 2018; Froehlich *et al.*, 2024; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2024). Individuals who experience a strong sense of belonging are more likely to maintain commitment to collective goals, perceive social support, and develop enduring connections with their communities. From this perspective, belonging represents an important bridge between identity and participation, transforming group membership into a meaningful relational experience.

Several scholars have emphasized that social identity is multidimensional. Cameron (2004) proposed that identification involves cognitive centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties, while Leach *et al.* (2008) distinguished between self-definition and self-investment as key components of identification. These perspectives suggest that group membership extends beyond simple recognition of belonging; it includes emotional attachment, psychological investment, and active commitment to collective goals. Such dimensions are especially important in educational communities where sustained participation depends not only on formal membership but also on the quality of interpersonal relationships.

The relevance of these insights to scouting is substantial. Unlike many educational activities that emphasize individual performance, scouting traditionally relies on patrol systems, collaborative learning, collective responsibility, and shared experiences. The educational process is intentionally structured around cooperation and group participation, making collective identity a central mechanism of development. Consequently, brotherhood may be understood as an identity-based relational outcome that emerges when individuals perceive themselves as members of a meaningful, value-driven, and enduring community.

Although the language of brotherhood is frequently used within scouting discourse, the concept remains largely underdeveloped in academic literature. Existing studies have examined belonging, cohesion, peer connectedness, and social support, yet they rarely conceptualize brotherhood as a distinct educational construct. This omission is theoretically important because brotherhood appears to encompass more than friendship, acceptance, or social support. Rather, it reflects a durable form of collective commitment grounded in shared identity, mutual trust, reciprocal obligation, and common moral purpose. The absence of a clear conceptualization therefore limits scholarly understanding of one of scouting's most distinctive educational features.

2.2 Identity Leadership and Collective Cohesion

The importance of collective identity has also been emphasized within contemporary leadership research. Moving beyond traditional trait-based and behavior-based approaches, identity leadership theory proposes that effective leaders influence followers by creating, representing, advancing, and embedding a shared sense of “us” (Haslam *et al.*, 2010; Steffens *et al.*, 2014). Leadership effectiveness therefore emerges not simply from personal attributes but from the ability to cultivate collective identity and align individual motivations with group interests.

Research consistently demonstrates that identity-based leadership strengthens trust, cohesion, engagement, collective efficacy, and group performance (Platow *et al.*, 2003; Steffens *et al.*, 2021; van Knippenberg, 2011). When leaders are perceived as representing shared values and collective aspirations, members become more willing to cooperate, contribute, and act in support of collective objectives.

Recent developments have expanded identity leadership scholarship beyond organizational settings into educational, sport, and youth development contexts. Emerging evidence suggests that identity leadership contributes to psychological safety, social connectedness, and developmental engagement among young participants by reinforcing shared belonging and common purpose ((Butalia *et al.*, 2024)). Such findings indicate that collective identity functions not only as a source of cohesion but also as a developmental asset that supports learning and growth.

Scouting provides a particularly suitable context for applying identity leadership theory. Patrol leaders, youth leaders, and adult leaders are expected not only to coordinate activities but also to cultivate commitment to scouting values. Through shared rituals, traditions, symbols, narratives, and experiences, leaders help construct a common identity that binds members together. This process contributes to the development of trust, solidarity, and collective responsibility that characterize strong scouting communities.

Despite these advances, existing identity leadership literature has paid limited attention to situations in which collective identity is challenged by broader institutional pressures. Most studies focus on how leaders strengthen cohesion rather than on how educational environments themselves may contribute to identity fragmentation. Consequently, the interaction between leadership, competition, and collective identity remains insufficiently understood.

2.3 Competition, Cooperation, and Youth Development

The relationship between competition and cooperation has attracted scholarly attention for decades. Deutsch (1949) argued that social interactions are fundamentally shaped by the structure of goals embedded within a situation. Cooperative goal structures encourage individuals to perceive their success as linked to the success of others, whereas competitive structures create perceptions of incompatible interests. These differing perceptions influence communication, trust, helping behavior, and conflict management.

Subsequent educational research generally demonstrates that cooperative environments produce more positive interpersonal outcomes than highly competitive ones. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that cooperative structures improve peer relationships, strengthen trust, and promote prosocial behavior (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Roseth *et al.*, 2008). Such findings are particularly important for educational programs that seek to foster social responsibility and collective development.

At the same time, competition should not be viewed exclusively as detrimental. Achievement motivation research suggests that competition can stimulate effort, persistence, and competence development when individuals perceive challenges as opportunities for growth (Ames, 1992; Nicholls, 1984). More recent scholarship increasingly distinguishes between developmental competition and status competition. Developmental competition emphasizes learning, mastery, and self-improvement, whereas status competition prioritizes hierarchy, comparative advantage, and social recognition. The developmental consequences of competition therefore depend less on competition itself and more on how success is defined, interpreted, and rewarded.

Self-Determination Theory offers additional insight into this issue. According to Ryan & Deci (2000), positive development is facilitated when environments support autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Excessive emphasis on external rewards, rankings, and comparative evaluation may undermine intrinsic motivation and weaken relational connections among participants (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Under such conditions, educational experiences risk becoming increasingly performance-oriented rather than development-oriented.

These concerns are particularly relevant for scouting. Historically, scouting activities have been designed to promote cooperation, service, and collective growth. Yet contemporary scouting organizations increasingly operate within broader educational cultures that prioritize measurable achievement, recognition, and competitive success. As competitive events become more institutionalized, questions emerge regarding their potential influence on collective identity, interpersonal relationships, and the preservation of brotherhood.

2.4 Conceptual Gaps and the Need for Reconceptualization

The preceding review reveals several important gaps in the literature.

First, although social identity research provides extensive explanations of group identification, belonging, and cohesion, there is no established theoretical framework specifically conceptualizing brotherhood within scouting education. Existing concepts such as belonging, cohesion, peer support, and connectedness capture important aspects of interpersonal relationships, yet they do not fully explain the distinctive moral commitments and reciprocal obligations embedded within scouting traditions.

Second, existing scouting and youth development literature largely emphasizes individual developmental outcomes while paying comparatively little attention to collective relational outcomes. Studies frequently investigate leadership development, civic engagement, competence acquisition, and well-being (Catalano *et al.*, 2004; Larson, 2000; Lerner *et al.*, 2005), but they rarely examine how educational environments preserve, strengthen, or weaken the relational foundations that make such outcomes possible.

