

# THE PATROL METHOD SURVEY

## A Survey of Salt River District Troops

June 2011

Results compiled and report written by: Bill Nelson, Training Chairman, Salt River District, Grand Canyon Council, AZ; for use by Salt River District leaders.

The patrol method is the second method of the Eight Methods of the Boy Scout program and an essential element of Scouting. It is the central focus of successfully delivering all that the Scouting program promises especially teaching the young men leadership.

### I. ABOUT THE SURVEY

Most of what happens in Scouting is not easily quantifiable and there is too broad a range of practices to imagine that there is any way to ask all the 'right' questions. I am also aware that anything the author asks is going to be subject to my own experiences, interpretations and biases. I designed this survey, based upon Clark Green's national survey<sup>1</sup> in order to see how we could improve our Boy Scout Leader courses this year. It is by no means exhaustive or scientific.

I am not aware of a similar survey on the patrol method done in our district in the past. It has been suggested that we create future surveys on other topics having to do with troop program and share them with the troop leaders in the district. If you have ideas in this area please send them to me.

### **RESPONDENTS AND METHODOLOGY**

First I would like to thank everyone who participated in the survey. We received a great response which gives all of us a good snapshot of how troops in our district utilize the patrol method in 2011.

30 people responded to the survey. All responses were from the Salt River District of Grand Canyon Council. 97% identified themselves as Scoutmasters, Assistant Scoutmasters or troop committee members. 74% are direct contact leaders (Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters.)

Representatives from over 50% of all the troops in the Salt River District responded to the survey which is a great sample size. Respondents represent troops that run the range from very large to very small; from a wide variety of chartering organizations, and from everywhere in the district.

For respondents who identified their troop, every troop response counted as one response. In cases where we received multiple answers from the same troop, I merged the responses into one response. If the responses contradicted each other the answer with the most responses for that troop was selected. In the case where the count of contradictory answers from the same troop was equal, that answer was not counted.

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<sup>1</sup> This survey is based upon a nationwide survey conducted by Clarke Green in 2010. I utilized most of his questions (adding some of my own) and the structure of his survey results. His survey results contain a lot of scouting wisdom as well. I used that wisdom as a starting point, adjusting some items to either reflect my opinion or national guidelines where it differs from his opinion and heavily augmenting his suggestions and information where appropriate for our area or simply to give more discussion, information and resources. Clark Green's [survey and results are here](#)

## II. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In this section are my high level observations. Your observations may differ. A detailed discussion on these points is contained in the Detailed Analysis section.

### ***What is Working***

It is clear from the survey that many of the respondents have strong patrol systems and strong traditions of youth leadership within their troops.

### ***What Isn't Working***

It is plain that none of us are alone in dealing with frustrations and challenges. We also want to understand why things are the way they are as a first step to recognizing how to make things better.

The patrol method is much more than separating Scouts into groups and managing them as patrols. A thorough discussion of the subject is entwined with issues of youth leadership, training junior leadership, organizational skills, the role of adults, and nearly every other aspect of the Scouting program

The survey results show four major issues that are challenges to troops striving to implement the patrol method.

#### **1. Adults may be overly-involved**

97% of respondents report at least some direct involvement of adults in the planning process; of these 40% report that planning is largely or wholly accomplished by the adults.

Skill instruction happens with direct adult involvement in 97% of the responding Troops. Of these 7% report that adults do all of the instructing.

69% respond that adults are often involved in presenting the program at meetings and campouts.

39% report that directions to Scouts are largely given by adults, of this 14% report that directions came almost exclusively from adults.

#### **2. Youth leader's planning is sometimes compromised**

14% report that youth leader's plans are either nonexistent or frequently revised or vetoed by adults.

82% report that adults other than the Scoutmaster attend patrol leader's council meetings and 71% speak up and advise Scouts during these meetings on a regular basis

40% of troops report that adults have the primary responsibility for planning meetings and 54% report that adults have the primary role in planning outings.

#### **3. Patrols may be too small or too large**

69% of patrols have more than eight or fewer than six members. Size of the patrol seems to be a challenge across the boards with all troops. Small troop size is a particular challenge with LDS units.

#### **4. Patrols don't appear to have a large measure of independence or continuity**

41% of patrols have 10 minutes or less scheduled at troop meetings, 19% have no time scheduled.

41% of troops have inter-patrol competitions less than once a month.

93% of troops do not have their patrols set up independent campsites; of these 50% make no differentiation of patrols at all when camping

86% of patrols do not have at least one monthly independent meeting or activity.

Based on survey results and comments many respondents' troops are in transition towards a stronger patrol method. Many of the comments reflect that this is a challenging process.

### **III. SOLUTIONS**

#### ***Understand How the Patrol Method Functions***

Authentic patrols are wholly dependent on 'real, free handed' responsibility of youth leaders. There are a lot of resources out there that discuss the patrol method.

List of some resources on the patrol method:

- The Scoutmaster Handbook
- The Patrol Leader's Handbook, this book is full of great ideas on implementing the patrol method
- [The Salt River District Patrol Method Resource Page](#)
- The Scoutmaster's Other Handbook by Mark Ray
- [The National Youth Leader Training syllabus](#)

#### ***Coming to terms with uncertainty***

It is important to see things from the scale and perspective of Scout aged boys. Their conception of successfully planning, developing and leading activities is not based on an adult perspective of successful planning, development and leadership. For example a well executed meeting in a Scout's eyes may look unorganized to an adult. Ask yourself "Did they accomplish most of the objectives for the meeting?" If the answer is yes, but it was a mess, then it was probably a successful meeting.

Just as it would be unfair to hold a first grade student to the same standard of a college professor we cannot hold Scouts to an adult standard of leadership. Rather we want to encourage every success and minimize any perceived failures.

If we accept that learning to lead is a process we must also accept that there will inevitably be uncertainties in planning and other aspects of leadership. In fact we welcome these uncertainties and seize on them as teachable moments.<sup>2</sup>

#### ***Develop appropriate levels of instruction and oversight***

In our zealotry to see Scouts succeed adults sometimes over-instruct and over-supervise their efforts.

Scouts can internalize and understand instruction in leadership best when it is:

- Offered in small doses
- Is immediately related to the task at hand

Adults may feel that they must have direct supervision of Scouts at all times. They feel that it is important to continuously instruct and offer advice in order to assure that Scouts are successful. However, Scouts

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<sup>2</sup> From Scoutmaster Green's Patrol System survey result report.

will not develop independent initiative or robust leadership skills if they feel that they are constantly under evaluation and supervision. Adults must allow Scouts to pursue Scouting with their patrol free from constant interference.

Adults are rightly concerned with the safety of Scouts and the propriety of their speech, actions and decisions. Scout aged-boys are sometimes poor judges of risk and danger and need occasional reminders as to the appropriateness of their speech, actions and decisions. For these reasons Scouting gives adults the provisional authority to respond to emergencies, stop unsafe or inappropriate behavior, and to make basic judgments about the appropriateness of activities.

In practice the vast majority of Scouts will respond to trust placed in them by being trustworthy. When we expect positive things from our Scouts we normally get positive results.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Understand how proximity affects leadership***

As a function of their schooling and other influences Scouts will typically defer to adults when they are close by. Adults are, in the eyes of Scouts, the presumptive leader and authority figure. Adults must be conscious of the affect their physical proximity has on a youth leader's ability to do his job.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Understand the place of responsibility and authority in Scouting***

Adults are present in Scouting to serve as advisors and mentors to Scouts and to assist them with some administrative tasks. Appreciating the limitations of this role is important. We are teaching them to be leaders by having them lead and learn from their mistakes.

Rob Farris, in his excellent guide on Scout training describes the program this way: "Baden-Powell believed leadership training should pervade the entire Scouting program. He created Patrols to offer leadership opportunities to as many Scouts as possible. That can happen only in a natural Scout Troop such as yours. Nearly everything a Scout Troop does is an opportunity to train Scouts to lead. The BSA has given us a mission: train Scouts to lead. We need to exercise careful focus, dedication and discipline if our unit's program is going to effectively train young leaders."<sup>5</sup>

The real authority and responsibility in Scouting is in the hands of the youth leaders. It is not something that is doled out to them by adults – the nature of the program invests Scouts with it as a matter of course. All too commonly adults assume that their authority extends to those tasks that are clearly entrusted to the Scouts.<sup>6</sup>

Scoutmasters must move beyond the planning of meetings, events, games, and outings. Those jobs are for the troop's boy leaders. The only job a Scoutmaster can't delegate is "keeper of the flame," a leadership commitment to Scouting's mission as an integral part of the troop's program.<sup>7</sup> Delegating is a tough skill for a Scoutmaster to learn, but it will make you a better Scoutmaster.

Don't expect Scouts to necessarily ask adults to step aside. "Many 21st century teenagers are perfectly willing to sit back and let adults take care of all the headaches. After all, in America's increasingly suburbanized lives, that is what most parents do with their teenagers — take care of all their problems

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<sup>3</sup> From Scoutmaster Green's Patrol System survey result report.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> [\*A Scout Leader's Guide to Youth Leadership Training\*](#); by Rob Farris, Ted Knight, Harry Wimbrough; Thornsby Bailey and Brown, Inc.; 2009

<sup>6</sup> From Scoutmaster Green's Patrol System survey result report.

<sup>7</sup> Strictly for Scoutmasters, Scouting Magazine, April-May 2004

and make all their decisions for them. In a Scout Troop, the Scoutmaster sets the standard for leadership. Effective youth leadership training begins with the Scoutmaster.<sup>8</sup>

### **Resetting the focus of our efforts**

Scouting is driven by the Patrol Method. The Patrol Method is the cause of the effect not an effect of other causes. Patrols develop leadership and character utilizing the Patrol Method. The Patrol Method engenders advancement opportunities. Adults often seize on the more tangible, easily quantifiable, aspects of the program with the expectation that they express the central goal of Scouting. These methods are not all equally weighted. You have probably heard the saying often attributed to Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting that "The patrol system is not one method in which Scouting for boys can be carried on. It is the only method."

