



BUILDING EVIDENCE IN SCOUTING TOGETHER

BSA BEST STUDY DATA USE RETREAT

November 1 & 2, 2019

Wood Badge



MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY
Institute for Research on Youth
Thriving and Evaluation



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Wood Badge

Survey Findings

- **38.6%** of adult leaders took Wood Badge
- Scouters who were Christian were more likely to find Wood Badge **very useful** or **extremely useful**



- **86.4%** of adult leaders said that Wood Badge was **very useful** or **extremely useful**

Role, membership in OA, and age were significant predictors of attending Wood Badge

Table of demographic characteristics of scouts who attended Wood Badge.

Demographic characteristic	Group	Full sample				Statistical significance
		Did attend the training		Did not attend the training		
		n	%	n	%	
Role	SM	329	55.0%	269	45.0%	< 0.001
	ASM	313	29.4%	752	70.6%	
Adult leaders who took Wood Badge were more likely to be SMs than ASMs						
Years in their current role	Average years	12.8		7.7		< 0.001
Adult leaders who took Wood Badge were more likely to be in their role for longer						
Participated in scouting as a youth	Yes	514	39.5%	786	60.5%	NS
	No	128	35.3%	235	64.7%	
Member of OA	Yes	494	76.9%	148	23.1%	< 0.001
	No	481	47.1%	540	52.9%	
Adult leaders who took Wood Badge were more likely to be members of OA						
Gender	Male	562	38.5%	898	61.5%	NS
	Female/ other	72	41.9%	100	58.1%	
Age	Average age	53		48.8		< 0.001
Adult leaders who took Wood Badge were more likely to be older						
Race/ ethnicity	White	576	38.1%	935	61.9%	NS
	Non-white	59	46.8%	67	53.2%	
Religion	Christian	549	39.6%	837	60.4%	NS
	Other	93	33.6%	184	66.4%	
Education	College graduate	434	39.9%	655	60.1%	NS
	Not a college graduate	200	37.0%	340	63.0%	
Employment	Employed	516	36.0%	918	64.0%	< 0.001
	Not employed	117	58.8%	82	41.2%	
Adult leaders who took Wood Badge were less likely to be employed						
Income	≥ \$100,000	362	38.2%	585	61.8%	NS
	< \$100,000	232	40.1%	347	59.9%	
Marital status	Married	551	38.6%	877	61.4%	NS
	Not married	82	40.6%	120	59.4%	
Child in scouting	Yes	389	33.0%	791	67.0%	< 0.001
	No	253	52.4%	230	47.6%	
Adult leaders who took Wood Badge were less likely to have a child in scouting						

Statistical significance based on $p < 0.05$; chi-squared test for categorical variables, one-way ANOVA for continuous variables. NS=not significant.

What do SMs/ASMs identify as benefits of training?

In interviews, adult leaders reported that Wood Badge was very beneficial to them in learning skills to **work with Scouts effectively, lead troops, build teams, and resolve conflicts.**

And then you mix in different classes of how to talk to kids and how to get them to do what you need them to do, and how to handle, you know if you have any bullying incident. [...] It really, it was really beneficial to me because it taught me a little bit more about listening to a Scout and how you perceive what the Scout's actually trying to say compared to what he's saying.

It's a lot of fun, and it's a great opportunity to brush up on some of the leadership skills that I had gained from my military experience, and then kind of refocused them more towards not military leadership in that kind of area, and brush up on some new terms and some new ideas in leadership that I hadn't yet heard.

Not specifically the EDGE method, but some of the work in terms of where a team is, and so the stages of team development. Definitely that team from Wood Badge, and then knowing what tool to use at the different stages of that teamwork.

One of the big ones is one of the skills that we were taught in Wood Badge, was conflict resolution, and really working in a team, and getting a team to perform better.