Third, identity leadership scholarship successfully explains how leaders cultivate collective identity, yet it offers limited insight into how institutional pressures may fragment that identity. The possibility that competition may reshape collective identity and weaken relational bonds remains largely unexplored.

Fourth, current literature lacks a relational mechanism capable of explaining how collective identity is transformed into a durable developmental resource. Belonging, trust, cohesion, contribution, and civic engagement are often treated as separate outcomes rather than interconnected dimensions of a broader relational system. As a result, existing frameworks provide limited explanatory power regarding how educational communities generate enduring social and developmental benefits.

Finally, no conceptual construct currently captures the collective social and moral resource generated through shared identity, mutual trust, collective responsibility, and commitment to common values. Without such a construct, it becomes difficult to explain why some youth communities maintain strong social cohesion despite external pressures while others experience fragmentation and declining collective commitment.

Taken together, these gaps suggest the need for a new conceptual lens capable of integrating insights from Social Identity Theory, Identity Leadership Theory, and Positive Youth Development. Such integration is necessary to explain how scouting communities maintain their relational foundations in increasingly competitive environments. Responding to this need, the next section introduces the concept of Brotherhood Capital as a collective social and moral resource that emerges from shared identity and serves as a critical mechanism linking scouting participation to broader developmental outcomes.

The preceding review reveals that existing theoretical perspectives offer valuable yet fragmented explanations of identity, leadership, and youth development. Integrating these perspectives requires a conceptual bridge capable of explaining how relational resources emerge and generate developmental value.

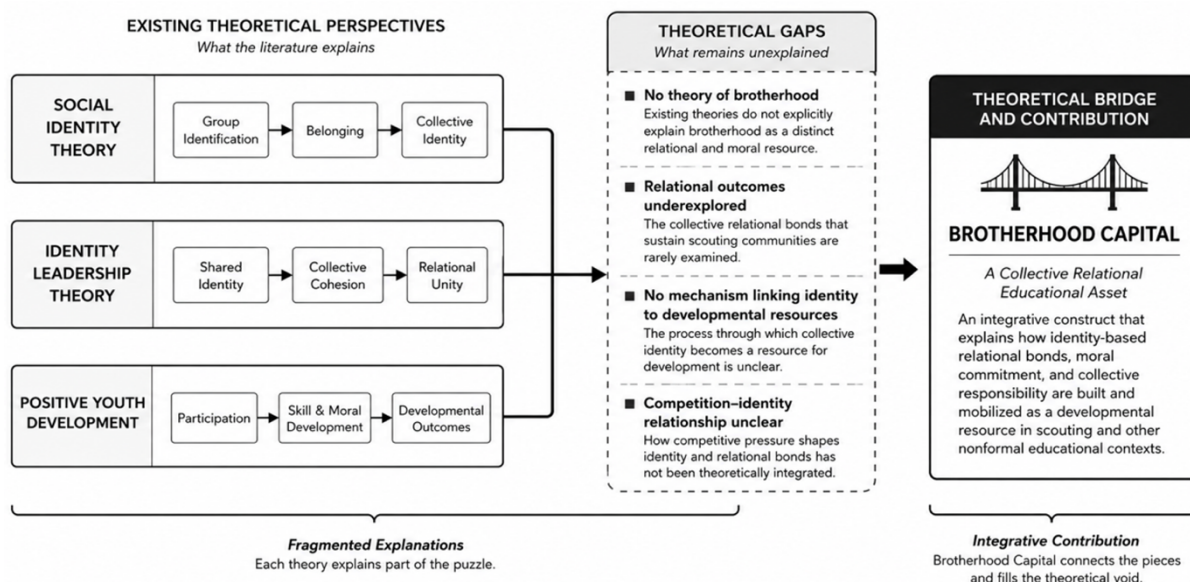


Figure 1. Positioning Brotherhood Capital Within Existing Theoretical Gaps

Source: Developed by the authors based on Social Identity Theory, Identity Leadership Theory, Positive Youth Development, and the present conceptual synthesis.

Figure 1 illustrates how previously disconnected theoretical traditions converge around unresolved relational questions within scouting education. By positioning Brotherhood Capital as an integrative construct, the figure highlights its role in addressing overlooked relational outcomes and providing a mechanism through which collective identity can be transformed into enduring developmental resources.

3. Reconceptualizing Brotherhood in Scouting

3.1 Moving Beyond Belonging, Cohesion, and Social Capital

Although brotherhood has long been recognized as a defining value of scouting, it remains conceptually underdeveloped within academic literature. Existing studies commonly rely on concepts such as belonging, social support, peer connectedness, group cohesion, and collective identity to explain positive social outcomes in youth organizations (Allen *et al.*, 2018; Bouchard *et al.*, 2023a; Cameron, 2004). While these constructs provide valuable insights into interpersonal relationships, they do not fully capture the distinctive moral and relational dimensions associated with scouting brotherhood.

Belonging generally refers to an individual's perception of being accepted, respected, and valued within a group (Allen *et al.*, 2018). Cohesion emphasizes the forces that bind members together and sustain commitment to collective activities (Eys *et al.*, 2009). Social identity focuses on self-definition through group membership (Leach *et al.*, 2008), while social support highlights the availability of emotional and instrumental assistance from others (Schaefer *et al.*, 2011). Each of these concepts contributes to understanding group dynamics, yet they tend to emphasize specific dimensions of social relationships rather than the broader relational system through which communities generate enduring developmental benefits.

The limitations become particularly evident in scouting contexts. Scouting does not merely encourage young people to participate in the same activities or maintain positive peer relationships. Members are expected to uphold shared values, demonstrate mutual responsibility, support collective welfare, and contribute to the development of others. Brotherhood therefore represents a stronger and more enduring form of relational commitment than simple affiliation or social connectedness. It reflects a collective orientation in which individual interests become intertwined with the well-being of the broader community.

The concept also extends beyond traditional understandings of social capital. Social capital literature generally emphasizes the resources embedded within social networks, trust, reciprocity, and norms of cooperation (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). Bonding social capital, in particular, highlights the benefits derived from strong interpersonal relationships among members of relatively homogeneous groups. While this perspective provides a useful foundation, scouting brotherhood involves more than access to relational resources. It incorporates moral commitments, collective responsibility, service-oriented values, and identity-based obligations that transcend instrumental exchanges.

