



# **BUILDING EVIDENCE IN SCOUTING TOGETHER**

## **BSA BEST STUDY DATA USE RETREAT**

November 1 & 2, 2019

# **Scoutmaster-Specific Training**



**MONTCLAIR STATE**  
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Thriving and Evaluation



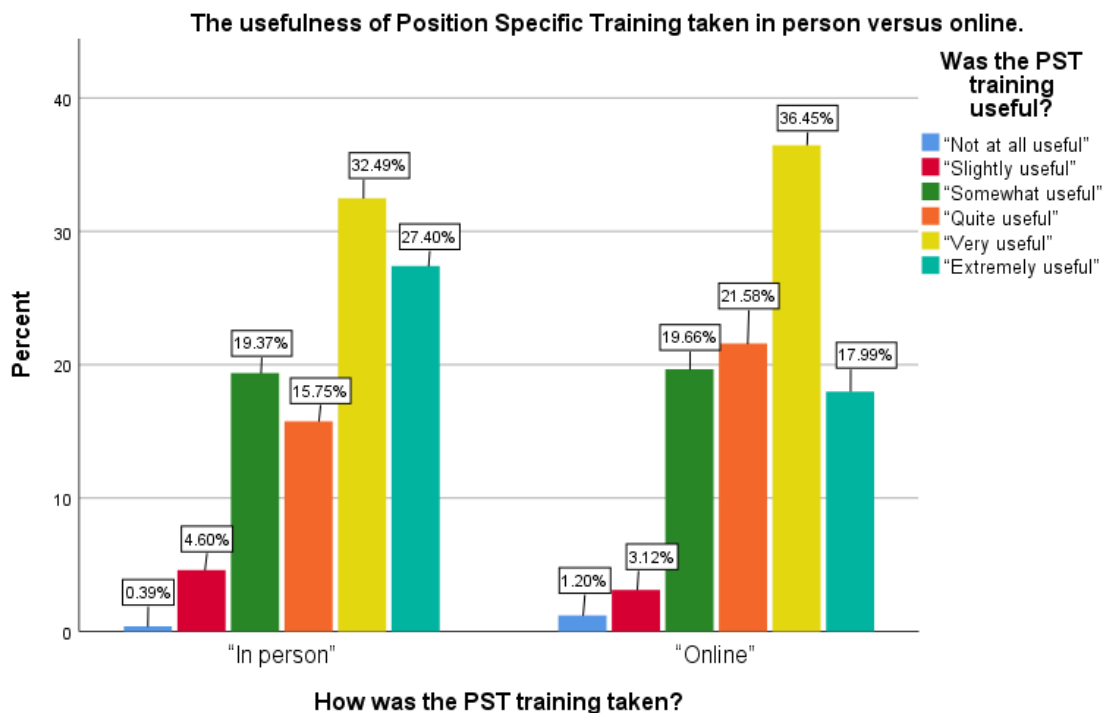
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## Scoutmaster-Specific Training

### Survey Findings

- **86.5%** of adult leaders took SMST
- **29%** of adult leaders took SMST **online**; **71%** of adult leaders took SMST **in person**
- **58.3%** of adult leaders said that SMST **was very useful** or **extremely useful**
- Scouters who thought SMST was very useful or extremely useful were more likely to have **not participated in scouting** as a youth, were **older**, and identified as **Non-white**



- **59.89%** of adult leaders who took SMST **in person** thought it was **very useful** or **extremely useful**
- **54.44%** of adult leaders who took SMST **online** thought it was **very useful** or **extremely useful**

**Role, years in that role, membership in OA, age, and education level were significant predictors of taking Scoutmaster Specific Training**

