RACE, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION: OBSERVATIONAL STUDY

2020 Data Use Meeting

A Collaborative Initiative:

MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY
**Institute for Research on Youth
Thriving and Evaluation**

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DEMOGRAPHICS

The observation team explored what variations exist in trainings across the BSA organization by observing an advanced leadership training, known as Wood Badge.

Racial composition of Wood Badge training participants tended to be disproportionately white. That is, in all nine of the observed Wood Badge trainings, participants were primarily white (ranging from 73% to 100%). In all but one training, the **percentage of white participants at the training** was higher than the **percentage of white people in the county** where the training was held. The exception to this rule was at WB-1-W, where 73% of the participants were white compared to 78% white residents in the county.
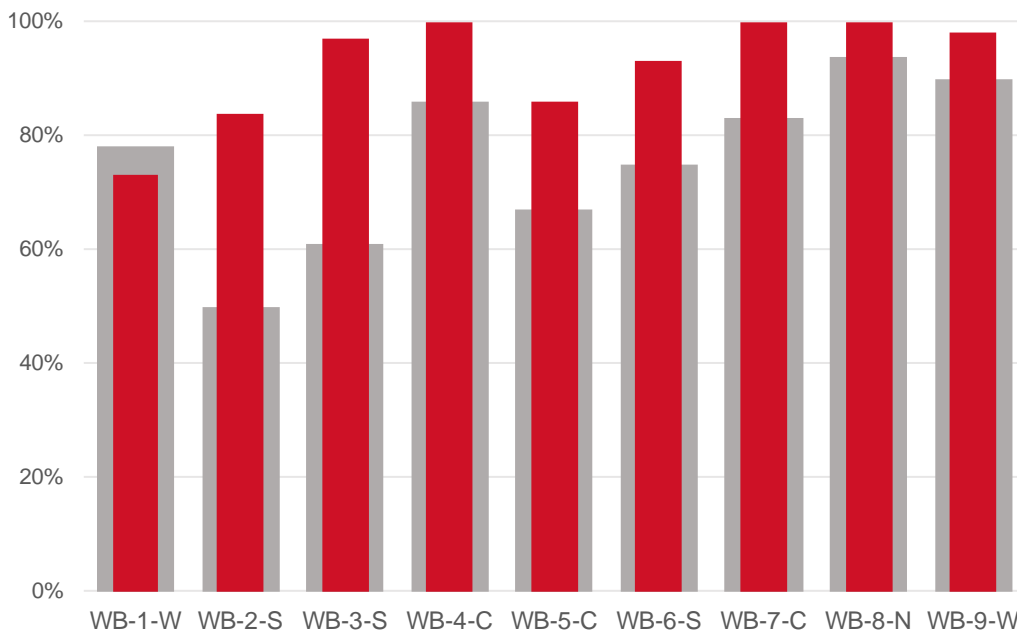
Likewise, the majority of participants at observed Wood Badge trainings were **male**. This ranged from 60% male at WB-1-W to 90% male at WB-7-C. The largest proportion of **non-male** participants attended the WB-1-W training and accounted for 40% of attendees.
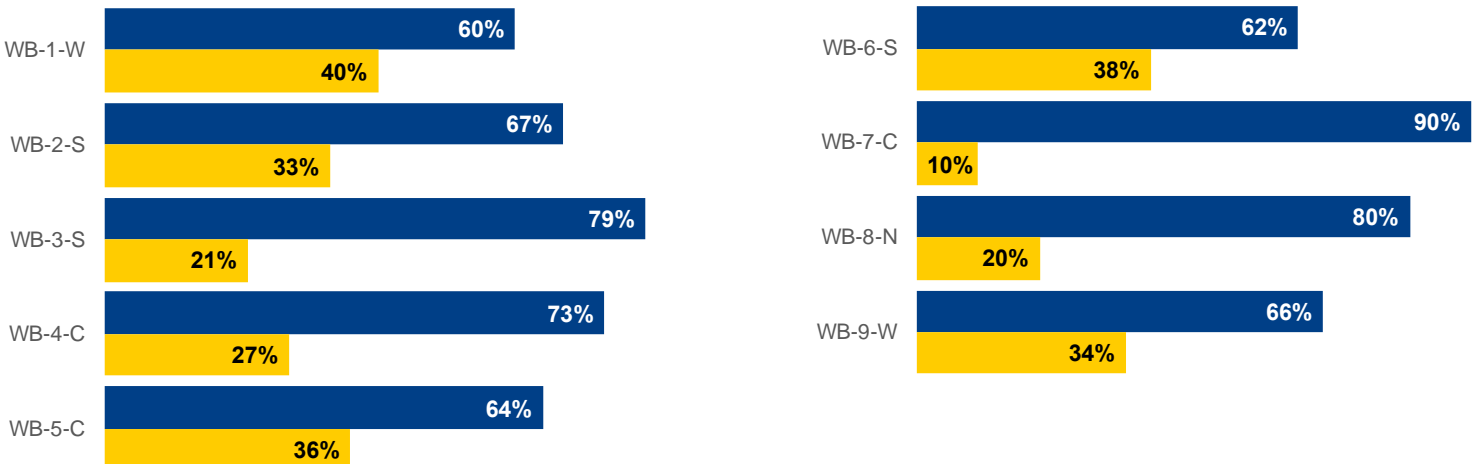
METHODS