Consequently, brotherhood should be understood not simply as an interpersonal outcome but as a collective developmental resource embedded within a value-based community. Such a perspective shifts attention from individual experiences of belonging toward the broader relational infrastructure that sustains collective learning, cooperation, leadership development, and civic engagement. This distinction is important because educational outcomes are often evaluated in terms of individual competencies and achievements while overlooking the relational assets that make those outcomes possible.

Recent developmental systems perspectives similarly emphasize that positive youth development emerges through dynamic interactions between individuals and their social environments (Lerner *et al.*, 2005). From this viewpoint, relational resources are not peripheral outcomes but central developmental assets that facilitate adaptation, engagement, and contribution. The concept of brotherhood therefore warrants theoretical recognition as a distinct educational resource rather than merely a by-product of participation.

The distinctions among existing relational constructs remain insufficient for explaining the unique social and moral commitments embedded within scouting communities. The following comparison clarifies the conceptual boundaries of Brotherhood Capital and highlights its distinctive contribution to educational and youth development scholarship.

Table 1. Comparative Positioning of Brotherhood Capital

Construct	Primary Focus	Relational Strength	Moral Commitment	Collective Responsibility	Developmental Function
Belonging	Feeling accepted and valued within a group	Moderate	Low	Low	Psychological comfort and inclusion
Group Cohesion	Unity and attraction among group members	High	Low	Moderate	Group stability and persistence
Social Support	Emotional and instrumental assistance	Moderate	Low	Low	Coping and well-being
Social Capital	Resources embedded in social networks	High	Moderate	Moderate	Access to opportunities and cooperation
Brotherhood Capital	Shared identity-based relational asset	Very High	Very High	Very High	Relational infrastructure for collective development

Source: Developed by the authors based on Allen et al. (2018), Coleman (1988), Putnam (2000), Leach et al. (2008), and the present conceptual framework.

Table 1 demonstrates that Brotherhood Capital extends beyond conventional relational constructs by integrating identity-based attachment, trust, moral commitment, collective responsibility, and service orientation into a unified developmental resource. This positioning establishes its theoretical distinctiveness and justifies its introduction as a novel construct within scouting and youth development research.

3.2 Defining Brotherhood Capital

To address these conceptual limitations, this article introduces the construct of Brotherhood Capital.

Brotherhood Capital is defined as:

the collective social and moral resource generated through shared scout identity, mutual trust, collective responsibility, and commitment to common scouting values, which enables members to cooperate, support one another, and pursue collective growth beyond individual interests.

This definition emphasizes several important characteristics.

First, Brotherhood Capital is inherently collective rather than individual. Unlike personal competencies, leadership skills, or psychological attributes, it exists within relationships among members and emerges through social interaction. Its value therefore resides not in individual possession but in the quality of connections that bind members together. This characteristic aligns with social identity perspectives that view group membership as a source of shared meaning and coordinated action (Ellemers *et al.*, 2002; Tajfel *et al.*, 1971).

Second, Brotherhood Capital is relational. Its benefits derive from trust, reciprocity, mutual commitment, and shared expectations among members. Similar to broader forms of relational capital, its effectiveness depends upon the quality of interpersonal relationships rather than formal organizational arrangements. However, Brotherhood Capital differs from

conventional relational capital because it is explicitly grounded in collective identity and value-based commitments rather than purely instrumental exchanges.

Third, Brotherhood Capital possesses a moral dimension. Members are connected not merely because they interact frequently but because they share commitments to common principles and collective welfare. This moral foundation distinguishes Brotherhood Capital from many existing conceptualizations of social capital that primarily emphasize network resources and cooperative norms.

Fourth, Brotherhood Capital is developmental. It contributes to positive youth outcomes by creating environments characterized by belonging, trust, participation, responsibility, and service. Such environments provide developmental assets that facilitate leadership growth, resilience, civic engagement, and psychosocial well-being (Lerner *et al.*, 2005; Scales *et al.*, 2000).

Finally, Brotherhood Capital is context-sensitive and potentially fragile. Because it depends upon shared identity and collective commitment, it may be strengthened by cooperative experiences while simultaneously weakened by processes that encourage excessive social comparison, internal differentiation, or individualistic competition. This characteristic makes the construct particularly relevant for understanding contemporary scouting environments.

The proposed construct encompasses multiple relational and moral elements that collectively explain how scouting communities generate enduring developmental resources. The following conceptualization organizes these elements into an integrated multidimensional framework.

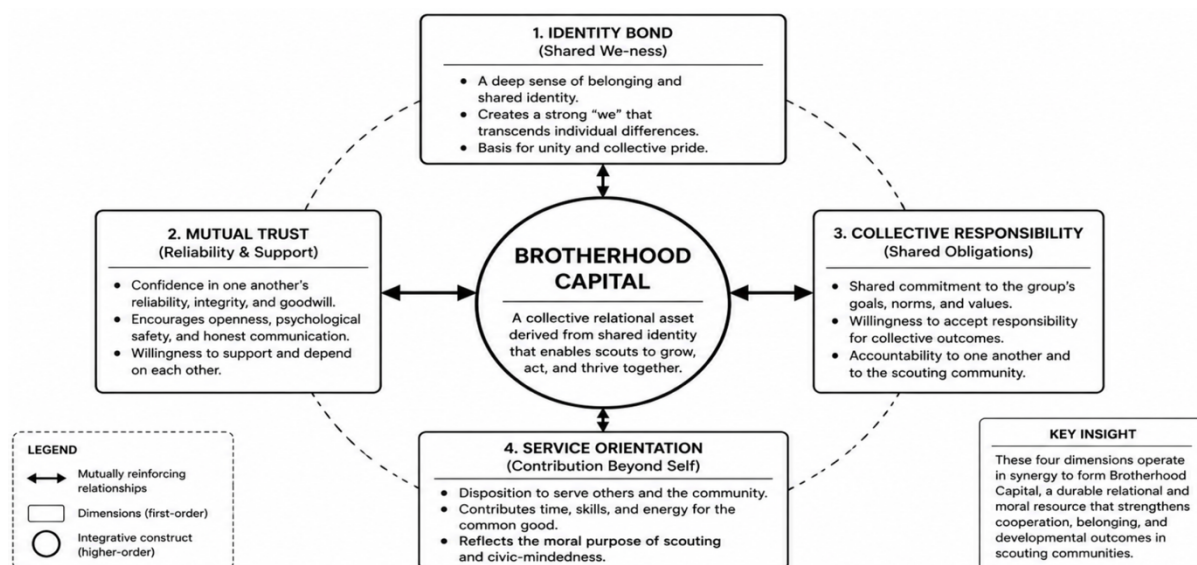


Figure 2. Dimensions of Brotherhood Capital

Source: Developed by the authors based on Social Identity Theory, Positive Youth Development, relational capital perspectives, and the present conceptual framework.