Demographic characteristics of scouts who attended SMST

		Full sample				
		Did attend the training		Did not attend the training		
Demographic characteristic	Group	n	%	n	%	Statistical significance
Role	SM	585	97.8%	13	2.2%	< 0.001
	ASM	861	80.8%	204	19.2%	
Leaders who took SMST were more likely to be SMs than ASMs						
Years in their current role	Average years	10.3		5.8		< 0.001
Leaders who took SMST were more likely to be in their role for longer						
Participated in scouting as a youth	Yes	1132	87.1%	168	12.9%	NS
	No	314	86.5%	49	13.5%	
Member of OA	Yes	888	91.1%	87	8.9%	< 0.001
	No	558	81.1%	130	18.9%	
Leaders who took SMST were more likely to be members of OA						
Gender	Male	1282	87.8%	178	12.2%	0.03
	Female/ other	141	82.0%	31	18.0%	
Leaders who took SMST were more likely to be male						
Age	Average age	51.3		44.4		< 0.001
Leaders who took SMST were more likely to be older						
Race/ ethnicity	White	1318	87.2%	193	12.8%	NS
	Non-white	109	86.5%	17	13.5%	
Religion	Christian	1212	87.4%	174	12.6%	NS
	Other	234	84.5%	43	15.5%	
Education	College graduate	983	90.3%	106	9.7%	< 0.001
	Not a college graduate	439	81.3%	101	18.7%	
Leaders who took SMST were more likely to be college educated						
Employment	Employed	1242	86.6%	192	13.4%	NS
	Not employed	182	91.5%	17	8.5%	
Income	≥ \$100,000	853	90.1%	94	9.9%	< 0.001
	< \$100,000	480	82.9%	99	17.1%	
Leaders who took SMST were more likely to have higher income						
Marital status	Married	1266	88.7%	162	11.3%	< 0.001
	Not married	155	76.7%	47	23.3%	
Leaders who took SMST were more likely to be married						
Child in scouting	Yes	1020	86.4%	160	13.6%	NS
	No	426	88.2%	57	11.8%	

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

**Age and having a child in scouting were significant predictors of taking Scoutmaster Specific Training online versus in person**

Demographic characteristics of scouters who took SMST in person versus online

		Full sample				
		Online		In person		
Demographic characteristic	Group	n	%	n	%	Statistical significance
Role	SM	143	24.5%	440	75.5%	0.002
	ASM	275	32.1%	583	67.9%	
Leaders who took SMST online were more likely to be ASMs than SMs						
Years in their current role	Average years	8.7		10.9		< 0.001
Leaders who took SMST online were more likely to be in their role for fewer years						
Participated in scouting as a youth	Yes	337	29.9%	791	70.1%	NS
	No	81	25.9%	232	74.1%	
Member of OA	Yes	231	26.1%	653	73.9%	0.002
	No	187	33.6%	370	66.4%	
Leaders who took SMST online were less likely to be a member of OA						
Gender	Male	367	28.7%	913	71.3%	NS
	Female/ other	41	29.3%	99	70.7%	
Age	Average age	48.9		52.3		< 0.001
Leaders who took SMST online were more likely to be younger						
Race/ ethnicity	White	380	28.9%	936	71.1%	NS
	Non-white	31	28.7%	77	71.3%	
Religion	Christian	342	28.3%	867	71.7%	NS
	Other	76	32.8%	156	67.2%	
Education	College graduate	272	27.7%	711	72.3%	NS
	Not a college graduate	137	31.4%	299	68.6%	
Employment	Employed	366	29.5%	876	70.5%	NS
	Not employed	44	24.6%	135	75.4%	
Income	≥ \$100,000	250	29.3%	603	70.7%	NS
	< \$100,000	140	29.3%	338	70.7%	
Marital status	Married	359	28.4%	904	71.6%	NS
	Not married	50	32.3%	105	67.7%	
Child in scouting	Yes	332	32.6%	687	67.4%	< 0.001
	No	86	20.4%	336	79.6%	
Leaders who took SMST online were more likely to have a child in scouting						

## What do SMs/ASMs identify as benefits of training?

In interviews, adult leaders reported that SMST increased their **knowledge** of the **BSA organization**, the **youth-led** philosophy, **Scouting** methods, and how to create and maintain a **safe environment** for troop members.