**"The patrol system is not one method in which Scouting for boys can be carried on. It is the only method."**

**-- Scoutmaster Handbook, 2010**

Skill development within the advancement program, uniform, and expertise in the outdoors are only a means to an end, they are not designed to be an end in themselves. Developing youth leadership is one of our goals. The vision of Scouting is "The Boy Scouts of America will prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law."<sup>9</sup>

Despite that the single most important component of Scouting is the Patrol Method, most of our time seems to be worrying about the function and success of the Troop rather than Patrols. It is useful to remember that in the grand scheme of things the Troop is relatively unimportant except in its role to support the Patrols that make it up.

From the beginning, Baden-Powell's Patrol Method has been the principle recipe for youth leadership training. We hear a lot about how the boys are not willing or interested in learning leadership skills. Adults must realize that most boys will not see a need for learning leadership skills until he has had some success in leading a group. Get them out leading their patrols, let them stumble a few times and they will see the need for leaning about some basic leadership tools.

"The Patrol System has also a great character-training value if it is used aright. It leads each boy to see that he has some individual responsibility for the good of his Patrol. It leads each Patrol to see that it has definite responsibility for the good of the Troop. Through it the Scoutmaster is able to pass on not only his instruction but his ideas as to the moral outlook of his Scouts. Through it the Scouts themselves gradually learn that they have considerable say in what their Troop does. It is the Patrol System that makes the Troop, and all Scouting for that matter, a real co-operative effort." -Baden-Powell

## **IV. DETAILED ANALYSIS**

The following pages contain a detailed analysis of each survey question and response. Individual survey question analysis is broken down into the following sections:

'The Real' simply reports on the results.

'The Ideal' is my attempt to reference best practices from BSA literature and other writings (notably those of Baden-Powell, Bill Hillcourt and Earnest Thompson Seton.

'Discussion' is just that. Your opinions may differ!

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<sup>8</sup> [A Scout Leader's Guide to Youth Leadership Training](#); by Rob Farris, Ted Knight, Harry Wimbrough; Thornsby Bailey and Brown, Inc.; 2009

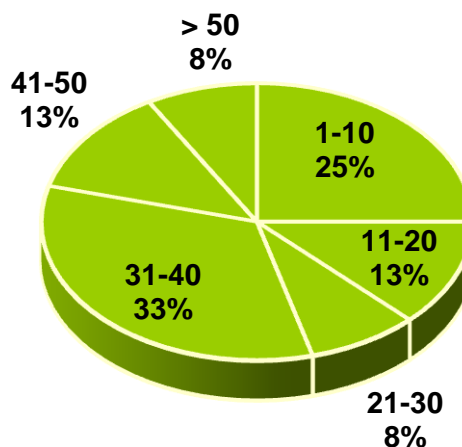
<sup>9</sup> [BSA Mission and Vision Statement](#)

'Respondents Comments' are the comments accompanying specific questions. I have taken the liberty of condensing some repetitive comments into representative statements and editing out a very few that were off-topic.

## 1. What is the Size of Your Troop?

### THE REAL

As of 2010 the mean size of Scout troop according to BSA figures was 21 Scouts (837,808 Scouts in 40,146 Troops<sup>10</sup>). The median size (where 50% of the troops are above this and 50% below) is 14 Scouts<sup>11</sup>. 54% of our respondents were from troops of fewer than 31 Scouts, 8% were from troops of 50 or more. 38% of the troops have than 20 Scouts less.



### THE IDEAL

There is no actual ideal number for troop membership. Baden Powell suggested 32 as a maximum number.<sup>12</sup> Jamboree Troops are made up of four patrols of eight Scouts and four youth leaders for a total of 36, just a few more than B.P. suggested.

A discussion of troop size and make up is in Chapter 3 of the Scoutmaster Handbook.

### DISCUSSION

30-40 Scouts seems like a good size. Not so large that individual Scouts are lost in the mix. Around 20 means two patrols of eight and four youth leaders is critical mass for the patrol method to work well. Much below 20 and a Troop really becomes two patrols. When troops get very large, it is hard for the youth to truly run them and adults tend to step in to fill the void.

If you find you don't have enough Scouts, RECRUIT! RECRUIT! RECRUIT! Also make sure you have a strong outdoor and high adventure program. The Scouts are attracted by and join Scouting for adventure. This is also true for LDS units<sup>13</sup>. Troop recruiting resources can be found [here](#).<sup>14</sup> Also your District Committee can assist you in recruiting. Contact Phil Grey, District Committee Chairman for more information by emailing: [test4u@cox.net](mailto:test4u@cox.net) We are not reaching out enough to all the boys in our area who would benefit by Scouting. To get you over the slump if your troop is too is small, try merging activities with other troops.

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<sup>10</sup> [BSA Annual Report for the year 2010](#)

<sup>11</sup> See the [BSA Journey to Excellence 2011 Troop Scorecard](#).

<sup>12</sup> Aids to Scoutmastership, Baden-Powell, 1920. "The number in a Troop should preferably not exceed thirty-two. I suggest this number because in training boys myself I have found that sixteen was about as many as I could deal with-in getting at and bringing out the individual character in each. I allow for other people being twice as capable as myself and hence the total of thirty-two."

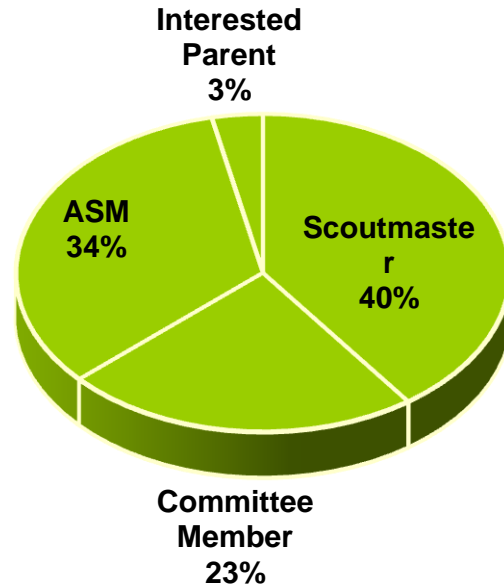
<sup>13</sup> For LDS units, guidance can be found in the 2011 LDS [Scouting Handbook](#) (the Green Book.)

<sup>14</sup> <http://grandcanyonbsa.org/openrosters/ViewOrgPageLink.asp?LinkKey=5774>

## 2. What is your leadership role in Scouting?

### THE REAL

The majority of respondents are direct contact leaders, that is to say: Scoutmasters and Assistant Scoutmasters



## 3. Our patrols have, on average

### THE REAL

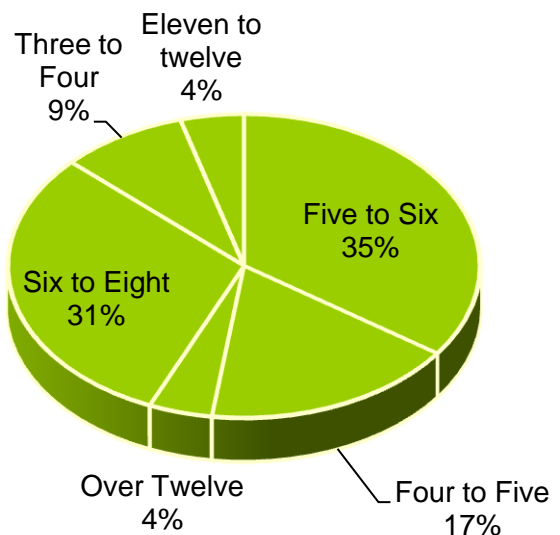
31% respondents report patrol sizes of six to eight Scouts. 8% report more than eight and 61% report six or less.

### THE IDEAL

The long-standing<sup>15</sup> rule of thumb has been six to eight Scouts per patrol.<sup>16</sup>

### DISCUSSION

Six to eight Scouts per patrol works well. Most patrols of six or eight can manage to get at least four or five to any given event or meeting. Four or five Scouts seem to be the critical



<sup>15</sup> Aids to Scoutmastership, Baden Powell, 1920

<sup>16</sup> Scoutmaster Handbook; Chapter 4; BSA; 2010

mass for effective participation as a patrol<sup>17</sup>. Anything smaller usually does not work as well and more than eight Scouts in a patrol seem to be the tipping point for patrol leader effectiveness. There is an old supervision rule that efficient supervision is over a team of approximately six individuals<sup>18</sup>. A discussion of patrol size and makeup can be found in the Scoutmaster Handbook, Chapter 4 and in the Patrol Leaders Handbook.

If your troop is small a patrol or multiple patrols are still needed. It is through patrols that every individual Scout is given responsibility. To quote Baden-Powell, a patrol is "the character school for the individual," where Scouts learn "subordination of self to the interests of the whole."<sup>19</sup>

## ***RESPONDENTS COMMENTS***

Only one scout right now. Usually we only have enough scouts for one troop.

Small...everyone is in one patrol.

8 is more typical for the number at a meeting

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<sup>17</sup> For LDS units, suggestions for dealing with a Patrol of only one or two boys are made in the 2011 LDS [Scouting Handbook](#) (the Green Book.)

<sup>18</sup> Sir Ian Hamilton in his 1922 book --[The soul and body of an army](#) writes "The nearer we approach the supreme head of the whole organization, the more we ought to work towards groups of three; the closer we get to the foot of the whole organization, the more we work towards groups of six."

<sup>19</sup> The Scoutmaster's Other Handbook; by Mark Ray; 2010

## 4. How are patrol leaders selected in your troop?

### THE REAL

The vast majority of respondents report that patrol leaders are elected by patrol members.

### THE IDEAL

While the Scoutmaster, troop or chartering organization may set basic rank or age requirements for eligibility Scouting literature specifies that patrol leaders be elected by the members of the patrol<sup>20</sup>. See the Scoutmaster Handbook, Chapter 4; the Patrol Leaders Handbook and LDS Scouting Handbook.

### DISCUSSION

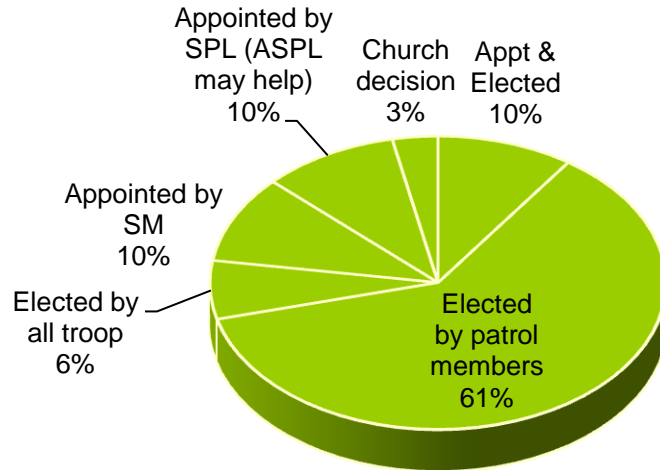
A patrol is that small group of boys and friends under their own leadership who plan and carry out troop and patrol meetings and activities. It is the basic organizational unit of a Scout troop<sup>21</sup>.