Figure 2 illustrates Brotherhood Capital as a higher-order relational construct composed of four mutually reinforcing dimensions: Identity Bond, Mutual Trust, Collective Responsibility, and Service Orientation. Together, these dimensions explain how collective identity is transformed into a durable social and moral resource that supports cooperation, belonging, developmental engagement, and long-term commitment within scouting communities.

3.3 Dimensions of Brotherhood Capital

Building upon Social Identity Theory, Positive Youth Development, and relational capital perspectives, Brotherhood Capital can be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct consisting of four interrelated dimensions.

1) Identity Bond

The first dimension is Identity Bond, which refers to the strength of members' psychological attachment to the scout community.

Social identity research consistently demonstrates that strong identification promotes commitment, solidarity, cooperation, and collective action (Hogg, 2001; Leach *et al.*, 2008). Within scouting, identity bonds emerge through shared rituals, traditions, symbols, uniforms, stories, and collective experiences. These elements create a sense of “we-ness” that transcends individual differences and reinforces perceptions of common purpose.

Identity Bond represents the foundational dimension of Brotherhood Capital because collective relationships cannot be sustained without a shared sense of who “we” are as a community.

2) Mutual Trust

The second dimension is Mutual Trust, defined as the expectation that fellow scouts will act in ways that are supportive, reliable, and consistent with shared values.

Trust is widely recognized as a cornerstone of cooperative relationships because it reduces uncertainty and facilitates collective action (Deutsch, 1949). Educational research similarly demonstrates that trust enhances communication, collaboration, and psychological safety among participants. In scouting environments, trust develops through repeated experiences of teamwork, outdoor challenges, shared responsibilities, and mutual dependence.

Mutual Trust transforms group membership from symbolic affiliation into meaningful social commitment. It enables members to rely on one another not only during routine activities but also in situations involving uncertainty, challenge, and risk.

3) Collective Responsibility

The third dimension is Collective Responsibility, which reflects members' willingness to contribute to group welfare and accept responsibility for collective outcomes.

Identity leadership scholars argue that strong collective identities encourage members to prioritize group interests and engage in cooperative behavior (Haslam *et al.*, 2010; Steffens *et al.*, 2014). Within scouting, collective responsibility is expressed through teamwork, leadership, service, and commitment to shared goals. Members recognize that group success depends upon collective contribution rather than individual accomplishment alone.

This dimension distinguishes Brotherhood Capital from forms of belonging that emphasize emotional attachment without corresponding obligations. Brotherhood implies responsibility as well as connection.

4) Service Orientation

The fourth dimension is Service Orientation, defined as the commitment to helping others and contributing to the broader community.

Service has historically been one of the defining principles of scouting education. Positive youth development literature similarly identifies contribution and civic engagement as central indicators of healthy development (Catalano *et al.*, 2004; Lerner *et al.*, 2005). Service Orientation therefore represents the outward expression of Brotherhood Capital, extending relational commitments beyond the immediate group.

Through service, brotherhood becomes more than an internal organizational resource. It becomes a mechanism through which collective identity generates positive social impact for communities and society.

3.4 Brotherhood Capital as a Relational Educational Asset

Taken together, these four dimensions suggest that Brotherhood Capital represents a distinctive form of relational educational asset embedded within scouting communities. It combines identity-based belonging, interpersonal trust, collective responsibility, and service-oriented commitment into a coherent social and moral resource that supports both individual and collective development.

Viewed from a developmental systems perspective, Brotherhood Capital functions as a contextual asset that facilitates adaptive developmental regulation. The availability of strong relational resources enables young people to access emotional support, mentoring opportunities, collective efficacy, social learning, and meaningful participation. These experiences create conditions that support resilience, leadership development, civic engagement, and long-term commitment to prosocial values.

Unlike traditional measures of educational success that focus primarily on performance outcomes, Brotherhood Capital captures the relational infrastructure through which developmental outcomes are generated. It helps explain why scouting experiences often produce enduring friendships, sustained civic participation, and lasting commitments to community service long after formal participation has ended.

Importantly, conceptualizing brotherhood as capital also highlights its vulnerability. Like other forms of social and relational capital, Brotherhood Capital requires continuous investment and maintenance. Educational environments that strengthen shared identity, cooperation, and collective purpose may increase this resource, whereas environments characterized by excessive social comparison, status differentiation, and individualistic recognition may gradually erode it.

Understanding these dynamics is therefore essential for explaining how contemporary scouting organizations can preserve their educational mission while operating within increasingly competitive contexts. The next section develops a conceptual framework explaining how competitive intensity may influence social comparison processes, identity fragmentation, and ultimately the accumulation or erosion of Brotherhood Capital.

4. Proposed Framework and Proposition Development

4.1 Towards a Competitive Pressure–Brotherhood Capital Framework

The preceding discussion established that Brotherhood Capital represents a collective social and moral resource emerging from shared identity, mutual trust, collective responsibility, and service orientation. However, the value of introducing a new construct lies not only in defining it but also in explaining the mechanisms through which it is accumulated, maintained, and potentially eroded.

This article argues that one of the most significant contemporary influences on Brotherhood Capital is the increasing institutionalization of competitive practices within scouting environments. Although competition has historically existed as one component of scouting programs, contemporary educational cultures increasingly emphasize measurable achievement, rankings, awards, and external recognition. As a result, competitive performance may become a dominant reference point through which scouts evaluate themselves, their peers, and their groups.

Importantly, the proposed framework does not assume that competition is inherently detrimental. Rather, it suggests that the developmental consequences of competition depend on the psychological and relational processes it activates. Competitive environments can stimulate excellence, persistence, and achievement. However, they may also intensify social

comparison, reshape identity priorities, and alter patterns of interpersonal interaction. These processes can ultimately influence the accumulation or erosion of Brotherhood Capital.

The proposed framework explains how competitive environments influence developmental outcomes through a sequence of identity-based and relational mechanisms. It highlights the processes through which competition shapes collective identity and ultimately affects the accumulation of relational resources within scouting communities.