*...Scoutmaster Specific, especially when you transitioned from the Cub Scout program, which is a parent-boy program, when you transition into Boy Scouts, which is a boy led program, that training helps to set the tone for where you should be present and where you shouldn't. [...] So, one of the key phrases that we like to use is, "Never do anything that a youth can do." Right? So, let them do it. If they need help, you can help them. But don't do it for them.*

*There's also what they call position specific training, which is just the Scoutmaster [...] committee members to try and make sure that they've got at least an exposure to being safe with kids, keeping yourself safe.*

Adult leaders also emphasized **networking** and **learning from other adult leaders** as benefits of SMST--it should be noted, though, that these benefits depend on taking SMST in person.

*The biggest thing that the trainings that I have received for the Scoutmaster position gave me was the networking with other leaders.*

*The position-specific training for Scoutmaster I had taken when I first started was much more beneficial in person, because when I was taking it, it was just starting to be required, so there were a lot of Scouters with years of experience there that we could bounce ideas off of.*

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

Some adult leaders who had more experience in Scouting as youth reported that SMST was **redundant** for them, as they already had experience and knowledge of the BSA organization, how troops are run and outdoor skills.

*I think a lot of the position specific training, because of my Scouting background, I don't know if it added a bunch to it. I think for someone who maybe doesn't have a Scout background, it would be just fine.*

*Not so much because I was an Eagle Scout, there was little that I wasn't already aware of, and I had already done camping recently with the Scouts and the Cub Scouts and all of that.*

## **SMST Observation Findings**

Researchers found that attendance at SMST was limited and resulted in frequent cancellations. Of the 10 training sites that we contacted, 8 agreed to participate in the study. Of those 8, however, 4 were cancelled due to low attendance. Thus, 4 courses were observed in total. Of these 4 sites, participants were in short supply. Two of these courses had only 1 participant each and none had more than 6 participants total.

SM-1-North: 6 participants, 1 trainer

SM-2-North: 1 participant, 1 trainer

SM-3-West: 1 participant, 1 trainer

SM-4-North: 5 participants, 3 trainers

- 10 of the 13 participants were male
- 9 of the 13 participants appeared to be white
- 5 of the 6 trainers were male
- All six trainers appeared to be white.

*Trainer 1 sighed, "I know why it's [Scoutmaster Specific Training] offered online. It's so that people get 'trained',"—he puts "trained" in air quotes--"But people don't get to ask questions, they don't get to meet people, they don't get to interact."*

*Trainer 3 emphasized that the online training was not consistent with the syllabus for the Scoutmaster Specific Training. Moreover, there was an interactive quality wholly absent from the online version. By meeting other Scoutmasters, both trainers and participants in the trainings, participants "got more out of interactions" and the training on the whole.*

# What variations exist in adult training implementation in Boy Scouts?

## Successes to Maintain

Of the 4 domains of the BSA Scoutmaster training model, 2 (**Adherence to BSA Materials & Sharing Key Resources**) were present at strong levels.

- **All observed trainings included modules on the official BSA syllabus' 7 core components.** Facilitators developed a learning culture by teaching critical Scoutmaster skills.
- **All observed trainings shared BSA required resources to some extent.** Of the 21 resources, 5 were not shared at all, 4 were shared at 25% of trainings, 3 were shared at 50% of trainings, 2 were shared at 75%, and 1 was shared at 100%.

### 7 Core Components of Scoutmaster Training

Aims & Methods of Scouting  
Role of the Scoutmaster  
The Patrol Method  
The Troop Meeting  
Advancement  
The Support Team  
Annual Planning

## Opportunities for Improvement

- **Many in-person trainings had low attendance or high cancellation rates.** 40% of trainings during the study period were cancelled due to lack of registrants, and 100% had 6 or fewer attendees.
- **Many BSA required delivery methods were not used at trainings.** BSA expects training content to be reinforced through 14 specific games, activities, simulations, discussions and demonstrations, of which 8 were absent from all observed trainings, 4 were only present at 25% of trainings, and 1 was present at 50% of trainings.



Notably, though discussed, the ***Patrol Method, a central part of BSA, was not modelled at any trainings***, which may impact Scout experiences.