Scouts really should elect their own patrol leaders. In my experience Scouts generally choose solid leaders. To those who say that these positions should be reserved for older Scouts needing a leadership position for advancement I say there are plenty of troop positions of responsibility to go around for Scouts needing them for advancement. I don't think that applying rank or age requirements is necessary – this is one decision that Scouts should make for themselves free of any form of coercion or control.

Electing the Patrol Leader is the business of the patrol. It is not a troop activity. The patrol leader is the leader of the patrol, not the troop. Those he is leading should be electing him, not the entire troop.

The SPL and ASPL should not be involved. I can understand some extraordinary circumstances where a Scoutmaster, SPL or anyone else at the troop level might be involved; but I wouldn't make it a regular practice<sup>22</sup>.

There are no term limits for patrol leader if their Scouts want to reelect them, that is their business. Neither adults nor the SPL should force a patrol leader out to make room for another Scout to be able to get leadership experience or for advancement reasons. There are plenty of Positions of Responsibility



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<sup>20</sup> The basic model upon which a Scout Patrol functions is rooted in the native instinct of adolescent boys to create small groups or "gangs" and to select a leader amongst themselves. As Bill Hillcourt wrote in the 1936 Handbook for Scoutmasters: "Take any thirty boys, turn them loose in a closed street, a playground, or in a sports field-and you know what happens. Shortly something will be under way. A clatter of many eager voices raised in discussion-and out of the large group will evolve a number of smaller groups, in gangs, ready for game or mischief. Such are boys. The impulse of forming gangs is natural to them. They cannot help themselves." We are leveraging upon that innate instinct in adolescent boys to model the Patrol Method.

<sup>21</sup> Scoutmaster Handbook, Chapter 4, The Boy-Led Patrol

<sup>22</sup> For LDS troops, a discussion on how patrol leaders are sustained is in the [LDS Scouting Handbook \(Green Book\)](#).

available to a troop and if you make sure that those positions have real responsibility, the Scout will learn leadership skills.

Can an inexperienced eleven or twelve-year-old Scout be a successful patrol leader? Yes, he can.

## RESPONDENTS COMMENTS

*Patrol Leaders serve for 6 months*

*We are currently switching from annual elections and terms to 6 month*

*SPL has to approve*

Our Scoutmaster has completely lost sight on what a Boy Led organization means. He still makes the boys do school yard picks which continues to result in hard feelings by the boys.

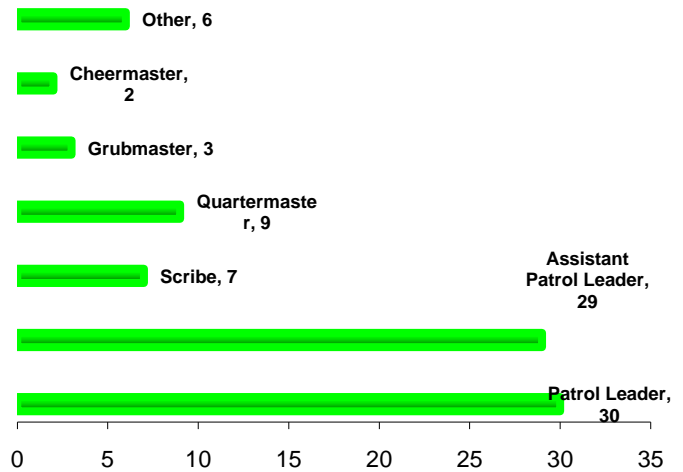
## 5. Our patrols have the following leadership positions

### THE REAL

Patrol leadership structures are mostly reported to have at least one more designated position than the patrol leader.

Other positions mentioned were:

- Flag Keeper
- Chaplain
- Historian
- Librarian



### THE IDEAL

Every Scout in the patrol should have a real responsibility in keeping that patrol healthy, and know what the responsibility is. This may or may not be a position with a title. Many different positions are suggested in Scouting literature. See the Patrol Leader Handbook and the Scoutmaster Handbook. These positions should be appointed by the Patrol Leader not adults or the SPL.

### DISCUSSION

Patrol leaders should be delegating responsibility and authority so the Scouts in his patrol have plenty of both. Of course this can only happen if you first give the patrol leaders real responsibility. These patrol positions can rotate often so Scouts can try different roles and skills. See the Patrol Leaders Handbook and Scoutmaster Handbook for a list of suggested patrol positions.

## RESPONDENTS COMMENTS

*We are working right now on assigning more positions.*

*When we have enough scouts.*

*Patrol Scribe and Quartermaster are positions the leaders have encouraged for the coming year*

*There are enough titles for everyone to have a position.*

*They share other duties - for example, since we use a storage unit, someone from the patrol - who is going on the outing - has to request the items the patrol needs (each patrol has a big chuck box most of the items are in)*

## 6. During patrol leader's council meetings adults other than the Scoutmaster

### **THE REAL**

18% of respondents report that only the Scoutmaster attends the PLC. The remaining 82% report that other adults attend and 71% speak up and advise Scouts during these meetings on a regular basis

### **THE IDEAL**

Scoutmasters attend the patrol leader's council meeting as an observer. Commonly the Scoutmaster is given a moment for comment at the conclusion of the meeting. See the Scoutmaster's Handbook and Senior Patrol Leaders Handbook.

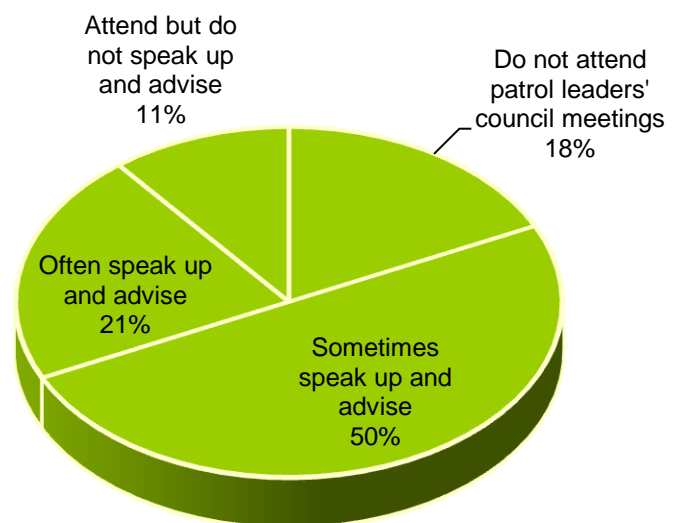
### **DISCUSSION**

While we want Scouts to plan and lead their own activities the line between advising, commenting on and coercing these plans and an ongoing training process is a thin one. Scouts learn to lead through a mixture of training, mentoring and trial and error; we need to allow plenty of room for this with our youth leaders.

The PLC meeting is chaired by the SPL. Preferably the Scoutmaster doesn't speak up at the meeting unless invited at the end for an educational moment. Instead the Scoutmaster meets separately with the SPL to discuss ideas to present to the PLC for consideration. No other adult is involved in this process.

As the comments below reflect there is a strong tendency towards well-intentioned adults interfering with the process.

It is often asked at training what is the role of the Adult Patrol Advisor? There is no official BSA position called Adult Patrol Advisor. The closest thing the BSA has is an ASM for New Scouts (aka: 11 year old Scoutmaster) and the Venture Patrol Advisor. The regular patrols are to function on their own using the



Patrol Method and the troop structure. However in real life we all know that some regular patrols are weaker than others or newer Scouts are placed into existing patrols. In such cases an adult Patrol Advisor can be of great assistance to the Patrol Leader. A patrol advisor advises the patrol leader on ways to keep the patrol on track. They should seldom, if ever work directly with patrol members. Patrol Advisors should monitor patrol meetings and activities and advise the patrol leader (away from the other Scouts so as not to undermine his leadership.) The patrol advisor should be ever vigilant that they don't yield to the temptation to start acting as Den Leaders in khaki. They do not have a leadership role. It is extremely important that patrol advisors obtain training before or shortly after taking on the role so they understand the patrol method and how a troop program is suppose to function. The major job of the adult patrol advisor is to work himself out of a job. A reward to a successful patrol advisor is a self sufficient patrol. If the patrol advisor attends the patrol leaders' council meeting, they should not speak up, and preferably sit in the back of the room monitoring what is happening. If advice is needed to be given to the patrol leader, it should be done before or after the meeting away from the other patrol leaders so as not to undermine his authority<sup>23</sup>; you may want to engage the SPL in the conversation as well.<sup>24</sup>

If I was to concentrate my efforts on any single thing towards fostering the patrol method it would be maintaining the independence of the patrol leader's council.

For more information on the topic, see the Scoutmaster Handbook and the Senior Patrol Leader Handbook.

## **RESPONDENTS COMMENTS**

*It is more like the quite hand to help them set realistic expectations and achieve them. Also ask questions as a mentor that they need to ask of the plans and themselves*

*I am assuming you mean assistant scoutmasters.*

*There is one other adult besides me - she does not speak unless she has a good idea or feels she needs to redirect them*

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<sup>23</sup> Youth protection guidelines must always be followed when an adult interacts with a Scout.

<sup>24</sup> A discussion on the role of the patrol advisor can be found in the book: The Scoutmaster's Other Handbook; by Mark Ray; 2010

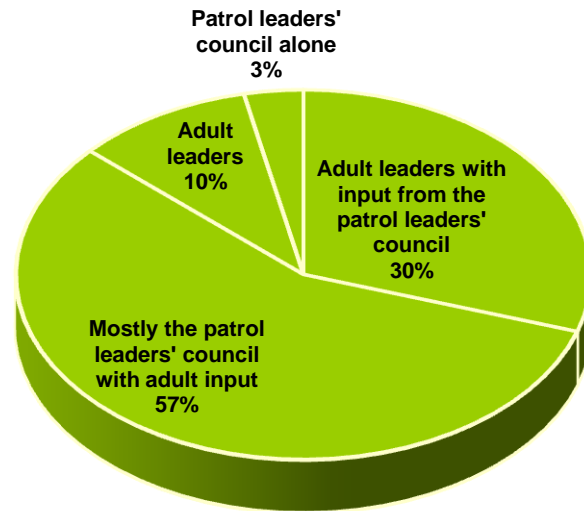
## 7. Our troop meetings are planned by

### THE REAL

97% of respondents report at least some direct involvement of adults in the planning process. Only 3% report that the planning is wholly accomplished by the Scouts. 40% report that planning is largely or wholly accomplished by the adults.