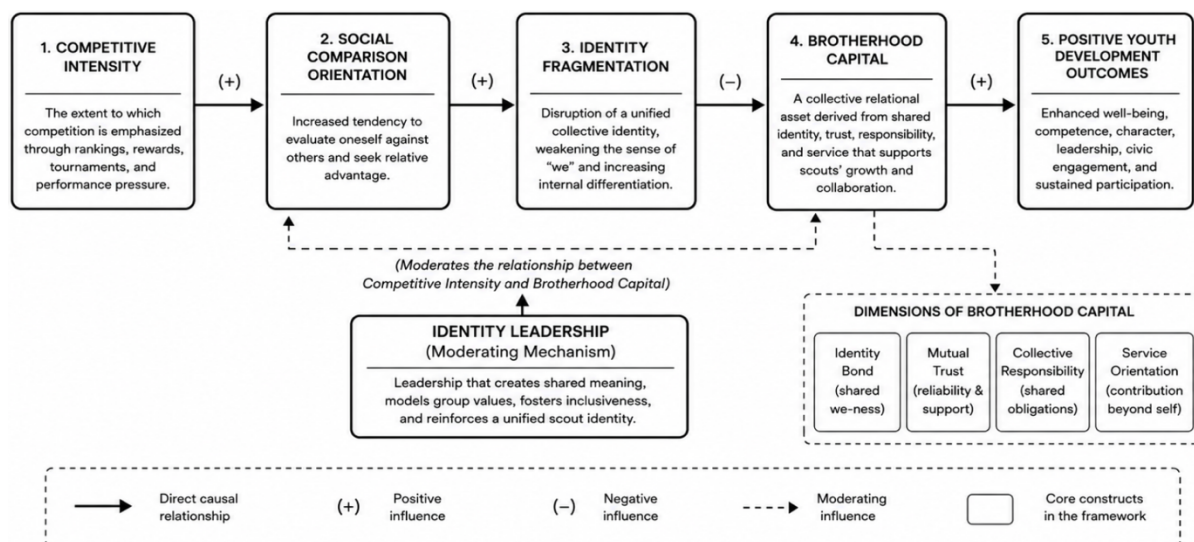


Figure 3. Competitive Pressure–Brotherhood Capital Framework

Source: Developed by the authors based on Social Identity Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, Identity Leadership Theory, Positive Youth Development, and the present conceptual framework.

Figure 3 illustrates the central theoretical argument of this article. Competitive intensity increases social comparison orientation, which contributes to identity fragmentation and subsequently affects Brotherhood Capital. The framework further proposes that Brotherhood Capital promotes positive youth development outcomes, while identity leadership serves as a protective mechanism that mitigates potentially divisive competitive pressures.

4.2 Competitive Intensity and Social Comparison Orientation

The first stage of the framework concerns the relationship between competitive intensity and social comparison orientation.

Achievement Goal Theory argues that educational environments influence how individuals define and evaluate success (Ames, 1992; Elliot & McGregor, 2001). Mastery-oriented environments encourage self-improvement, learning, and competence development, whereas performance-oriented environments encourage evaluation based on relative standing and comparative achievement. Consequently, the structure of educational experiences shapes not only behavior but also the criteria individuals use to assess themselves and others.

Within scouting contexts, competitive intensity refers to the degree to which activities emphasize comparative performance, external recognition, rankings, awards, and achievement-based differentiation among participants or groups. Examples include competition-centered events, public rankings, elite recognition systems, and evaluation practices that disproportionately reward winning over learning.

As competitive intensity increases, participants become more likely to evaluate themselves through comparison with others rather than through personal growth or collective progress. This tendency reflects what social psychologists describe as social comparison orientation, namely the predisposition to assess one's value, competence, and success relative to other individuals or groups.

This process is particularly important during adolescence because identity formation remains highly sensitive to peer evaluation, social status, and recognition. When competitive distinctions become increasingly salient, young people may shift attention away from collective participation and toward comparative positioning within the group. Such shifts alter the social meaning of participation and potentially redefine relationships among members.

Self-Determination Theory provides additional support for this argument. Excessive emphasis on external evaluation may redirect attention away from intrinsic developmental goals and toward performance validation, thereby increasing dependence on comparative judgments (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

Accordingly:

Proposition 1: *Higher levels of competitive intensity increase social comparison orientation among scouts.*

4.3 Social Comparison Orientation and Identity Fragmentation

The second stage of the framework addresses the consequences of social comparison for collective identity.

Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals derive meaning, belonging, and psychological security from membership in valued groups (Ellemers *et al.*, 2002; Tajfel *et al.*, 1971). Strong collective identification promotes solidarity, cooperation, and shared commitment because members perceive themselves as part of a common social entity. However, the salience of collective identity is not fixed. It is continuously shaped by social contexts and evaluative processes.

When social comparison becomes a dominant feature of participation, members increasingly focus on distinctions among individuals and groups. Attention shifts toward relative status, performance differences, prestige, and competitive standing. Such processes encourage members to define themselves through differentiation rather than commonality.

This article conceptualizes identity fragmentation as the gradual weakening of a shared collective identity resulting from increased emphasis on internal differentiation, comparative status, and performance-based distinctions. Identity fragmentation does not imply the disappearance of group identity. Rather, it refers to a reduction in the integrative power of collective identification and a corresponding increase in subgroup, individual, or status-based identities.

Research on social identity and intergroup relations suggests that strong internal differentiation can reduce perceptions of common identity and weaken social cohesion (Brewer, 1991; Gaertner *et al.*, 1993; Hewstone *et al.*, 2002). Within scouting environments, excessive comparison may create symbolic divisions between successful and unsuccessful groups, highly skilled and less skilled members, or elite and ordinary participants.

Over time, such distinctions may undermine the sense of common purpose traditionally associated with scouting communities. Members may continue to belong to the same organization while experiencing weaker feelings of unity, solidarity, and mutual obligation.

Therefore:

Proposition 2: *Social comparison orientation positively contributes to identity fragmentation within scouting communities.*

4.4 Identity Fragmentation and Brotherhood Capital

The third stage of the framework explains how changes in collective identity influence Brotherhood Capital.

As argued in the previous section, Brotherhood Capital is fundamentally rooted in shared identity. Identity Bond serves as the foundation upon which Mutual Trust, Collective Responsibility, and Service Orientation are built. Consequently, processes that weaken collective identification are likely to influence the broader structure of Brotherhood Capital.

Identity leadership research consistently demonstrates that collective identity strengthens trust, cooperation, commitment, and willingness to act on behalf of the group (Haslam *et al.*, 2010; Steffens *et al.*, 2014). Conversely, fragmented identities often reduce social cohesion and limit collective action because members become less likely to perceive collective welfare as personally relevant.