An important element of Wood Badge which came up repeatedly in interviews was the **hands-on learning**; in particular, leaders noted how the experience of Wood Badge helped them appreciate **what it is like to be a Scout.**

It puts you in that position of that Scout so you can see it more from their point of view whereas where I'm in my forties now you might've forgotten what it's like to be a 10-year-old trying to meet new kids for the first time and get along with them and work together as a troop.

Adults forget how difficult the first time they did. And by reminding yourself what that is and the things that led up to that, you become a better mentor to the Scouts, after all, being a mentor doesn't mean doing for somebody, it means providing an example. It means being a reference point. If you don't remember that reference point, you don't remember the state that their head is, then you

won't know what questions to ask them back, so that they can get through whatever the problem is, so I find that there's no other training I've been at that does as good a job as Wood Badge.

It makes us a little bit more appreciative and a little bit more sensitive to maybe what they're going through.

Another stand-out feature of Wood Badge is the opportunity it provides for leaders to **connect with other adult leaders.**

I met so many other adult leaders who were just as excited and interested in Scouts as I was. We still communicate with each other, still share ideas, or progress, like how we're doing.

And that part for me was the most enjoyable about it because you really bonded with the people you were with. So I've gained long life friends from some of these trainings that I've been to and Wood Badge was, is one of them.

What do SMs/ASMs identify as the drawbacks of training?

Leaders were extremely positive about their experiences in Wood Badge, though several noted the **significant time commitment** as a potential negative.

I'm trying to find a way to get Wood Badge training, but again, when it takes a Friday, Saturday and Sunday and with what I do for a living that's not very easy to get time off {from someone who would like to be able to go to Wood Badge but for whom the time commitment is a barrier}.

I think hands down, except that it takes so long because it takes multiple weekends and that sort of stuff.

Wood Badge Observation Findings

WB-1-West: 48 participants, 23 trainers
WB-2-South: 45 participants, 23 trainers
WB-3-South: 39 participants, 21 trainers
WB-4-Central: 55 participants, 24 trainers
WB-5-South: 36 participants, 27 trainers
WB-6-South: 42 participants, 17 trainers
WB-7-Central: 48 participants, 27 trainers
WB-8-North: 30 participants, 22 trainers
WB-9-West: 47 participants, 21 trainers

- Across the 9 trainings, participants were predominately male: 277 male (71%) vs. 113 female (29%)
- Trainers across eight of the trainings mirrored the participant gender breakdown: 144 male trainers (70%) vs. 61 female (30%).

Training segments observed

- Instructional:** Course Overview; Values, Mission, and Vision; The Leading EDGE/The Teaching EDGE; Generations in Scouting; Problem Solving and Decision Making; Coaching and Mentoring; Servant Leadership
- Activities:** Wood Badge Game Show; The Game of Life; Problem Solving Round Robin; Conservation Project
- Troop Meetings:** Observed on Days 1 and 3
- Interfaith Service:** Day 6

What variations exist in adult training implementation in Boy Scouts?

Adherence

The observation team set out to observe 13 training segments per Wood Badge course. In virtually all trainings, the selected training segments were conducted. The two exceptions reflect scheduling anomalies and conflicts rather than the absence of a training segment.

Duration

Facilitators did not appear to omit training segments, but their scheduling of segments and session duration tended to vary more. Although individual training segments did exceed the allocated time on several occasions, most were carried out in less than the allotted time; training segments on average were 12 minutes less than their syllabus recommended time. The only sessions to exceed their allotted time on average were the Wood Badge Game Show and the Day 1 Troop meeting.

The table below illustrates which individual training segments showed greater differentiation than others. Three training segments—Problem Solving and Decision Making, Conservation Project, and The Leading EDGE/The Teaching EDGE—used on average less than 75% of the allocated minutes.

Generally, adherence to duration was greater on the first weekend than the second, likely due to the higher percentage of classroom-based training segments during the first weekend. The exception to this first weekend trend with regards to duration was The Leading EDGE/The Teaching EDGE. As the table below shows, this particular training segment included minimum and maximums well under the allotted time, including a 13-minute run at one site.