### THE IDEAL

Youth leadership should be planning and executing every aspect of the troop meetings and courts of honor. Scouts in the patrols should make sure their patrol leader represents their interests, but the planning is made at the PLC. The Scoutmaster acts as mentor and advisor. See the Scoutmaster Handbook and the Senior Patrol Leaders Handbook.



### DISCUSSION

Youth leadership should have all principle responsibilities for planning. They will need increasingly smaller amounts of advice as they learn. There are a lot of resources that the PLC can utilize to plan their meetings. The primary resources are the [Troop Program Features](#) and [Troop Program Resources](#).

Meetings are planned at the PLC. The PLC meeting is chaired by the SPL. Preferably the Scoutmaster doesn't speak up at the meeting during the planning. Instead the Scoutmaster meets separately with the SPL to discuss ideas to present to the PLC for consideration.

Parents and adult leaders should expect the meeting to not be up to adult standards, especially as the boys learn to organize them.

### RESPONDENTS COMMENTS

*Yeah, we're working on making this more based on Patrol Leaders' Council*

*All of the scouts come up with ideas and we vote on it.*

*The adult being the Scoutmaster or an ASM in the SM's absence*

*There is an interplay between the two meetings (the SPL and I attend both) - the adult meeting is broader ("we need to work on first aid" or "we should be better prepared for xxxxx outing than we were last year") - the scout leader meeting is more nuts and bolts of how we do those things - plus they make recommendations that go to the adult meeting. So, I like to think the troop meetings are planned by the scouts.*

The Scoutmaster directs the boys to do what he wants them to do.

## 8. Our senior patrol leader is

### THE REAL

78% of respondents report that the Scouts elect their senior patrol leader. 22% report that there is some adult control of the process. 11% report that the SPL is appointed.

### THE IDEAL

Senior patrol leaders should be elected by the Scouts. Some Troops may establish minimum rank, age or past leadership experience levels to qualify for election. See the Scoutmaster Handbook<sup>25</sup>.

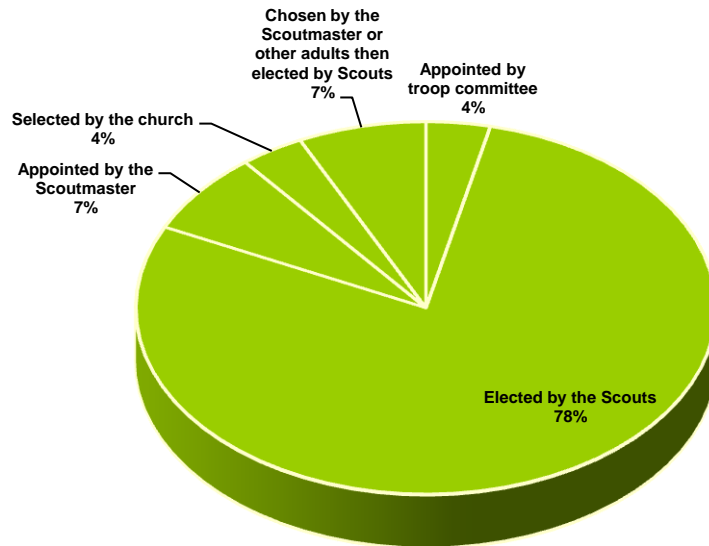
### DISCUSSION

Giving Scouts truly free choice in leadership elections is an expression of trust. They rise to this expectation by making good choices. They often have a much better sense of who will do the job well than the adults.

If the wrong person is elected, and doesn't accomplish his duties, the Scouts learn very quickly that they made an incorrect decision. The Scoutmaster should counsel the wayward SPL and if he still does not do his duty, the Scoutmaster should remove him from the position and call for new elections. Scouts learn from their mistake and seldom repeat it. And that's the name of the game here, to teach them about leadership.

### RESPONDENTS COMMENTS

*The scouts have to submit an application to be SPL - on it they must explain why they want to be it and how they are qualified. I then meet with them to go over the responsibilities - just to be sure they understand that there is a lot more to it than just running the meeting each week*



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<sup>25</sup> For LDS units, guidance is in the [LDS Scouting Handbook](#).(the Green Book)

## 9. How are youth leaders trained? (Select all statements that apply)

### THE REAL

60% of respondents report youth leaders receive some type of formal of training. Of these training schemes the most prevalent is an annual troop based training session of some kind. 40% of youth leaders receive little or no formal training.

### THE IDEAL

Training is essential to developing good youth leadership. Jr. Leaders need to take TLT within 2 weeks of being elected.<sup>26</sup> Send all your Scouts to NYLT as well. In troop ongoing mentoring of the Jr. Leaders should also be implemented within the troop.

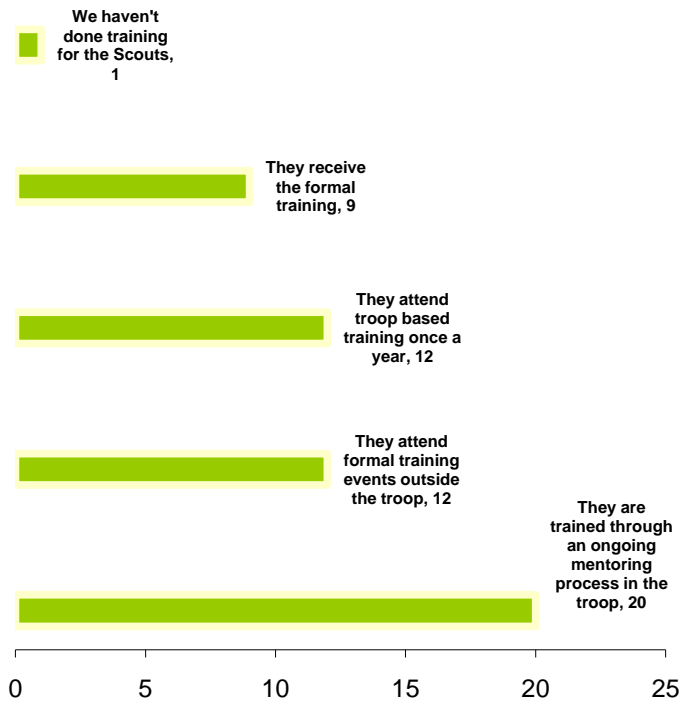
### DISCUSSION

Training events give some elements of what tools the Scouts need for leadership; especially job descriptions and management style theory. Scouts respond very well though to an ongoing process of mentoring and actual on the job leading. They gain real skills readily by actual experience. Get them outdoors, depending on each other. I talk about the Green Bar Patrol campouts further down in the report. Utilize them as well. Utilization of the patrol method while backpacking is a great tool to this end.

I have found that the Scouts we send to NYLT, the council run youth leadership program, come back stoked to be leaders of the troop. It is a great investment, and you should send all your Scouts to NYLT.

Utilize any opportunity to build rapport and coach your junior leaders. Hours are spent driving to and from campouts: Pair up with youth leaders and their adult advisors to discuss troop issues in depth and give them ideas.

“Leadership training and mentoring in a Scout troop is actually very simple. Any Scoutmaster who puts his mind to it can do it. Trust and respect your Scouts. Use the Patrol Method. Give your Scouts real responsibility. Mentor. Motivate. Recognize results. While the basics are simple, the devil is in the details.”<sup>27</sup>



<sup>26</sup> Scoutmaster Handbook, Chapter 7, Training Youth Leaders

<sup>27</sup> [A Scout Leader's Guide to Youth Leadership Training](#); by Rob Farris, Ted Knight, Harry Wimbrough; Thornsby Bailey and Brown, Inc.; 2009

For more information on training techniques see: *A Scout Leader's Guide to Youth Leadership Training*<sup>28</sup>, the Scoutmaster Handbook and the guides at [www.bsatroop14.com/patrolmethod](http://www.bsatroop14.com/patrolmethod)

## RESPONDENTS COMMENTS

*Monthly training conducted after Patrol Leaders' Council.  
We grab good training for the boys any place we can grab it.  
Actually 2x per year at the change of each SPL election  
SPL, ASPL, PL & APL are supported in going to NYLT In the 2 months between election and induction, the newly elected leader shadows the existing position  
We do a junior leader training and try to get the more junior leaders to learn from the older ones - discussing problems and solutions at the PLC meeting*

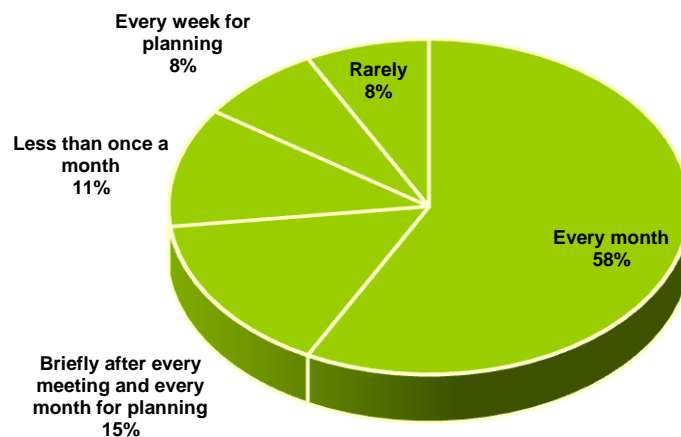
## 10. Our patrol leader's council meets

### THE REAL

77% of respondents report that the patrol leader's council meets once a month or less. 23% report weekly meetings.

### THE IDEAL

The patrol leader's council is the source of planning, direction and leadership in a Scout troop. Formal meetings for planning are important to their success. The PLC should meet at least monthly and have a brief review meeting after every meeting and major event. The SM and SPL should meet briefly prior to every meeting and event. See the Scoutmaster Handbook<sup>29</sup>.