Identity fragmentation affects Brotherhood Capital through several pathways. First, it weakens Identity Bond by reducing perceptions of common membership and shared purpose. Second, it diminishes Mutual Trust because members increasingly evaluate one another through competitive rather than collaborative lenses. Third, it reduces Collective Responsibility by encouraging self-interest and status preservation. Finally, it weakens Service Orientation because attention becomes concentrated on individual advancement rather than collective contribution.

Identity fragmentation may also reduce opportunities for informal mentoring, peer learning, and collaborative knowledge sharing. As interpersonal relationships become increasingly stratified by performance status, developmental benefits traditionally associated with collective participation may become less accessible to members.

Therefore:

Proposition 3: *Identity fragmentation negatively affects the development and maintenance of Brotherhood Capital.*

4.5 Brotherhood Capital and Positive Youth Development Outcomes

The framework further proposes that Brotherhood Capital contributes significantly to positive youth development outcomes.

Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspectives emphasize that healthy development emerges through the interaction between individual strengths and developmental assets embedded within social environments (Catalano *et al.*, 2004; Lerner *et al.*, 2005). Development is therefore not solely determined by personal characteristics but also by access to supportive relationships, meaningful participation, opportunities for contribution, and positive social contexts.

Brotherhood Capital provides precisely these developmental conditions.

Identity Bond generates belonging and psychological security. Mutual Trust facilitates cooperation, emotional support, and social learning. Collective Responsibility promotes leadership development and accountability. Service Orientation encourages civic engagement, contribution, and prosocial behavior.

From this perspective, Brotherhood Capital functions as a relational mechanism linking participation experiences to developmental outcomes. Rather than assuming that participation automatically produces positive effects, the framework suggests that benefits emerge because participation generates relational resources that support development.

This argument aligns with growing evidence that belonging, connectedness, and supportive relationships are among the strongest predictors of resilience, well-being, engagement, and civic participation among young people (Allen *et al.*, 2018; Bouchard *et al.*, 2023b; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2024).

Accordingly:

Proposition 4: *Higher levels of Brotherhood Capital positively contribute to positive youth development outcomes.*

4.6 The Moderating Role of Identity Leadership

Although competition may create conditions that encourage social comparison and identity fragmentation, these outcomes are not inevitable. The framework proposes that identity leadership moderates the relationship between competitive intensity and Brotherhood Capital.

Identity leadership theory emphasizes leaders' ability to create, represent, advance, and embed a shared sense of collective identity (Haslam *et al.*, 2010; Steffens *et al.*, 2014). Effective leaders continually reinforce common values, shared goals, and collective purpose, thereby reducing the likelihood that members define themselves solely through competitive distinctions.

Within scouting, leaders occupy a particularly influential position because they shape how competition is interpreted. Competitive activities can be framed as opportunities for learning, mastery, teamwork, and collective growth rather than as mechanisms for status differentiation. Through such framing processes, leaders help preserve the salience of collective identity even when competitive pressures increase.

Recent evidence suggests that identity-centered leadership strengthens belonging, cohesion, trust, and collective commitment across educational, organizational, and sport (Butalia *et al.*, 2024; Haslam *et al.*, 2022; Steffens *et al.*, 2021). These findings indicate that leadership may function as a protective mechanism that buffers groups against the potentially divisive consequences of excessive competition.

Therefore:

Proposition 5: *Identity leadership weakens the negative relationship between competitive intensity and Brotherhood Capital.*

To improve conceptual clarity and facilitate interpretation of the proposed model, the major theoretical propositions are summarized below. This synthesis highlights the causal logic linking competition, identity processes, relational resources, and developmental outcomes.

Table 2. Theoretical Propositions Underpinning the Competition Orientation Framework

	Proposition & Proposed Relationship	Direction	Primary Theoretical Foundation
P1	Competitive Intensity → Social Comparison Orientation	Positive (+)	Achievement Goal Theory; Self-Determination Theory
P2	Social Comparison Orientation → Identity Fragmentation	Positive (+)	Social Identity Theory
P3	Identity Fragmentation → Brotherhood Capital	Negative (–)	Social Identity Theory; Relational Capital Perspective
P4	Brotherhood Capital → Positive Youth Development Outcomes	Positive (+)	Positive Youth Development Theory
P5	Identity Leadership moderates the relationship between Competitive Intensity and Brotherhood Capital	Buffering Effect	Identity Leadership Theory

Source: Developed by the authors based on Ames (1992), Ryan and Deci (2000), Tajfel et al. (1971), Haslam et al. (2011), Lerner et al. (2005), and the present conceptual framework.

Table 2 consolidates the framework's core propositions into a coherent theoretical sequence. The model suggests that competition influences developmental outcomes indirectly through identity-based and relational mechanisms, while identity leadership functions as a protective

factor capable of preserving Brotherhood Capital under conditions of heightened competitive pressure.

4.7 Theoretical Implications of the Framework

The proposed framework contributes to existing literature in several important ways.

First, it introduces Brotherhood Capital as a novel relational mechanism connecting scouting participation and developmental outcomes. Second, it extends Social Identity Theory by examining how competitive structures influence identity formation within educational settings. Third, it integrates Positive Youth Development and Identity Leadership perspectives into a unified model of scouting education.

Most importantly, the framework challenges the assumption that competitive success and educational success are necessarily aligned. Instead, it proposes that the relationship is conditional and mediated by identity-based and relational processes. Competitive activities may support development when they reinforce collective identity and strengthen Brotherhood Capital, but they may undermine development when they promote fragmentation and weaken the relational foundations of participation.

By positioning Brotherhood Capital as a central explanatory mechanism, the framework provides a foundation for future empirical research and offers a new theoretical lens for understanding the educational consequences of competition in scouting and other youth development contexts.

5. Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this article was to reconceptualize brotherhood within scouting education and explain how increasing competitive pressures may influence the relational foundations of scouting. Drawing upon Social Identity Theory, Identity Leadership Theory, Positive Youth Development, and relational capital perspectives, the article introduced Brotherhood Capital as a collective social and moral resource emerging from shared identity, mutual trust, collective responsibility, and service orientation. Building on this construct, the article proposed a framework linking competitive intensity, social comparison orientation, identity fragmentation, and positive youth development outcomes.