Sessions Covered	Time Allotted	Average Duration	Minimum Duration	Maximum Duration
Course Overview ^[1]	30	24	17	30
Values, Mission, and Vision	60	48	40	60
Wood Badge Game Show	50	52	40	63
The Game of Life	50	48	35	60
Troop Meeting ^[2]	80	85	60	122
The Leading EDGE/The Teaching EDGE	50	28	13	38

Sessions Covered	Time Allotted	Average Duration	Minimum Duration	Maximum Duration
Generations in Scouting ^[3]	60	53	30	64
Problem Solving and Decision Making	30	21	10	36
Problem Solving Round Robin	75	70	43	102
Coaching and Mentoring ^[4]	50	38	25	54
Conservation Project ^[5]	120	79	45	102
Interfaith Service ^[6]	30	25	16	45
Servant Leadership	60	45	25	60

^[1] Times are reported based on the six sites where the session was observed in its entirety. At one site, the session was rescheduled without prior notice. Observers were not present.

^[2] One site is excluded from the times reported. At one site, the troop meeting was already in progress when observers arrived on site.

^[3] Times are reported based on the five site where the session was observed in its entirety. Generations in Scouting was rescheduled without prior notice at one site and field workers arrived after the session had begun

^[4] Coaching and Mentoring was rescheduled without prior notice at one site and field workers arrived after the session had begun. This time is not included in the calculations of the average or the maximum/minimum.

^[5] Due to scheduling conflicts, the entirety of the Conservation Project was not observed at two sites. These sites are not included in the reported average, minimum, or maximum.

^[6] The interfaith service was rescheduled without prior notice at one site. Observers were not present.

Implementation Issues

In total, 21 distinct “implementation issues” among Wood Badge trainings have been documented by the observation team thus far. We mean “issues” in the broadest sense of the word—such that there is any sort of disruption to effective enactment of Wood Badge material delivery.

Researchers identified the following themes as umbrella categories:

Implementation Issue	Example of Issue	Number of times coded
Treating Syllabus as Content to Disseminate	Facilitators read material to learners	197
Problematic Interactions Between Facilitators and/or Learners	Participants disrespectful to facilitators	99
Ineffective or Confusing Instruction	Participants and/or observers are confused by facilitator examples provided	95
Understanding Inhibited by Conduct of Training Segment	Facilitators ask questions but don't answer them	50
Confusion About Where To Go or What To Do	Learners off-task during training segment	36
Debriefs Are Conducted Poorly	Facilitators interrupt one another during debrief	29

Implementation Issue	Example of Issue	Number of times coded
Training Segment-Specific Issues	Reducing generations to stereotypes	26
Instruction or Activities Do Not Prepare Scouters for Real World	Content of training segments does not match reality of working with scouts	12
Gender Issues Not Involving Girls Joining Scouting	Negative commentary or connotation about transgender youth	11
Managing Time	Central activity or topic skipped due to time constraints	11
Inclusion of Girls in Scouting	Facilitators struggle with gender references	8
Facilitators Do Not Fully Adhere to Training Syllabus	Facilitator does not address all scenarios or questions in session	7
Content of Interfaith Service	Christian slant to activities and services	5
Framing of Scouting and Religion by Participants	Equation of scouting with individual religion	4

Implementation Issue	Example of Issue	Number of times coded
Understanding Inhibited by Nature of Wood Badge	Commentary by staff that you do not “get” WB the first time through	3
Concern Over Activity, Game, etc.	Trainers ill at ease with Game of Life	2
Aware of Changes from Pilot, Upset about Changes	Training staff express concern over the removal of course elements	1
Race and Ethnicity Missing from Discussions of Diversity	Diversity discussion seem to avoid issues of race and ethnicity	1
Some People Facilitate Better Than Others	Individual facilitators seem to do “better” than others	1
Staffing	Size of volunteer base dictates WB staff availability	1
Weather	Cold temperatures disrupt plans for conservation project	1