### DISCUSSION

As the core source of leadership and direction the patrol leader's council should be meeting once a week. These meetings do not need to be formal or lengthy. Some patrol leaders' councils meet prior to and just after every troop meeting and several times during a camping trip. They share plans, information and direction at these meetings. The Scoutmaster looks in as frequently or infrequently as the situation warrants. These regular meetings are prime opportunities for mentoring the patrol leader's council as a group.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> This scheme isn't new. [William Hillcourt in the Handbook for Scoutmasters in 1936](#) introduced the concept that the Troop Leaders' Council met on a monthly basis and planned the weekly Troop Meetings based upon a monthly schedule which reflected the Troop Leaders' Council plan for the year. A short "half-meeting" of the TLC met after the meeting to reflect on what happened during that meeting and to prepare for the next meeting and assign responsibilities for that meeting. We have been using it ever since.

Meeting often also establishes the authority and responsibility of the Senior Patrol Leader. It also keeps the task at hand in front of youth leaders much more effectively; they will act on what is decided at these meetings in moments rather than hours days or weeks. More formal planning meetings are held once a month<sup>30</sup>.

## **RESPONDENTS COMMENTS**

*We only have one patrol*

*Obviously we meet as needed at/after meetings as things come up*

# **11. Patrol time scheduled at our troop meetings lasts**

## **THE REAL**

41% of respondents report that patrols have 10 minutes of meeting time or less allotted to them at troop meetings. 19% report patrols are given no time in the troop meeting and 19% report patrols are given 20 minutes or more.

## **THE IDEAL**

Patrols should have sufficient time to meet and plan within the context of a troop meeting. See the Scoutmaster Handbook for example troop meeting agendas.

## **DISCUSSION**

Patrols need time for planning and preparation for a camping trip, inter-patrol competition or other activity. Ideally they will learn something within the troop meeting and be given time to practice it in the patrol meeting time.

## **RESPONDENTS COMMENTS**

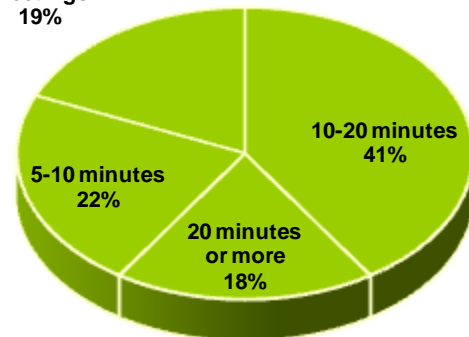
*At most but not at all meetings.*

*This varies depending upon the activities and needs of the scouts*

*We only have one patrol.*

*Patrols do not meet at every Troop Meeting*

No time set  
aside during  
troop meetings  
or outside of  
meetings  
19%



<sup>30</sup> From Scoutmaster Green's Patrol System survey result report.

## 12. On average, inter-patrol games and competitions are held

### THE REAL

41% report that they have patrol competitions less than once a month.

### THE IDEAL

Competitions build patrol spirit, sharpen leadership skills and are just plain fun<sup>31</sup>. They should be a part of every meeting and most outdoor activities<sup>32</sup>. See the [Troop Program Resources](#) for game ideas.

### DISCUSSION

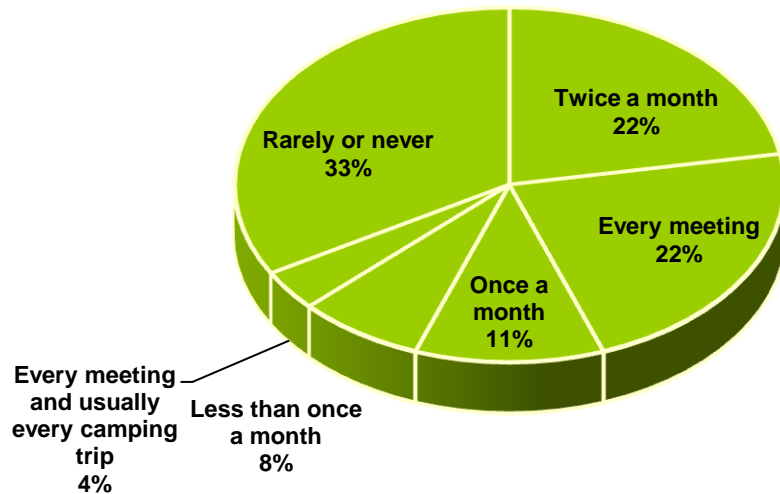
Patrol competitions should be a regular part of the troop program. They should be more than just a pick up game. They should be games that actually put one patrol in competition with other patrols. Often in training Scoutmasters bring up the point that the Scouts don't identify with their patrols. Patrol Spirit is frequently a big problem in our troops. Inter-Patrol competitions with immediate awards of things that Scouts like (e.g., candy), not necessarily what adults like should be an integral part of your program.

### RESPONDENTS COMMENTS

*We only have one patrol*

*This is improving and evolving. It is hoped to be included in each weekly (7-part) meeting schedule this year*

*Depends - we try to base some of the activities in the meetings by patrol, but it often just isn't practical - either due to attendance or advancement needs it's often just easier to make new groups based on fair competition or who needs to learn vs who needs to teach. We try to have inter-patrol competitions through the year - earning points - we try for at least once a month - sometimes "more important" things take up too much time and we have to just play a simple game.*



<sup>31</sup> "One of the objects of Scouting is to supply team games and activities which can promote the boy's health and strength and help to develop his character. These games have to be made attractive and competitive, and it is through them that we can inculcate the elements of pluck, obedience to rules, discipline, self-control, keenness, fortitude, leadership and unselfish team play. .... These and many other activities open a wide and varied program of competition for Patrol against Patrol, which an imaginative Scoutmaster can apply in turn to develop the physical points required." Baden-Powell; Aids to Scoutmastership; 1920

<sup>32</sup> Scoutmaster Handbook; Chapters 5 & 6

## 13. On our camping trips

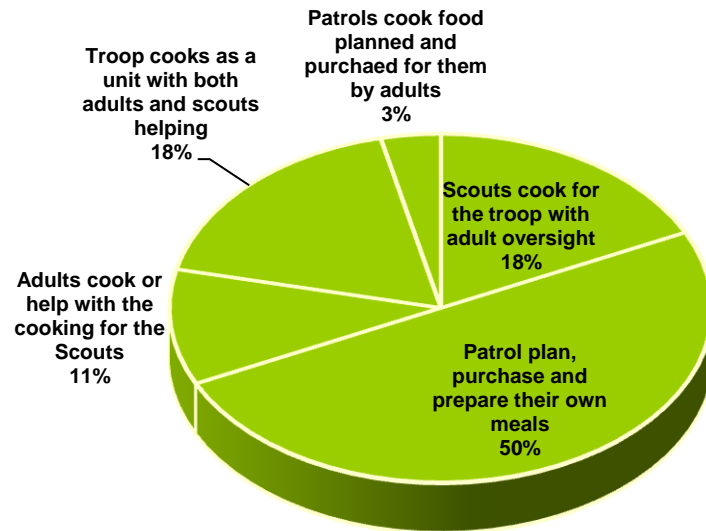
### THE REAL

50% of respondents report that patrols plan, purchase, and prepare their own meals.

50% of respondents report that adults have some involvement with the cooking.

### THE IDEAL

Patrols need to have ongoing patrol responsibilities that give them the opportunity to exercise both Scout skills and the group dynamics of accomplishing challenging work<sup>33</sup>. Patrols should be frequently planning, purchasing and preparing their own meals. Patrols should be doing this as a patrol to bond and build patrol spirit. See the Scoutmaster Handbook Chapter 9.



### DISCUSSION

The goal is to give the patrols the responsibility to fend for themselves. Give them the tools to get the job done (suggested food lists, training on how to safely use stoves, how to shop, etc.) and then give them more and more responsibility to do this themselves. Johnny is probably not going to starve to death if the patrol didn't bring all the right food on one campout and they will learn to be prepared next time.

If you do a lot of backpacking, it can be great for developing the patrol method if the patrols are expected to camp and cook by patrol. Don't fall into the habit of allowing pairs of Scouts or individual Scouts to cook for themselves. For a lot of Scouts this is easier to do because they don't have to deal with a group's taste in food, but it defeats the training in leadership we are trying to develop.

The troop must provide the training and practice to teach the Scouts how to shop wisely for food for a given campout. If you leave the shopping up to an appointed "grubmaster" the one doing the shopping is likely to be Mom which doesn't teach this skill to the Scout. Scoutmasters will have to escort new patrols in this activity until they are use to doing it themselves and not just having the grubmaster ask his mom to purchase the food.

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<sup>33</sup> "The Patrol System has also a great character-training value if it is used aright. It leads each boy to see that he has some individual responsibility for the good of his Patrol. It leads each Patrol to see that it has definite responsibility for the good of the Troop. Through it the Scoutmaster is able to pass on not only his instruction but his ideas as to the moral outlook of his Scouts. Through it the Scouts themselves gradually learn that they have considerable say in what their Troop does. It is the Patrol System that makes the Troop, and all Scouting for that matter, a real co-operative effort." – Baden-Powell; Aids to Scoutmastership; 1920

Have them cook by patrol. By having the patrols fend for themselves in this manner, more patrol leaders and Scouts learn responsibility and have an opportunity to practice leadership. It is important that the patrols learn to rely on themselves here. It also gives each patrol the ability to cook what they want to their own taste. That is hard to do if they are cooking for the entire troop.

## **RESPONDENTS COMMENTS**

*Scouts plan their own menus and often purchase the food themselves.*

*It all depends upon the need for advancement, and what the guy would to eat and cook. More often we all work together - scouts and leaders*

*None of above. Patrol members on an outing will often plan meals together. Most outings are backpack and therefore limited in possible items...*

*Parents help on the individual scout level...ie, mom or dad helps scout purchase items*

*Do you trust a 12 year-old to cook your meals?*

*This varies with attendance. If enough scouts attend from each patrol, then patrol method (including separate adult patrol). If troop combines due to attendance, then troop members plan,shop,cook,clean. If adults and scouts are few, then scouts shop and all help with cooking & cleaning*

*That is the default they are supposed to cook for accompanying adults (I often advise those adults to have a backup). For our Webelos recruitment outing we do buy all the food (because we have - we hope - a large number of families joining us) - but the menu is worked out with them and mostly cooked by them*

*This can vary depending on the type of outing*

## 14. When we are camping

### THE REAL

7% of respondents report that patrols set up camp independently. 93% report that they do not (although 25% report that they have an area within the troop campsite). 50% report that patrols are not separated.

