



BUILDING EVIDENCE IN SCOUTING TOGETHER

BSA BEST STUDY DATA USE RETREAT

November 1 & 2, 2019

Introduction



BEST Study: How We Collected Our Data

BEST Surveys

624 Scouts BSA troops were recruited for Wave 1 of the BEST Study between late 2018 and May 2019; this included 601 Scoutmasters and 1067 Assistant Scoutmasters. Only troops registering at least 5 Scouts were enrolled in the study. From April to June 2019, Scouts and Scouters of enrolled troops were asked to take an online survey; the adult participants were asked questions related to basic demographic information, the adult's scouting experiences as a youth and as an adult (including attendance at and perceptions of training modules), and a host of program outcome constructs such as embracing the BSA culture and encouraging and supporting youth leadership.

BEST Interviews

110 Scoutmasters and assistant Scoutmasters were recruited from four regions of the country: Northeast (n = 24), Central (n = 28), Southern (n = 30) and Western (n = 28). Adult participants were purposively selected from each region for us to receive a wide range of responses and experiences. For example, we interviewed male and female adult leaders, leaders with varying years of experience, from diverse or homogeneous troops, with high and low socioeconomic status, and from diverse religious and racial backgrounds.

Trained and experienced interviewers conducted audio-recorded phone interviews using a semi-structured measure. Questions were scripted in advance, including follow up verbal probe questions. Interviewers also asked spontaneous questions to gather more information when needed. The interview protocol consisted of 36 items and asked the leaders about a variety of topics including items related to their leadership, training, how BSA resources are used, shared experiences with Scouts, challenging Scouts, relationships with other leaders, parents, and district and/council members, racial and cultural diversity, and youth leadership. The length of the interviews ranged from 35 to 150 minutes, with most taking 60 to 90 minutes.

BEST Observations





Observations of Scoutmaster Specific and Wood Badge trainings were conducted by a team of five researchers. Researchers recruited training sites in each of the four BSA regions. Four Scoutmaster Specific Trainings were observed (3 northeastern region, 1 western region), and were observed in their entirety by researchers. Nine Wood Badge trainings were observed (1 northeastern, 4 southern, 2 central, and 2 western); two observed trainings were pilot courses for the revised Wood Badge syllabus. During observations, researchers witnessed 14 training segments, including seven instructional presentations, four group activities, two Troop Meeting simulations, and an interfaith

worship service. Researchers drafted approximately 1,800 pages of detailed field notes describing training content and delivery methods, noting congruence and divergence with the observed training’s syllabus. The team also collected approximately 400 pages of training documents, including participant handbooks, songbooks, training newsletters, and any other documents trainers shared with the team.

Basic demographic information, full sample and interview sample

Demographic characteristic	Group	Full sample		Interview sample	
		n	%	n	%
Role	SM	598	36.0%	66	60.0%
	ASM	1065	64.0%	44	40.0%
Years in their current role	Average years	9.7		10.6	
Participated in scouting as a youth	Yes	1300	78.2%	97	88.2%
	No	363	21.8%	13	11.8%
Member of OA	Yes	975	58.6%	71	64.5%
	No	688	41.4%	39	35.5%
Gender	Male	1460	89.5%	94	85.5%
	Female/ other	172	10.5%	16	14.5%
Age	Average age	50.5		51.6	
Race/ ethnicity	White	1511	92.3%	98	89.1%
	Non-white	126	7.7%	12	10.9%
Religion	Christian	1386	83.3%	89	80.9%
	Other	277	16.7%	21	19.1%
Education	College graduate	1089	66.9%	78	70.9%
	Not a college graduate	540	33.1%	32	29.1%
Employment	Employed	1434	87.8%	97	88.2%
	Not employed	199	12.2%	13	11.8%
Income	≥ \$100,000	947	62.1%	67	64.4%
	< \$100,000	579	37.9%	37	35.6%
Marital status	Married	1428	87.6%	93	84.5%
	Not married	202	12.4%	17	15.5%
Child in scouting	Yes	1180	71.0%	74	67.3%
	No	483	29.0%	36	32.7%

BSA Trainings at a Glance

												
Demographics	Role	Attend	%	Role	Attend	%	Role	Attend	%	Role	Attend	%
	SM	588	98%	SM	585	98%	SM	556	93%	SM	329	55%
	ASM	1037	97%	ASM	861	81%	ASM	752	71%	ASM	313	29%
	Avg Years in Role	7.6		Avg Years in Role	10.3		Avg Years in Role	10.3		Avg Years in Role	12.8	
	OA	962	99%	OA	888	91%	OA	823	84%	OA	494	77%
	Avg Age	50.6		Avg Age	51.3		Avg Age	51.4		Avg Age	53	
	Male	1431	98%	Male	1282	88%	Male	1163	78%	Male	562	39%
	Female/other	165	96%	Female/other	141	82%	Female/other	126	73%	Female/other	72	42%
	White	1478	98%	White	1318	87%	White	1194	79%	White	576	38%
	Non-white	122	97%	Non-white	109	87%	Non-white	98	78%	Non-white	59	47%
	Child in scouting	1154	98%	Child in scouting	1020	86%	Child in scouting	918	78%	Child in scouting	389	52%
Training Benefits	Knowledge or skills gained Convenient			Knowledge or skills gained Access to other participants			Knowledge or skills gained Access to other participants Hands on experience			Knowledge or skills gained Hands on experience Access to other participants		
Training Drawbacks	Time consuming Website issues			Repetitive or redundant			Repetitive or redundant			Time consuming		

*Percentages based on the total sample for each group; e.g. 81% of ASMs took SMST

Training gives you knowledge. Knowledge gives you confidence [...] in leading.

Boy Scout training is some of the best in the world.

Boy Scouts have some very, very good training. They have more information than I think just about any other organization. If it's out there, the Boy Scouts cover it and have it somewhere for you.