The observation team reached out to staff at 14 Wood Badge courses to participate in the study. Of those, staff at 11 courses agreed to allow observers at their training. Two were cancelled due to low numbers of registered participants and were thus not observed. In total, nine Wood Badge courses were observed.

When a course was observed, two researchers attended the selected training modules and independently recorded their observations through field notes. Generally, Wood Badge takes place over two weekends, although occasionally it is held in a consecutive six-day sequence. Every effort was made to have the same observers attend both weekends for the trainings. One of the courses was held over a continuous six-day sequence, so observers' single site visit was elongated. Thus, observers made 17 total site visits to Wood Badge courses.

The number of participants at Wood Badge trainings ranged from a low of 31 participants to a high of 55 participants. There were no instances of attrition between the two weekends of Wood Badge. That is, all participants present at the first weekend of Wood Badge training returned for the second weekend. The following table represents Wood Badge Training recruitment and attendance.

Code-assigned	Response	Cancellation	Participants
WB-1-W	Accepted		48
WB-2-S	Accepted		45
Unobserved course in S	Declined		
WB-3-S	Accepted		39
Unobserved course in W	No response		
WB-4-C	Accepted		55
WB-5-S	Accepted		36
WB-6-S	Accepted		42
WB-7-C	Accepted		48
Unobserved course in N	Accepted	Cancelled	
WB-8-N	Accepted		31
Unobserved course in W	Accepted	Cancelled	
Unobserved course in W	Declined		
WB-9-W	Accepted		48

Wood Badge is an immersive experience. Participants eat, sleep, and learn with fellow adult Scouting volunteers for five or six days. In addition to formal presentations led by trainers, participants also engage in large-group and small-group activities, play games, and demonstrate what they have learned through the development of their own content. Prior to data collection, two researchers attended a Wood Badge course as full participants. That is, they signed up as participants with a local Wood Badge course and went through two weekends of camping and intensive leadership activities. While researchers were outsiders to the BSA organization, not being scouting volunteers or professionals themselves, they were nevertheless welcomed to participate by Wood Badge staff and participants alike. As a result, each completed the training as would a normal participant—joining a patrol, camping in tents, helping to cook over campfires, playing games, and developing skits and activities with the rest of their teammates.

As a result of this experience, researchers narrowed down key components of the Wood Badge course to observe consistently over time. It was decided that researchers would focus on large-group activities to avoid intrusion into intimate settings and would stay in the field for two to four hours per day of the training to avoid burn-out. The following sessions were selected for observation:

- Course Overview
- Values, Mission, and Vision
- Wood Badge Game Show
- The Game of Life
- Troop Meeting
- The Leading EDGE/The Teaching EDGE
- Generations in Scouting
- Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Problem Solving Round Robin
- Coaching and Mentoring
- Conservation Project
- Interfaith Service
- Servant Leadership

These sessions were selected to represent a range of activity-types, days of the course, and times of day. During the course of the project, BSA was updating the Wood Badge curriculum. This update included a pilot version of the course, tested at 8 different sites across the regions. The syllabus for this new course was in flux during the observational timeline. However, observers attended two pilot courses for observation.