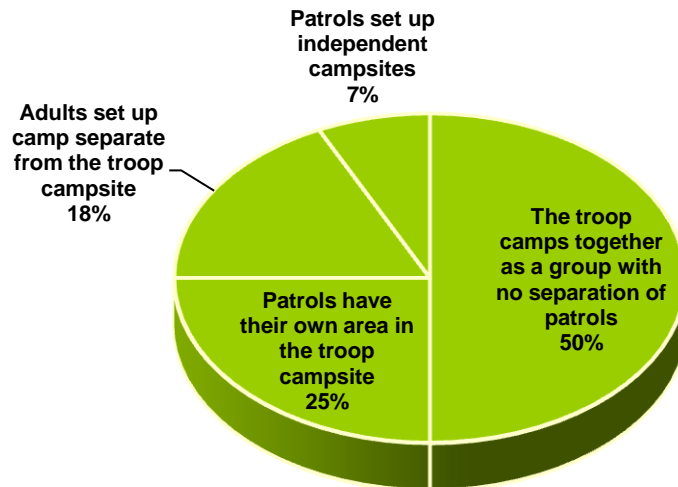
### THE IDEAL

Patrols need to have the independence to exercise their skills without constant adult oversight. As the Patrols mature the separation should be lengthened<sup>34</sup>.

### DISCUSSION

The proximity of adults and other patrols greatly affects the way a patrol functions. Ideally the majority of the time they spend camping they will be exclusively under their own leadership<sup>35</sup>.

It is also important to separate the patrols from each other. Baden-Powell recommended 100 yards of separation. That may be too far for many troops, but 100 feet certainly isn't. The goal is not only to keep the adults away from the Patrols, but to separate all the Patrols so as to develop the responsibility of each Patrol Leader for his distinct unit. They should camp at a distance from the adults and each other proportional to their abilities and maturity. They should feel "on their own."



<sup>34</sup> "The object of a camp is (a) to meet the boy's desire for the open-air life of the Scout, and (b) to put him completely in the hands of his Scoutmaster for a definite period for individual training in character and initiative and in physical and moral development. These objects are to a great extent lost if the camp be a big one. The only discipline that can there be earned out is the collective military form of discipline, which tends to destroy individuality and initiative instead of developing them; and, owing to there being too many boys for the ground, military drill has to a great extent to take the place of scouting practices and nature study. So it results that Scouts' camps should be small -- not more than one Troop camped together; and even then each Patrol should have its own separate tent at some distance (at least 100 yards) from the others. This latter is with a view to developing the responsibility of the Patrol Leader for his distinct unit. And the locality of the camp should be selected for its Scouting facilities." Outlook; Baden-Powell; October 1909.

<sup>35</sup> Two cautionary notes: 1. Keep patrols separate. If two or more patrols camp close together away from SPL/Adults, problems will often escalate. 2. Leaders should do some walking about. If you either observe or have reported some significant un-Scout-like activities in the remote camps (language is always first), the PL gets some immediate quality time with SPL (with SM observing) and that patrol may lose their privilege to camp remotely until they prove they are ready. They hate that.

Avoid using ad hoc patrols (patrols that are formed for a given event). I have found that it puts peer pressure on the patrol members for everyone to attend events if the patrol suffers the consequences of members not showing up to them. Combining Scouts to form ad hoc "patrols" for an event undermines the patrol spirit you are trying to build in each patrol.

## **RESPONDENTS COMMENTS**

*We allow for a bit of patrol choice when camping sites are selected but all within sight of the leaders*

*We only have one patrol.*

*I would like to do separate areas for each patrol, but we tend to be smaller groups camping - and in smaller sites. We often end up having to combine down to just two patrols - they DO do all their own separate cooking, cleaning, and duties (and I have to bring a list of who is in what camping patrol to keep them straight)*

*Also, the patrols are not separated.*

## 15. On average our patrols have independent meetings/activities

### THE REAL

68% of respondents report that patrols never or rarely meet independently. 32% report that they do but only 14% do so at least once a month.

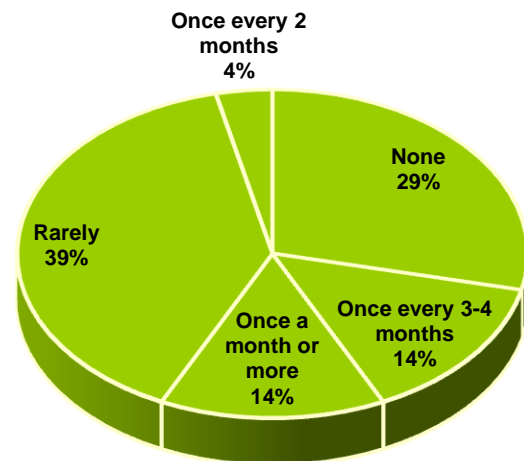
### THE IDEAL

Patrols should be able to function on their own without the troop. They should have independent meetings and events (camping trips, hikes, etc.) separate from troop meetings and other patrols.<sup>36</sup>

### DISCUSSION

Time and scheduling is usually cited as the reason that patrols do not meet independently. Altering the troop meeting schedule allows patrols to meet on their own and have their own independent activities.

Your goal is to try to get your patrols to the stage where the Scouts know each other well enough and can work together effectively and efficiently. "They trust one another enough to allow independent activity. Members are motivated and knowledgeable. They are considerate of one another and respect one another. Roles and responsibilities change according to need in an almost seamless way. There is strong group identity, strong group loyalty and high morale. The team solves problems in creative ways that maximize use of team resources. Dissent is expected and is handled respectfully in a way that is acceptable to the entire team. All of the energy of the Patrol can be directed towards the tasks at hand. All for one and one for all!"<sup>37</sup>



<sup>36</sup> Note: A Boy Scout patrol or Varsity Scout squad may participate in patrol activities (without an adult) with the permission of its Scoutmaster or Coach and parents/guardians. Appropriate adult leadership must be present for all overnight Scouting activities. See the Guide to Safe Scouting for more information.

<sup>37</sup> [A Scout Leader's Guide to Youth Leadership Training](#); by Rob Farris, Ted Knight, Harry Wimbrough; Thornsby Bailey and Brown, Inc.; 2009; page 67

You won't get there overnight. But to get there, you need to give encourage it and the patrols a chance for independence. Separate patrol camping sites as they mature, at distances that make the Scouts feel separate and independent patrol meetings and activities should be part of your normal operation.

## **RESPONDENTS COMMENTS**

*Patrols often meet separately during a Troop meeting.*

*None of above. varies by patrol. Outside meetings are encouraged. Some patrols have meetings others do not.*

*Again, this varies based on the activities of the scouts. Some patrols (especially younger scouts) like to meet more often*

*Working on this one!!*

*We only have one patrol.*

*This depends on the Patrol leader during his elected period*

*Would be nice*

*NEVER*

## 16. Our skill instruction is mostly planned and carried out by

### **THE REAL**

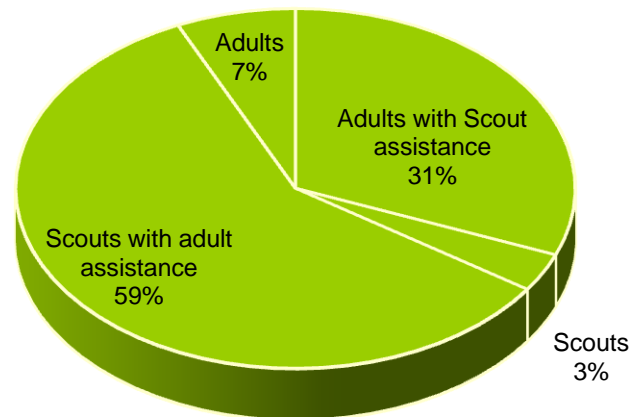
93% of respondents report that Scouts have a role in instruction. 3% report that Scouts do all of the instruction. 36% report that adults have the key responsibility for instructing.

### **THE IDEAL**

Scouts should be instructing Scouts at every opportunity.

### **DISCUSSION**

This is another example of giving Scouts the opportunity to develop and exercise skills. The adult role is teaching them and mentoring their skills. To teach the junior leaders the skills you can have separate meetings or events. Bill Hillcourt introduced a concept of a "Green bar Patrol" That being the PLC on a camping trip headed by the Scoutmaster. The Scoutmaster teaches the Patrol Leaders a skill, say Dutch oven cooking, or a few skills during the campout. The Patrol Leaders then bring those skills back to the troop and teach the Scouts.<sup>38</sup>



### **RESPONDENTS COMMENTS**

*The third choice has a type: "adutl" (Yea, I noticed -bill)*

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<sup>38</sup> For an extensive discussion on the Green Bar Patrol campout see the Handbook for Scoutmasters; BSA; 1936. An example [Green Bar training campout is here](#)

*We don't have skill instruction.*

*Adult (sp) guests and counselors on skill topic may be included with reinforcement by older scouts*

*At the PLC we decide what and how and who beyond that I will pull in older scouts to teach things as they come up (if we have extra time to plug something in)*

## 17. In our troop directions to scouts are given

### THE REAL

57% of respondents report that youth leadership has the key responsibility for directing Scouts. 25% report that youth leaders are almost exclusively directing. 14% report that direction is almost exclusively given by adults.

### THE IDEAL

Scouts should be directing Scouts at every opportunity.

### DISCUSSION

An adult directly speaking to a Scout in order to tell them what to do should be a relatively rare occurrence.