The discussion below highlights the theoretical significance of Brotherhood Capital, its implications for scouting education, and broader opportunities for future research.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

1) Repositioning Brotherhood as a Distinct Educational Outcome

One of the primary contributions of this article is the repositioning of brotherhood from a normative value to a theoretically meaningful educational outcome. Existing scouting literature and broader youth development research have predominantly emphasized outcomes such as leadership development, competence acquisition, resilience, civic engagement, and well-being (Catalano *et al.*, 2004; Holt *et al.*, 2017; Lerner *et al.*, 2005). While these outcomes remain important, they primarily focus on individual development.

The present framework suggests that educational success within scouting should also be understood in relational terms. Scouting is fundamentally a group-based educational system in which learning occurs through interaction, cooperation, and shared experiences. Consequently, the quality of relationships among members constitutes an important outcome in its own right. Brotherhood Capital provides a conceptual lens through which these relational outcomes can be understood, assessed, and integrated into broader discussions of educational effectiveness.

This contribution is particularly relevant in contemporary educational systems that increasingly prioritize measurable indicators of success. Leadership awards, certificates, rankings, and competition results are often highly visible and easily quantified. In contrast, relational outcomes such as trust, solidarity, collective responsibility, and mutual commitment are more difficult to measure and therefore frequently overlooked. By conceptualizing brotherhood as a form of capital, this article highlights its significance as an educational asset rather than merely an organizational ideal.

2) Integrating Previously Disconnected Theoretical Traditions

A second contribution lies in the integration of several theoretical traditions that have generally evolved independently.

Social Identity Theory explains how collective identification influences behavior and interpersonal relationships (Ellemers *et al.*, 2002; Tajfel *et al.*, 1971). Positive Youth Development emphasizes the importance of developmental assets, meaningful participation, and supportive environments (Lerner *et al.*, 2005). Identity Leadership Theory explains how leaders cultivate collective identity and strengthen cohesion (Haslam *et al.*, 2010; Steffens *et al.*, 2014). Meanwhile, social and relational capital perspectives highlight the value of trust, reciprocity, and cooperative relationships within communities (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000b).

Although each perspective offers valuable insights, they have rarely been integrated into a unified framework for understanding scouting education. The concept of Brotherhood Capital provides a bridge among these traditions. Social identity supplies the psychological foundation, identity leadership explains how collective identity is sustained, relational capital explains how social resources emerge, and Positive Youth Development clarifies how such resources contribute to developmental outcomes.

This integration contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how educational experiences simultaneously shape individual development and collective well-being.

3) Identifying a Relational Mechanism Linking Participation and Development

A third contribution concerns the identification of a previously underexplored mechanism connecting participation and developmental outcomes.

Research consistently reports positive developmental effects associated with organized youth activities, extracurricular participation, and community engagement (Bruner *et al.*, 2023; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Mahoney *et al.*, 2003). However, the processes through which participation generates these benefits often remain insufficiently specified.

The concept of Brotherhood Capital helps address this limitation by proposing a relational pathway through which participation influences development. The framework suggests that participation contributes to positive outcomes because it generates identity-based relational resources characterized by belonging, trust, responsibility, and service. These resources subsequently create conditions that support leadership development, resilience, civic engagement, and psychosocial well-being.

From this perspective, developmental benefits do not arise automatically from participation itself. Rather, they emerge because participation strengthens the relational infrastructure that supports learning, growth, and contribution.

4) Reconceptualizing Competition in Educational Contexts

Perhaps the most significant theoretical contribution concerns the reconceptualization of competition within educational environments.

Educational debates frequently portray competition as either beneficial or harmful. The present framework challenges this binary perspective. Competition is not conceptualized as

inherently positive or negative. Instead, its developmental consequences depend on how it shapes collective identity and relational resources.

This distinction has important implications. A scouting unit may achieve impressive competitive success while simultaneously experiencing declining trust, weaker solidarity, and reduced commitment to collective values. Conversely, a unit may achieve only modest competitive outcomes while maintaining strong Brotherhood Capital and generating substantial developmental benefits.

The framework therefore suggests that competitive success and educational success should not automatically be treated as synonymous outcomes. Educational effectiveness should be evaluated not only in terms of achievement but also in terms of its influence on collective identity, relationships, and moral development.

5) Brotherhood Capital as Relational Infrastructure

Beyond its role as a developmental resource, Brotherhood Capital may be understood as a form of relational infrastructure that supports the functioning of educational communities.

Infrastructure is typically associated with physical systems that enable collective activity. However, social systems also depend upon relational infrastructures composed of trust, shared norms, collective identity, reciprocity, and mutual commitment. These relational foundations create the conditions that enable cooperation, leadership development, collective problem-solving, and civic participation.

From this perspective, Brotherhood Capital represents the relational infrastructure through which scouting communities maintain continuity and developmental effectiveness over time. It provides the social architecture that allows educational values to be transmitted across generations, collective learning to occur, and members to remain committed to shared purposes despite changing circumstances.

This conceptualization broadens the significance of Brotherhood Capital beyond scouting alone. Similar relational infrastructures may exist within youth organizations, community groups, educational institutions, volunteer movements, and civic associations. Consequently, the present framework may contribute to wider discussions concerning how collective identities generate durable social and developmental resources within educational communities.

5.2 Practical Implications for Scouting Education

The framework generates several practical implications for scouting organizations, leaders, and educational institutions.

First, competition should be viewed as an educational tool rather than an educational objective. Competitive activities can provide valuable opportunities for learning, skill development, and leadership growth. However, when competitive outcomes become the dominant measure of success, there is a risk that social comparison may overshadow collective development.

Second, scouting leaders should intentionally cultivate identity-centered practices. Identity leadership research suggests that leaders strengthen cohesion by reinforcing shared values, collective goals, and common purpose (Haslam *et al.*, 2022; Steffens *et al.*, 2021). In scouting contexts, this may involve emphasizing service, teamwork, mutual support, and personal growth alongside competitive achievement.

Third, scouting organizations may benefit from adopting broader evaluation systems. Current assessment approaches frequently prioritize visible achievements such as trophies, rankings, and awards. While useful, these indicators do not adequately capture the relational dimensions of educational success. Measures of belonging, trust, cooperation, service

engagement, and collective responsibility may provide a more comprehensive assessment of organizational effectiveness.

Fourth, educational institutions that support scouting activities should recognize the importance of relational development as a legitimate educational objective. Supporting collective identity and social connectedness may be as important as promoting technical skills or leadership competencies.

5.3 Directions for Future Research

The present article is conceptual in nature and therefore opens several opportunities for empirical investigation.

