

# Building Evidence in Scouting Together



## RACE, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION: YOUTH INTERVIEWS

2020 Data Use Meeting



*A Collaborative Initiative:*



**MONTCLAIR STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

Institute for Research on Youth  
Thriving and Evaluation



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# SAMPLE

Out of the full survey sample, a sub-sample of 109 youth participants from four regions of the country (Northeast, Central, Southern, and Western) were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews that asked about their experiences in Scouts BSA. Purposive sampling was used to select interview participants to increase the heterogeneity of the sample; participants were selected to include both male and female Scouts, participants from diverse and homogeneous troops, high and low socioeconomic status, diverse religious and racial backgrounds, and positive and negative experiences with Scouting. A total of 109 participants completed the Wave 1 interview, and 100 of these youth also completed the Wave 2 interview.

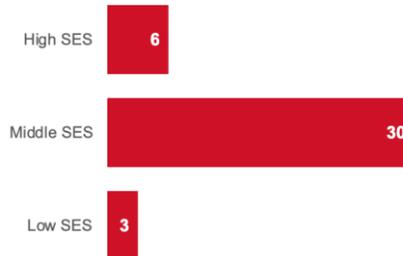
A subset of 39 Scouts' interviews from Waves 1 and 2 were selected for diversity coding. In order to develop an understanding of the experiences of minority youth in BSA, these 39 youth were purposively selected out of the larger interview sample because in their Wave 1 interview they stated that they were of non-White or non-Christian backgrounds. This diversity sub-sample included 11 non-White youth, 16 non-Christian youth, and 12 youth who were both non-White and non-Christian. Scout ages ranged from 11-17, with the average age being approximately 14. The following visuals illustrate the demographic makeup for this sample of youth interviews.

# 1 DEFINING THE GROUP

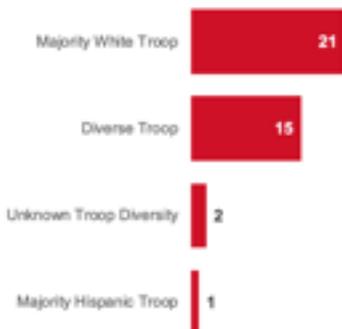
The reported **Gender** was...



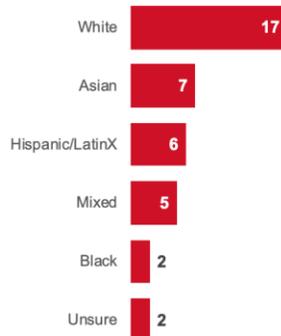
The reported **Socioeconomic Status<sup>1</sup>** was...



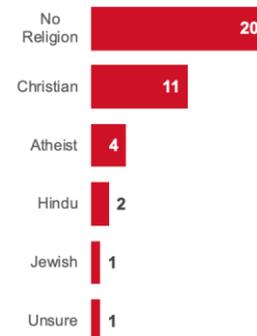
The **Troop Diversity<sup>2</sup>** was reported as...



The youth-reported **Race/Ethnicity** was...



The youth-reported **Religion** was...



<sup>1</sup>SES was determined by Scout responses to a survey question about family finances. Response options were: "We have enough money to buy almost anything we want" (high SES); "We have just enough money for the things we need" and "We have no problems buying the things we need and can sometimes also buy special things" (middle SES); and "We have a hard time buying the things we need" (low SES).

<sup>2</sup>During the troop registration process, Scoutmasters were asked a survey question about the racial makeup of the Scouts in their troop; response options were: Diverse, Majority Black/African American, Majority Hispanic, Majority White/Caucasian, and Other (please specify).

# METHODS

Interviews were conducted by phone by trained interviewers; interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and transcriptions were double-checked for accuracy before being coded. Wave 1 interviews took place from March through June 2019, and Wave 2 interviews took place from September to December 2019, providing a follow-up period of about six months between interviews.

Analyses focused on youth interview questions that addressed diversity and feelings of acceptance in their troop. In reviewing youth interview transcripts, we found that nearly all youth only discussed diversity in response to interview questions that specifically asked about diversity. For this reason, the researchers only read and coded youth responses to the diversity-related interview questions, which include:

- Do you feel that the Scouts in your troop get along with and respect one another? (For Wave 2, the following question stem was added: “Thinking back on the past six months...”)
- Do you feel that the Scouts in your troop respect each other’s differences (for example, gender, race, culture or orientation)? (For Wave 2, the following question stem was added: “Thinking back on the past six months...”)
- Do you feel that the Scoutmaster in your troop respects differences in Scouts (for example, gender, race, culture or orientation)? (For Wave 2, the following question stem was added: “Thinking back on the past six months...”)
- Do you feel like you can be yourself in your troop? (Wave 2 only)

Three research assistants coded Scout responses into a list of themes that were generated inductively. First, the team of coders read youth responses and coded any quotes related to diversity. Coders also wrote reflective memos about each interview they read, highlighting themes in the interview related to diversity, areas of uncertainty in coding, and noting any changes across each Scout’s interviews from Wave 1 to Wave 2. Then, the team analyzed the memos and text coded as related to diversity; researchers created a list of twenty-two diversity-related themes that arose across interviews. Scouts’ diversity-related comments were then re-coded into these inductively-generated themes by the coding team.