Scouts should go to their Patrol Leader with questions and directions. Patrol Leaders should go to their SPL

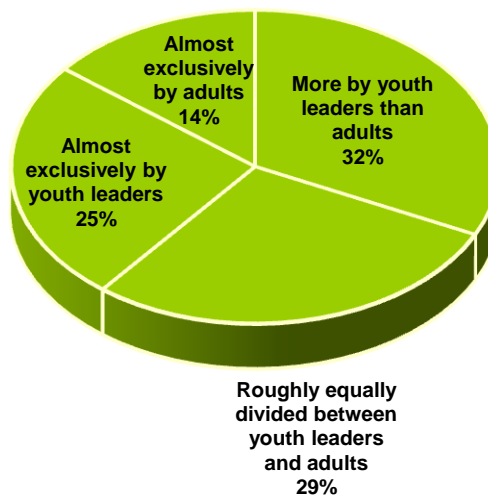
The SPL should go to the Scoutmaster. Adults should answer the Scouts' questions about routine details by saying, 'Ask your Patrol

Leader; he knows!' instead of giving them the answer yourself. This will help to develop in them a certain amount of respect for those leaders, to whom they have to look for vital facts and guidance. This is true for all sorts of directions. Including where to pitch camp, when to pack up camp, cleaning camp and meeting rooms, when to leave, etc. Scouts should also be making these decisions as much as possible as well.

There may be times for safety sake that adults give the Scouts direction, but those times are usually rare.

Adults have pride in their troop and their Scouts and want them to succeed. Unfortunately that often leads adults into barking orders at the Scouts to get them 'ship shape.' When you do that you are instantly undermining your Junior Leadership. Every time you undermine your Jr. Leadership you are working against your goal to teach them leadership skills.

Ask yourself why adults are making announcements at troop meetings? Why isn't the SPL? Is it because no one told him about it and to request an announcement be made? After all it is his meeting, and he is suppose to be in charge of the troop program. Remember, every time an adult gets in front of the troop it communicates to the troop that the real leaders are the adults.



More information here: <http://bsatroop14.com/patrolmethod/>

## **RESPONDENTS COMMENTS**

*Just depends upon the nature of the directions*

*Varies by type of activity. We attempt to have all activities directed by youth leaders.*

*Announcements of meet-up locations and carpooling to training, trips, service projects are made by adults and yes....we know that the scouts should but they do forget to add it to the troop meeting announcements occasionally and, when needed, an adult is given the opportunity to give these reminders*

*I like the variety of choices in this survey. we try to have the scout leadership do as much as possible - there is some prodding/reminding of the leaders to get them to do it sometimes (but I'd have adults prodding/reminding me if I were doing all of it)*

The direction that is given by Scouts is generated at the Scoutmaster level...He instructs the boys what to say and how he wants it done.

## 18. Our troop outings are planned by

### THE REAL

This question is similar to the question concerning who plans the meetings, and the results are similar as well.

92% of respondents report at least some direct involvement of adults in the planning process. Only 8% report that the planning is wholly accomplished by the Scouts. 54% report that planning is largely or wholly accomplished by the adults.

### THE IDEAL

Youth leadership should be planning and executing every aspect of the program. A few details may be left to adults. The PLC should be planning the events. Scouts in the patrols should make sure their patrol leader represents their interests, but the planning is made at the PLC<sup>39</sup>. See the Scoutmaster Handbook and the Senior Patrol Leaders Handbook.

### DISCUSSION

Youth leadership should have all principle responsibilities for planning. They will need increasingly smaller amounts of advice as they learn. There is no reason why high school boys can't plan a weekend backpacking trip for example.

As much as possible let the Scouts plan the activities they want to do, not necessarily the activities the committee or Scoutmaster wants them to do. For example, if the PLC votes to go car camping and you think they should go backpacking, let them go car camping.

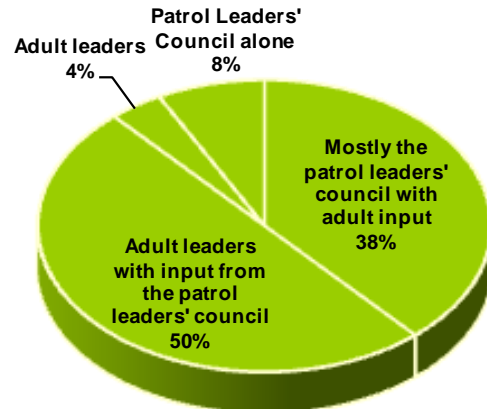
### RESPONDENTS COMMENTS

*11 outings are selected by the boys from a list of 20 to 30 prepared by boys and leaders. More ideas the better. Than outing flyers are prepared by an adult and permits pulled. Activities at each outing are selected by boys and leaders.*

*Survey of ALL scouts*

*Depends on the complexity of the outing and the paperwork needed to complete*

*Annual planning mtg with Scouts*



<sup>39</sup> "The best progress is made in those Troops where power and responsibility are really put into the hands of the Patrol Leaders. This is the Secret of success in Scout Training." Baden-Powell; Aids to Scoutmastership; 1920

*We are planning to get the scouts more involved in this - though the details are tough due to the lead time involved in permits and all. I mean the actual selection of locations - scouts do plan the activities AT the outings. We try to get input from the scouts - offer an array of choices for "mid range backpacking" for example. It's hard for them to imagine or commit far ahead I think - and we're at the point at which if we have adults who want to do it, it's probably a good choice (vs something we can't get adults for so it won't happen at all)*

I have tried to push this responsibility to the SPL/PLs, but have yet to see sufficient competency to release control.

Yearly planning meeting that Scouts and Parents are encouraged to attend and nominate trips.

## **19. Adults are directly involved in the action at troop meetings, patrol meetings and outings**

### ***THE REAL***

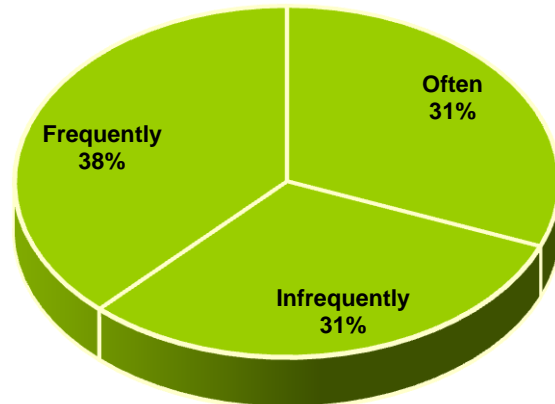
69% of respondents report that adults are often or frequently involved in the action. 31% report that this involvement is less frequent. No one reported that this is very rare.

### ***THE IDEAL***

Adult involvement is an indication of youth leader responsibility. Outside of providing transportation and ensuring safety, adults should strive to stay away from interfering with troop meetings, patrol meetings and outings.

### ***DISCUSSION***

Adults should be mindful of how their presence affects the dynamic of leadership. Scouts will default to adults for leadership and direction if they are present.



## RESPONDENTS COMMENTS

*Not running them, just keeping the meetings moving forward and adding color and accuracy when and if needed.*

*Sometimes would have been a better choice.*

*Adults are always drivers on outings and we need at least two adult leaders for any outings*

*I sometimes suggest to the SPL and ASPLs that they get adults involved to supervise some activities - and they always have to have adults supervising when they play on the field outside (there was a bad fight years ago that still stings)*

Scoutmaster Minute Chaplain Minute Announcements

Rarely ever....and we Never have a Scoutmaster minute

## 20. Plans made our by youth leaders are

### THE REAL

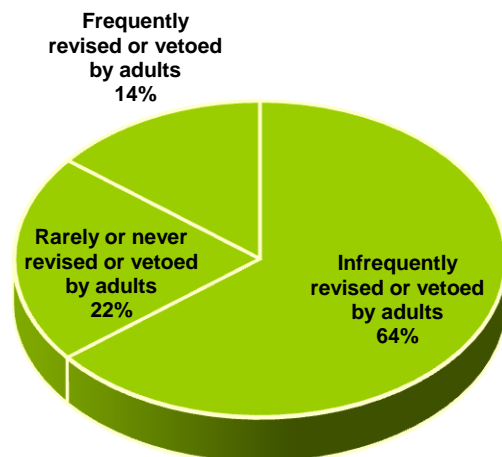
78% of respondents report that Scout's plans are revised or vetoed by adults. 14% report that this is a frequent occurrence.

### THE IDEAL

Scout planning should be respected within the bounds of safety and propriety<sup>40</sup>. See the Scoutmaster's Handbook.

### DISCUSSION

Encouraging Scouts to plan, seeing that their plans are thorough and getting them into action is an ongoing challenge for most of us. We should respond to any indication of initiative and build on it. Scoutmasters have always reserved the right to veto if in the best interest of safety or the troop. However, altering or vetoing their plans should be an infrequent occurrence. If you make it a regular occurrence you are communicating to the Scouts that it isn't their troop, and they aren't the real leaders of it. You are telling them in no uncertain terms that it is your troop and you are the leader.



<sup>40</sup> [The Development of the Patrol Method in the BSA](#), Bill Nelson 2010

If you find that you are augmenting their plans because they forgot to add or think about something, then utilizing one of the many BSA forms available in the Scoutmaster Handbook, or you creating one for them to utilize may be a good alternative.

## **RESPONDENTS COMMENTS**

*Bad question - we try to provide quality comments and re-direction if so needed.*

*Reviewed for safety and chaperone concerns*

*If an event conflicts with another that will better benefit the troop in the long run (Ex: patrol backpack planned on Scouting for Food weekend)*

*Well, hard to answer this - depends on what you mean by "plans" - there are a LOT of things at the "idea" stage that get shot down (with explanation), but if they actually plan something it is usually going to happen. We had scouts work up a new red-jacket patch award system - completely on their own. The fact that they did it and presented it meant more than the thing itself (so, of course, we did it)*

## **21. Patrols are reshuffled or change**

### **THE REAL**

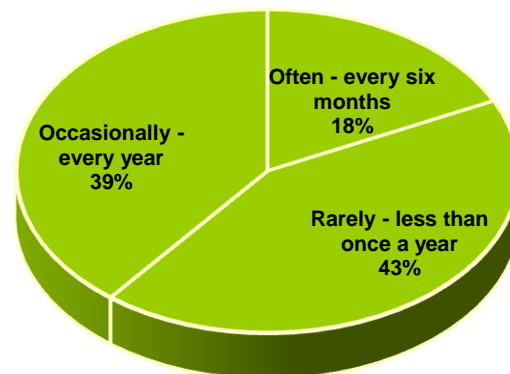
82% of respondents report that patrols are reshuffled each year or less. 18% report that this happens at least every six months.

### **THE IDEAL**

Patrols should have a definite identity; membership based on Scout choice and should have some continuity over time.