The first priority concerns scale development and validation. Future studies should develop and validate measurement instruments capable of assessing the four proposed dimensions of Brotherhood Capital: Identity Bond, Mutual Trust, Collective Responsibility, and Service Orientation. Establishing construct validity will be essential for advancing empirical research.

Second, future studies should empirically test the proposed framework using quantitative methods. Structural equation modeling may be particularly useful for examining relationships among competitive intensity, social comparison orientation, identity fragmentation, Brotherhood Capital, and positive youth development outcomes.

Third, longitudinal studies are needed to investigate how Brotherhood Capital develops and changes over time. Collective identity and relational resources are dynamic phenomena that evolve through repeated participation and social interaction.

Fourth, comparative studies across countries, cultures, and scouting traditions could examine contextual variations in the formation and maintenance of Brotherhood Capital. Although brotherhood is widely recognized within global scouting traditions, its expression may vary across social and cultural settings.

Finally, future research should examine the moderating role of identity leadership. The present framework proposes that identity leadership can buffer groups against the potentially divisive effects of excessive competition. Empirical investigation is needed to determine when and under what conditions this protective mechanism is most effective.

Taken together, these research directions suggest that Brotherhood Capital has the potential to become a meaningful construct within scouting education, youth development, and nonformal learning research. By providing a theoretical foundation for future inquiry, this article seeks to stimulate a broader scholarly conversation regarding the relational dimensions of educational success and the conditions under which collective identities contribute to sustainable developmental outcomes.

6. Conclusion

This article addressed an important yet insufficiently explored question within scouting education: how increasing competitive pressures influence the relational foundations that have historically distinguished scouting as a character-oriented and community-based form of youth development. Although brotherhood is widely recognized as a core scouting value, existing scholarship has largely focused on individual developmental outcomes such as leadership, competence, resilience, and civic engagement, while providing limited theoretical explanation of how collective relational bonds are formed, maintained, or weakened within contemporary scouting environments. Furthermore, prior research has tended to examine belonging, cohesion, trust, leadership, and youth development as separate constructs, leaving a significant gap in understanding the mechanisms through which collective identity is transformed into enduring developmental resources. In response to this gap, the present

study sought to reconceptualize brotherhood as a theoretically meaningful educational construct and to develop an integrative framework explaining how competitive environments may shape the accumulation or erosion of relational assets within scouting communities.

The central contribution of this study lies in the introduction of Brotherhood Capital as a novel conceptual construct. Rather than treating brotherhood as a normative ideal, cultural tradition, or informal social outcome, this article conceptualizes it as a collective social and moral resource generated through shared identity, mutual trust, collective responsibility, and service orientation. This reconceptualization extends existing literature by positioning brotherhood as a form of relational educational asset that not only emerges from participation but also functions as a mechanism through which participation produces developmental outcomes. In doing so, the study contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations concerning social identity, positive youth development, identity leadership, and relational capital by integrating these previously disconnected perspectives into a coherent explanatory framework.

The proposed Competitive Pressure–Brotherhood Capital Framework further advances current knowledge by explaining how competition may influence developmental outcomes through a sequence of identity-based and relational processes. Specifically, the framework proposes that competitive intensity increases social comparison orientation, which in turn contributes to identity fragmentation and subsequently weakens Brotherhood Capital. At the same time, the model identifies identity leadership as a critical moderating mechanism capable of protecting collective identity and preserving relational resources under conditions of heightened competition. By locating Brotherhood Capital at the center of this process, the framework moves beyond simplistic assumptions that competition is inherently beneficial or harmful and instead demonstrates that its developmental consequences depend on how it shapes collective identity and social relationships. This perspective offers a more nuanced understanding of educational effectiveness by distinguishing competitive achievement from relational and developmental success.

The study also contributes theoretically by extending Social Identity Theory into the domain of nonformal youth education, highlighting how collective identities can function as generators of durable developmental resources rather than merely sources of group affiliation. In addition, it broadens Positive Youth Development scholarship by emphasizing that developmental benefits emerge not only through individual competencies and opportunities for participation but also through the quality of relational infrastructures embedded within youth communities. The concept of Brotherhood Capital therefore provides a new lens through which scholars may examine how educational organizations cultivate trust, solidarity, responsibility, and service as collective developmental assets.

Beyond its theoretical relevance, the framework carries important practical implications for scouting organizations, youth leaders, educators, and policymakers. The findings suggest that competitive activities should be designed and evaluated not solely according to performance outcomes but also according to their effects on collective identity and relational development. Leaders play a particularly important role in shaping how competition is interpreted and experienced by participants. Identity-centered leadership practices that emphasize shared purpose, cooperation, service, and collective growth may help preserve Brotherhood Capital even in highly competitive environments. More broadly, educational institutions may benefit from adopting assessment systems that recognize relational outcomes—such as trust, belonging, cooperation, and collective responsibility—as legitimate indicators of educational success alongside conventional measures of achievement and performance.

At the same time, several limitations should be acknowledged. As a conceptual study, the article does not provide empirical evidence for the proposed relationships and therefore cannot establish causal validity. Brotherhood Capital remains a newly introduced construct

whose dimensional structure and measurement properties require empirical verification. Similarly, the proposed propositions and moderating relationships have not yet been tested across different scouting contexts, age groups, or cultural settings. These limitations, however, should be viewed not as weaknesses of the framework but as opportunities for future theory development and empirical refinement.

Future research should therefore focus on developing and validating measurement scales for Brotherhood Capital, testing the proposed framework through quantitative and longitudinal designs, and examining the construct across diverse organizational and cultural contexts. Comparative studies involving scouting organizations, youth movements, volunteer associations, and other nonformal educational settings may further illuminate the conditions under which Brotherhood Capital emerges and persists. Future scholars may also explore additional antecedents, mediators, and moderators that influence the relationship between competition and relational development, thereby extending the explanatory power of the present framework.

Ultimately, this study argues that the future effectiveness of scouting cannot be evaluated solely by the achievements it produces but must also be assessed by the relationships it sustains. In an era increasingly characterized by performance metrics, rankings, and competitive pressures, preserving the social and moral foundations of youth development becomes both an educational and societal imperative. By introducing Brotherhood Capital as a relational infrastructure that connects collective identity, developmental experiences, and long-term social contribution, this article offers a new theoretical foundation for understanding how youth organizations can remain both competitive and community-centered. More broadly, it suggests that the enduring strength of educational communities may depend not merely on how successfully they cultivate excellence, but on how effectively they preserve the bonds that enable individuals to grow, contribute, and flourish together.

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