Two researchers attended each Wood Badge session, each independently taking jottings (handwritten notes) while in the field. These jottings were later converted into written narratives describing the training. While in the field, researchers wore BSA uniforms, as was requested by training staff to diminish the distraction that observers would present at Wood Badge. On site, researchers sat in on large group sessions— typically occupying a pair of chairs off to the side or in the back of the room. Researchers introduced themselves to staff and participants and explained the purpose of the study. They interacted with staff and participants when approached but otherwise attempted to remain unobtrusive.

A standardized template was constructed to guide observers' note-taking. This template instructed observers to describe trainers and participants, to detail the information delivered in sessions, to make note of interactions between facilitators and participants, to capture verbatim quotes where possible, and to compare the sessions observed on-the-ground with the instructions provided in the syllabus. Afterwards, full narratives were written in the form of field notes as soon as possible. In total, field notes for the Wood Badge observations total more than 1500 single-spaced pages.

CODING & ANALYSIS

DIVERSITY CODING

All Scoutmaster-specific and Wood Badge course training field notes were coded for instances of "diversity." This topic was explored through both a-priori suggestions (specifically those soliciting information on religion, race, and gender). Additional categories were created through an inductive process as other elements of diversity emerged in the coding process that were not captured in the above.

Field notes are the written account of researchers' experience at a given site. As such, they contain a number of elements, such as visual descriptions of the location, recollections of conversations, and descriptions of presentations. Field notes captured both what happened in observed training courses and/or sessions, as well as interactions with staff and participants before, in between, and after sessions. It should be noted that field notes also contain observer commentary.

Upon coding completion, the outputs were systematically examined, and themes and commentary surrounding each topic were noted. These thematic findings can be found below in bullet-point form. Examples are provided for each of the themes. Please note that these themes are not necessarily mutually exclusive to one another. Many coded instances are also two different field workers recounting the same incident.

IDENTIFIED THEMES

DEFINITION OR SENSE OF DIVERSITY. This theme captures instances where diversity is defined (or not defined), discussions of its importance more generally, and observer commentary on the matter. Below are its sub-themes and examples:

- Discussion of diversity item as a requirement for Wood Badge ticket
    - *He also stated that "one of the tickets must include an aspect of diversity."*

- Definition or examples of diversity are provided
    - *SPL[1] asks what he means by "diversity." A participant defines it as "differences" and SPL agrees.*

- Expressions that diversity in BSA is underdeveloped
    - *She starts talking to us a little bit about the presentation that she has after this. It is on diversity. She says that Scouting needs to have a better diversity presentation and program and that Boy Scouts' diversity training is inadequate and they need a better one.*

- Positive feelings towards diversity
    - *P1P6[2]: had an epiphany this week; Scouting had to be inclusive, never ignoring diversity in its ranks but engaging and learning from it head on; came up conversation of diversity in snacks, which was unexpected; "talk, learn, celebrate" diversity.*

- Skepticism or negative sentiments towards diversity
    - *The first speaker announces they are going to do a skit about diversi-tayyy, and he shows what he claims is ASL[3] for fox. The game they want to play is smart as a fox… [Something about the way the first speaker in the Foxes said diversity didn't sit well with me. It almost seemed like the way the word was said was meant to be sort of knocking the idea of it. It could be that this was just for humor, which, at least in the abstract, I could be made to understand. Given the emphasis on diversity in some of the sessions, particularly how it is supposed to be an element of the ticket, I would think there would be more reverence for it and its value to Scouting.]*

- Negative observer assessment of diversity discussion or implementation
    - *I had the impression here that T3[4] was just dropping the words diversity and inclusion in wherever he thought they could fit, and I wondered what he might say if someone challenged him, or asked him to explain why or how 'diversity' and 'inclusion' contributed to differences.*

- Observer commentary about the lack of discussion on race/ethnicity as a part of diversity
    - *He describes diversity in terms of age, gender, religion but didn't mention diversity in the sense of race or ethnicity.*

[1] Abbreviations with letters and numbers in excerpts refer to a person's role in the course as recorded by field worker. In this case, SPL stands for "Senior Patrol Leader" for the particular Wood Badge course.
[2] Patrol 1 Participant 6.
[3] American Sign Language
[4] Trainer 3