### **DISCUSSION**

Patrols with long continuity are probably an asset to applying the patrol method. That being said dealing with attrition to keep a patrol at functional levels and a Scouts preference for teaming up with his fellow Scouts is important to a successful patrol.



## **RESPONDENTS COMMENTS**

*We try and keep the boys together, but many times different patrols will buddy up and work as a larger group.*

*When and if they do this - it is there choice we just try and make things safe and moving forward*

*Maybe Never...*

*We only have one patrol.*

*In past years, fewer new scouts joined, so patrols were mixed. We enlisted enough new (former Webelos) members this year to have a New Scout patrol. If this trend continues, patrols may be more stable.*

*I've never been sure what's the right thing here - we don't change them much unless there is an issue - scouts that can't get along - or patrols losing scouts. We hope that the incoming Webelos allow us to balance things up, but if they don't we have to work things out so that there is some balance between the patrols, by age, rank, and actual attendance*

Every 6 months

## 22. Our adult leadership

### THE REAL

17% of respondents use the patrol method without any modifications. 45% modify the patrol method. 28% aspire to use the patrol method and 10% are uninterested.

### THE IDEAL

The patrol method should be the central focus of the Scouting program. See the Scoutmaster's Handbook, chapter 4.

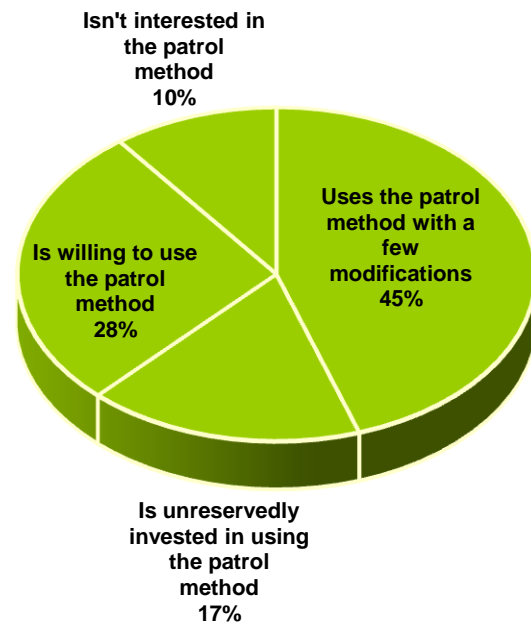
### DISCUSSION

The patrol method is probably not really the patrol method if it is deliberately modified. To be truly effective the Patrol Method should be applied directly and as fully as possible. In real life that is hard to accomplish. As I mentioned before, the best advice I can give here is to work diligently towards full implementation of the Patrol Method.

Instilling youth leadership can be done all at once or it might be a gradual process depending on where your troop is at. The BSA's model in teaching boys how to lead is through them leading the troop. You are there as a coach and mentor.

It is often productive to establish achievable goals and work towards them; for example, PLCs where the adults don't say anything or a troop meeting without adults speaking up even for announcements. Slowly add more complex goals, maybe eventually even a stretch goal of having annual planning events where the adults don't participate<sup>41</sup>.

Also realize that developing strong youth leaders in your troop takes time and the Scouts won't be there forever. From my experience, on average, an SPL takes approximately six months to learn his job and a Scoutmaster takes approximately one year. As with most teachers we Scoutmasters find that after years of effort and just when youth leadership in the troop starts to hum, the leaders go off to college and we



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<sup>41</sup> A good discussion on this topic can be found in chapter 14 of the Scoutmaster's Other Handbook by Mark Ray; 2010

now have to teach new leaders part way or maybe all the way over again about organizational skills, conflict resolution, etc. etc. Welcome to the world of training!<sup>42</sup>

Towards this end, the district training committee has tried to provide all troops with a number of tools and classes to help you to teach the Scouts to organize their troops and allow the troops to truly become Scout run troops. Check out our [district resources page](#) at [www.bsatroop14.com/district](http://www.bsatroop14.com/district) .

If things are not going well, more training or coaching for the junior leadership is probably warranted and you should go back into the Scoutmaster Handbook and other materials and review how the BSA proposes the program be run.

For example, chaotic meetings probably mean that the Troop Meeting Plan as outlined in the Scoutmaster Handbook, is not being utilized and you are not having pre-meeting meetings with the SPL and post-meeting meetings with the PLC. Go back and review how those are suppose to work before giving up on the Patrol Method and jumping in and you leading a troop meeting.

Establish achievable goals and work towards them; for example, PLCs where the adults don't say anything or a troop meeting without adults speaking up. Slowly add more complex goals. Keep in mind that deliberately deviating from the Patrol Method can detract from the experience for your Scouts.

More information on what the Patrol Method is can be found at [www.bsatroop14.com/patrolmethod](http://www.bsatroop14.com/patrolmethod) More information is in the Scoutmaster Handbook, the Patrol Leaders Handbook and the Senior Patrol Leaders Handbook on how to run the program.

## CONCLUSIONS

There seems to be a great deal of interest in the patrol method and an equal number of challenges in its application. These challenges are principally due to the reluctance to use the patrol method on the part of adults and experiences where unprepared Scouts have caused chaotic troop meetings or actives. A part of this is due to a lack of understanding, part to an aversion to uncertainty and part due to a lack of understanding of how crucial patrols are to the goals of Scouting. Much of these issues can be overcome with the proper training of the Scouts and the adult leaders and the application of the tools the BSA has provided for the program.

### Some Typical Youth Led Troop Problems

- Troop Meetings or activities are boring
- Troop Meetings or activities are chaotic
- Low attendance at troop meetings or activities

### Solutions

- Make sure PLC produces a full agenda for every meeting and activity until the next PLC (see Troop Program Features and SM Handbook)

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<sup>42</sup> From a very experienced Scoutmaster: "The first time a bird spreads its wings to fly, it crashes to earth, often painfully. The parent picks up the bird, pushes it to the brink again, and urges it to flight. This process may need repeated many times, but in the end an Eagle takes flight. That success gives the Eagle the courage needed to be prepared for life. However, the true satisfaction belongs to the one who dusted that young man off, and pushed him to his limit, allowing him to realize his potential. Sure, the grizzled old SM gives a sigh of weariness with each new group of crossovers, but he rises to the occasion. It is in such a way that we are challenged, our limits pushed, and we grow. Sometimes we fail, and crash to earth , sometimes painfully. The difference is we know what we are capable of, and pick ourselves up."

- Make sure the meetings have value and are productive for ALL Scouts, not just the ones going on the campout, or taking one merit badge.
- Make sure there is something to do for every patrol at every level
- Encourage patrol spirit, each Scout should think his patrol is the best in the troop.
- Make sure SPL follows up on any outstanding agenda items
- Make sure SPL brings the agenda to every meeting and follows it
- Have pre-meeting meetings with SPL to confirm agenda
- Have post meeting meetings with SPL and Patrol Leaders to review what happened at the meeting (Start, Stop, Continue) and to preview next meeting or activity's agenda
- All planning and as much as possible other directions should flow from the SPL to the Patrol Leaders. The Patrol leaders should meet with their patrols to relay the directions. This instills the Patrol Leader as a leader, not just someone on an organizational chart.
- Have Interpatrol competitions at every opportunity. And make them fun!

Also realize that if the PLC fails when executing an activity or a meeting, it isn't a bad impression of your leadership. Be proud of them, they are trying and it is all part of the learning experience. And you let them try! Have a reflection on the event with the PLC and use the Start, Stop, and Continue tool you and the Scouts [learned in training](#).

Let me add a story to the mix --

*I know of a troop that was pretty much an adult-led, troop method, advancement-oriented troop, with do-nothing positions of responsibility and a World's Oldest SPL of an SM. When the SM was asked about the patrol method, he'd answer "we're working on that." But meanwhile, the troop was purchasing a giant carport ("we can fit the entire troop under it"), a large 3-burner propane stove and a trailer to fit it all in. Adult leaders felt they had to boss around "youth leaders" and other Scouts, because otherwise "we'll never get anything done." The situation was bleak.*

*A new parent came along, asked a few questions, went to committee meetings, and otherwise kept his eyes open and his mouth shut (except when asked). First thing that was noticed that youth leaders didn't act as patrol leaders because 1) they'd never seen a Patrol Leader in action, and 2) nobody taught them how. The SM was not doing youth training at all.*

*The situation is better now, but it started with advocating at the committee level. "Do you want to have a youth-led troop, or not?" and gentle reminders. A couple of youth were sent to Brownsea 22 (the old "All Out For Scouting" syllabus) training, and training was offered at the troop level to all prospective Patrol Leaders. During the training, they were given a set of challenges, such as "take back ownership of the annual calendar", "take back operation of the troop via the PLC" and "run your patrol according to the National Honor Patrol criteria" and others.*

*The World's Oldest SPL still needs reminders. Although he admitted to other committee members "I didn't think you could do it" (well, we did it by actually turning over responsibility and mentoring -- funny how that actually works). But at the same time, at the last committee meeting, he was looking for agreement to buy two giant Dutch ovens ("hell, we can feed the whole troop with those things"). I fear he still doesn't get it.*

*The bottom line is that it isn't easy -- it takes constant reminders about stepping out of the way. We have a new crop of adults joining the troop this spring, and they need to be taught too. There*

*are some that still don't get that it isn't supposed to be father-son camping. Sometimes it takes a "this is a 100-year old youth leadership development program, and the way it is supposed to work is that adults are supposed to step back and let them lead -- they make mistakes, and it isn't always pretty, but they're learning"<sup>43</sup>.*

The moral of the story is that you will never get there if you don't try.

Remember, being a good Scoutmaster is so much more than having a boy led troop. It is caring about each and every boy and his success. It is about earning their respect through service and friendship. Scouting is ever changing, but this does not change.

For more information on the patrol method and training junior leaders see:

[http://bsatroop14.com/patrolmethod/Teaching\\_jr\\_leaders.ppt](http://bsatroop14.com/patrolmethod/Teaching_jr_leaders.ppt) and <http://bsatroop14.com/patrolmethod/>

I hope to have offered some insight into the challenges and some direction for a way forward.

Train 'em, Trust 'em, and Let Them Lead!<sup>44</sup>

## **THE AUTHOR**

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<sup>43</sup> Story from outside Grand Canyon Council, used with permission.

<sup>44</sup> Handbook for Scoutmasters; by William Hillcourt; BSA; 1936