Ongoing coding for the remaining youth will be completed deductively, using the existing list of themes. Additional themes may still emerge; coders’ memos and an ‘other diversity-related comment’ code will be reviewed for additional themes.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

When asked if the Scoutmaster and Scouts in their troop respect Scouts' differences, 80% of participants said that Scoutmasters are respectful of differences and 59% said Scouts are respectful of differences. However, Scouts' responses help to shed light on what they consider to be respect: 23% of Scouts equated not being made fun of with respect, and 31% of Scouts talked about Scoutmasters and Scouts treating everyone the same as respect. This is different from celebrating members' diversity, which only 8% of youth reported (one of these Scouts talked about their troop having a multicultural night). And while examples of outright racism and discrimination were rare (5% of youth), over a quarter of youth stated that their troops do not talk about diversity at all (28%).

## FINDINGS

The diversity themes highlighted by youth fall into several broad categories: respect for differences (e.g., Scoutmaster/Scouts respect differences, Scoutmaster/Scouts treat everyone the same way, minority Scout feels respected in troop, actively embracing diversity), resistance to diversity (e.g., racism, discrimination, etc.), lack of diversity or lack of discussion of diversity (e.g., limited diversity, diversity is not discussed in troops), and equating respect for differences with not being made fun of (e.g., Scouts make jokes about differences, Scouts report feeling respected because no one is made fun of). 35.9% of youth spoke about racial diversity. Overall, Scouts feel that youth of different racial backgrounds are treated with respect in their troops.

One surprising finding was how often youth responded to the interview questions about diversity in ways that did not actually touch on diversity concepts (race, ethnicity, age, gender, orientation, culture, etc.), which is notable as the interview questions specifically probe for information about differences and diversity. About 20% of the time, youth shared examples of Scouts disagreeing on what activities should be offered on camping trips, encouraging each other when playing ball games, paying attention during troop meetings, and other examples of interpersonal dynamics in the troop that were unrelated to diversity. While they also spoke about diversity and differences among Scouts in their troop (either in their spontaneous answer to the question or with additional prompting from the interviewer), it is interesting to see so many comments unrelated to diversity in response to questions that are specifically framed around differences and diversity.

Lastly, although coders reviewed participant responses for changes between Wave 1 and Wave 2 interviews, no real changes were found. This is unsurprising given the relatively short timeframe between Waves 1 and 2 (about six months).

A table of all themes, their frequency and exemplary quotes can be found in the Appendix.

# 2

## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

# Appendix

## Youth Interview Theme Table

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Percent of Scouts (n=52)</i>	<i>Quotes</i>
<i>Scoutmaster respects differences</i>	79.49%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“He accepts people for who they are, you know, he doesn't let that affect who the people actually are and not like judges them because of their culture, gender or ethnicity or any of that. So I think that's a really good thing about a Scout leader.”</li><li>“They are really welcoming to everyone and also really encourage the idea of multicultural night.”</li></ul>
<i>Respectful of differences</i>	58.97%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“Yes, nobody's mean to one another for their race, gender or anything like that.”</li><li>“Because no matter the appearance of the people in my troop, they treat others the way they want to be treated most of the time.”</li></ul>
<i>Racial diversity</i>	35.90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“There's a lot of backgrounds in our troop, so not everybody is from a certain area. So there's a mix in the ethnic groups, and their religion, and what they might do.”</li><li>“There are a bunch of people who have a different culture and races and other Scouts are generally excited to learn about the different cultures and races and different places that they've come from.”</li></ul>
<i>Diversity not addressed in troop</i>	28.21%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“Nobody really seems to target on that kind of stuff. If they are getting into a dispute it's never really about culture, race. Nobody really cares about any of that. I think to us it's just another person in the troop.”</li><li>“We're not going to go like ... We don't really like ask about it because it's personal, I think. Yeah, we don't really ask about it unless we're told to.”</li><li>“It's never really a topic that comes up, so everyone's differences are sort of set aside.”</li></ul>
<i>Jokes about differences: Not making fun of Scouts</i>	23.08%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“We haven't had any major conflicts where we've needed to speak to the boys or I haven't seen anything where other boys are making fun of or teasing or others are feeling bad and no one's come to me with any complaints.”</li><li>“Everyone's respectful of one another. We don't like make fun of people a lot. Like we tease, we don't like well, like fun teasing, not mean teasing.”</li><li>“Well, generally I think people don't really care about somebody's like skin tone or gender or anything like that. We mostly just, we just mess around, make fun of each other sometimes. And then, but really we're mostly respectful to one another.”</li></ul>