RACIAL & ETHNIC DIVERSITY OR COMMENTARY. This code was applied to instances of racial and ethnic differences as an aspect of diversity. It was not applied to demographic descriptors of participants or staff by observers. Below are its subthemes and examples:

- Discussions of racial and ethnic equality in the context of Wood Badge session (video clip prompting)
    - *Next, he plays a recording of Martin Luther King Jr.'s iconic "I have a dream" speech. This is another example of a vision that someone had. He asks the audience if we achieved this dream, and people say "not completely" "no" and other things like that progress had been made, but that it had not been universally achieved and that disparities and inequality still persisted. There is a moment of sober reflection. I am proud that this is acknowledged.*

- Examples of pursuing racial and ethnic inclusion
    - *His own involvement had started out cooking for the troop, which, because of its enrollment, involved cooking a more Indian-style cuisine, even on campouts and events. This proved to be a hit, even with Scouts in the troop (and their families, I think he said) who were not of Indian descent. If I recall correctly, this is also how P2P6[5] became involved; he came on and pitched in with the cooking end of things, but as his children became more involved in Scouting he felt he needed to "step up" and contribute more to the unit. They both saw diversity as an issue, in their community and in Scouting at large. In their community, there was a tendency to "[live] in bubbles", separate from the rest of the community and society. Scouting offered an opportunity for people of different backgrounds to come together and to plug in to something bigger, or perhaps just something different, from their own communities, values, etc. They said in a context like this (Wood Badge), there was an opportunity for them to share about their backgrounds, cultures, etc., just as there were opportunities for others to share and for them to learn.*

- Barriers or obstacles to ethnic/racial inclusion
    - *Staff Member 1 shares that several years ago, he was preparing to lead a Wood Badge course for a Vietnamese group. No one gave him the syllabus beforehand, so on the day of, he was just kind of winging it. He did this by reading off the syllabus. However, only half the group wound up speaking English. They then had to improvise and get a translator—but this took a great deal of time as he then repeated the syllabus verbatim, then the translator translated it, and then they fielded questions.*

- Sentiments that racial/ethnic diversity in BSA should be expanded
    - *To conclude the presentation, she says that scouting is really diverse from ages 5-80+, she is standing up there with the generations of her family that are present. Ethnicity matters too, though in addition to age when we talk about diversity. She is happy that scouting is reaching out to serve in new and unique ways.*

- Racially or ethnically insensitive commentary observed
    - *After fun, T3[6] chimed in, saying, "Fun—that's my Chinese neighbor's middle name." [This actually wasn't the last odd thing T3 said during the day, but it was the one comment that may have most reflected prejudice.]*

- Observer commentary on the lack of discussion of these features in diversity
    - *CD[7] begins to give more clarification on the ticket, explaining that it can be based either on one's current position in the organization or a position that one is "drawn to." He also states that "diversity" needs to be included as a ticket item. Here, he discusses his experience of "international camping" which I could not follow. He also mentions religious diversity. Again, this is another instance where race and ethnicity are not mentioned.*

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[5] Patrol 2 Participant 6
[6] Trainer 3
[7] Course Director

OTHER FORMS OF DIVERSITY. Finally, this code was created to capture instances of diversity in non-demographic or commonly recognized cultural terms. Below are its subthemes and examples:

- Diversity in scouting roles/units
    - *"Diversity can take many forms," and gave an example of how someone used his ticket to camp with a unit from another district (or council?). [Is this really the type of diversity BSA is aiming for? It says so in their syllabus, but the use of the word here does not line up with modern parlance.]*

- Diversity of communities
    - *It is important to acknowledge diversity. Shares that they have a mixture of schools in the community that their pack draws from but that they need to do more to diversify their pack and incorporate those different communities*

- Diversity across regions of the county
    - *A participant from Patrol 6 noted that there was usually a common denominator between people across generations; I think this is what was said--hearing participants as they chimed in with the whole group was difficult throughout this training. P2P2[8] returned to the idea of differences, suggesting that cities and regions might yield other differences, which interacted with generational differences in different ways. T3 replied, saying that the mentality and skills of people in these areas could well be different, too. "Very true," T3 said to P2P2, "great point."*

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[8] Patrol 2 Participant 2