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Percent of Scouts (n=52)</i>	<i>Quotes</i>
<i>Scoutmaster treats Scouts same way</i>	20.51%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Because every time I've seen him interact with anyone, he treats them the same way.”</li> <li>• “He doesn't really bring up the race of whatever, race differences stuff like that. He just acts like we are all the same race and whatever and just teaches us, what we need to learn, he doesn't choose favorites of a race. He doesn't really do favorites, he works with people that actually need help and people that don't need help, he still kind of works with them, but the ones that really do need help, he helps push them forward.”</li> <li>• “He, I guess... he treats everyone with the same respect he would to himself. He doesn't... he treats everyone like they're the same person. He treats everyone very nice. He, I guess that's all, he... he's a very kind and caring person.”</li> </ul>
<i>Respectful, could not provide example</i>	17.95%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Oh yeah, 100% we're all very accepting of each other and our differences and everything. There's not, you know, we're just, we're all equal.”</li> <li>• “Like don't see anyone different because of their culture, ethnicity or how much money they have. So I think that's a strong suit in my Boy Scout troop.”</li> <li>• “Because as a troop, we just try to respect people for who they are, not judging them. Like the saying don't judge a book by its cover, we try to not do that. We try to find who they are and not what they look like.”</li> </ul>
<i>Limited diversity</i>	12.82%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Yeah. We're all pretty much the same. There's not much different about us. We're all cool with each other.”</li> <li>• “Well, we really don't have a difference in our Troop. We all are from the same school and stuff. So, we already know each other and stuff.”</li> </ul>
<i>Treat everyone the same</i>	10.26%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Nobody really seems to target on that kind of stuff. If they are getting into a dispute it's never really about culture, race. Nobody really cares about any of that. I think to us it's just another person in the troop.”</li> <li>• “Our Scoutmaster, I would say he mostly does maybe not as much as some of the boys in the troop, but he is okay, he does not care too much about what you believe in or what background you come from, it is just about you as a person.”</li> <li>• “Oh, definitely. He accepts people for who they are, you know, he doesn't let that affect who the people actually are and not like judges them because of their culture, gender or ethnicity or any of that. So I think that's a really good thing about a Scout leader.”</li> </ul>

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Percent of Scouts (n=52)</i>	<i>Quotes</i>
<i>Actively embracing diversity</i>	7.69%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “There are a bunch of people who have a different culture and races and other Scouts are generally excited to learn about the different cultures and races and different places that they've come from.”</li> <li>• “They are really welcoming to everyone and also really encourage the idea of multicultural night.”</li> <li>• “They really welcomed the people who were coming in from the Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts and he was really excited to have more people from different genders and different places and different cultures coming to our troop.”</li> </ul>
<i>Minority Scout feels respected</i>	5.13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Well, I'm Hispanic and most of the kids in my troop are Caucasian and they aren't making hypocritical Hispanic jokes or, or racist jokes [...] they respect that I'm Hispanic.”</li> <li>• “Well I'm half Mexican and we have two boys in our troop who are Polish and we have one boy who is Asian and the rest of the boys are American and we all get along fine. We do have a few black boys there too, and we all get along fine. We don't discriminate against each other for it.”</li> <li>• “We kind of talked about the different dishes that we eat, like, my friend Omar, he comes from a Hispanic culture so he talks about the type of things that he eats, and then me coming from an Asian culture, I talk about what we eat. And then we kind of like just said, oh yeah, even though I'm not part of that culture, yeah, I like that stuff too. And so we're not really disrespecting each other's culture.”</li> </ul>
<i>Jokes about differences</i>	5.13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Usually, I guess I don't hear it much, but if they do make a joke it's usually light-hearted and it's not really directed at anyone. It's not usually meant to be rude in any way. And then even if someone does take offense to that-- like everyone apologizes immediately. And they're really nice.”</li> <li>• “Yeah, I think so. Generally, the Scouts are pretty good about not really even mentioning differences and stuff like that, but when they do it's generally pretty respectful and good. Of course, there's like one or two Scouts that can be a little bit ... can make jokes every once and a while, but for the most part everyone recognizes what's wrong and what's right in that sort of situation, and will be respectful and kind.”</li> <li>• Interviewer: But differences in terms of gender, race, culture, orientation, you feel those are respected? Participant: Yes. Interviewer: And what makes you think that? Participant: I never hear anything about them. Interviewer: Okay. Participant: And usually, usually we do after a while, but I don't hear anyone making gay jokes or racist jokes, I don't hear any of that.”</li> </ul>

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Percent of Scouts (n=52)</i>	<i>Quotes</i>
<i>Racism, intolerance, etc.</i>	5.13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Let me change that because the same kid I was just telling you about the lighter fluid ... he...on that same camp out he called an African American kid the N word. That was pretty bad, but that was the only time that anything racial happened. That was only that one kid. No one else ever did anything. So ya, that was really bad.”</li> <li>“Every once in a while, we have a couple of kids that are on the heftier side and every once in a while, I'll hear some of the more skinny athletic kids mention, "Oh, I beat you because you're on the heavier side." And we've kind of got that out of them, but for a little while there, there were some kids that were getting slightly offended because they're basically being called fat.”</li> </ul>
<i>Scout realizes importance of diversity to real world</i>	2.56%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Yes, definitely. Just because... the fact that we have people who are different in the troop is very helpful for us. Just because they can start experiencing how the real world is when you have to experience someone who is different than you and how you deal with that situation.”</li> </ul>