

Supplement 4

Developing Leadership Skills Through Scouting

The Patrol Method

A Supplement to

A Scouting Reference for Ward Leaders

2005 Edition

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“There is no teaching to compare with example.”¹

Sir Robert Baden-Powell²

¹ Robert Baden-Powell, “Baden Powell says,” online at <http://twc-woodbadge.freesevers.com/bpsays.htm>

² Sir Robert Baden-Powell was a hero in the Boer War, where he earned his fame by withstanding a 217-day siege of Mafeking, a small town on the outskirts of the Transvaal Republic in Africa. During the siege his forces were small and his supplies were low. The help of everyone in the small town was needed in order to defend it. Having limited adult help, he organized a boys’ corps where boys under their own leadership served as message carriers and observers. Through this experience, Baden-Powell learned what boys were capable of doing when they were properly taught how to do it. He later founded the Scouting Movement.

Introduction

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Boy Scouts of America are both world-class organizations. The elements that combine to make them so are many and varied. This supplement will not discuss all these elements, but will identify several that are contributors to the success of the organizations. Not only are they based upon sound principles, but they also have the ability to generate a spirit of development and growth among those who are involved. Each organization naturally and successfully develops leadership qualities in its members.

This supplement will begin by referencing several of the components of Church organization that play a part in the success of the development of its leaders. But it will more closely focus on one of the key elements in Scouting that contributes most to the development of leadership in the boys who participate. This element is referred to as the patrol method. The understanding and implementation of this principle is essential to developing boys into leaders.

Why have we adopted Scouting? We were the first religious body to adopt Scouting as a part of the youth program of the Church. Some two and one-half years after Scouting came to America, it was made an official part of the program of the Church.

Someone has said that it [Scouting] isn't mentioned in the revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and of course that is true. Neither is the Primary nor the Sunday School, but one of our Articles of Faith clearly indicates that "if there is anything virtuous, lovely or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (Article of Faith 13). Scouting is a help. It is a tool in achieving the objective of the building of real men. It helps to build character. It trains for citizenship. It helps to build leadership. It helps to prepare people to live in a wholesome manner, in a full and enjoyable manner here in this life, and prepares them for the life to come.³

President Ezra Taft Benson
Eagle Recognition Banquet
Logan, Utah, 22 March 1974

³ Ezra Taft Benson, <www.exploring.org/ga/crews/625/ScoutingLDS.doc>

Developing Leadership

In our Movement's objective of character training for good citizenship we emphasize not only the development of men of good character, but of leaders of men. It is by using the Patrol Method that we may succeed in this.

The only way to develop leadership in a boy is to give him a chance to practice it. The Patrol Method provides this practice by placing upon the boys themselves the responsibility of running their own gangs, of making them—or breaking them. It gives the boys the opportunity to lead. It brings forward boys of decided leadership abilities and awakens in others their latent powers. It gives to all of them their chance.⁴

William Hillcourt
Also known as “Green Bar Bill”

⁴ William Hillcourt, “The Only Method,” <www.inquiry.net/patrol/hillcourt/method.htm> “Bill Hillcourt [1900 – 1992] became the hero of millions of boys and adults. He introduced the patrol method to America, wrote more than thirty books on Scouting and the outdoors, and played the most prominent role in developing the program of Scouting for decades.” <www.scouter.com/features/0290.asp>

The Need for Leadership

It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of strong leadership in the Church.⁵ Having no paid ministry, we depend upon members to perform the tasks that a minister and his or her professional staff might perform in other churches. To be fully organized, a ward needs approximately forty-five adult and youth leaders, and additional ward members are needed to fill stake callings. Add to this number the continual stream of releases and new callings, and it is obvious why wards and stakes must give leadership training a high priority.

Not having a professional training program, the Church generally relies on the natural leadership abilities of its members—the leadership skills that they acquire at work, school, and in other organizations and the leadership abilities that they develop while serving in Church positions.

Leadership Meetings

The Church provides a number of ways to help improve the capabilities of its leaders, both adults and youth. Among the adult meetings are stake priesthood leadership meetings and bishopric training sessions. Each auxiliary also provides some form of leadership training or inservice lessons for its leaders. In addition to these scheduled meetings, informal training often occurs during a priesthood interview or a ward or stake council meeting. Some leadership training is also provided in casual exchanges, where an experienced leader provides guidance to a newly called leader. In addition to training that originates in wards and stakes, other leadership training is provided through handbooks, videos, manuals, and televised Church broadcasts.

Leadership Training Courses

The meetings mentioned above usually consist of *listening* to instructions, although occasionally a discussion is held or a demonstration is presented to illustrate how leadership skills are to be employed. Thus, the thrust of most leadership meetings is *what* a leader must do and not *how* the leader should do it.

To augment the instruction given in a meeting, sometimes leadership courses are organized to emphasize the *hows* of leadership rather than the *whats*—that is, to teach adults and youth how to really lead and not just be a person who has been called to a leadership position. Some of the skills taught in these courses are:

- How to deal with people.
- How to resolve conflicts.
- How to give instructions that will be understood, accepted, and followed.
- How to make wise decisions.
- How to delegate authority.
- How to set goals and organize one's efforts.
- How to inspire people to fulfill the assignments that have been given them.
- How to recognize the responsibilities leadership brings.
- How to recognize the qualities a good leader must have.
- How to support one's followers.
- How to avoid undercutting the authority of someone to whom authority has been delegated.

The success of these courses depends on their format and, more importantly, on the level of participation. In the least successful courses there is no participation, and a student merely listens to a lecture on leadership, and perhaps receives a handout summarizing what was in the lecture.

More useful courses often use role-playing, where simulated scenarios requiring leadership skills are devised and students are taught how to handle these situations. While role-playing is better than lecturing, it has a basic

⁵ In this supplement The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is frequently referred to as “the Church.”

weakness: simulated situations cannot duplicate real life. The simulated setting is artificial and there are too many peripheral factors in real life that cannot be reproduced in class.

The most effective leadership courses are those that have a “laboratory component.” That is, the students actually use the leadership skills in a real-life setting where an unwise decision may have unwanted consequences. In addition, the training exercise must last long enough for the students to see the consequences of the decisions they make. This type of training could be called “learning to lead by leading.” The remainder of this discussion will focus on the methods used by Scouting to train boys to become effective leaders—to help them learn to lead by leading.

Leadership Training Provided by Scouting

Because the camping and outdoor aspects of Scouting are so prominent, people often think that Scouting is just a camping program for boys. They don't realize that it is also a very powerful leadership-training program that skillfully uses the shadow leadership concept. Furthermore, Scout training is a perfect example of the "learn to lead by leading" method described previously. Boys make their decisions in a real-life environment (often on the trail, in camp, or in an aquatic activity) where a bad decision can have real consequences that could occur soon after the decision is made. For example, a young senior patrol leader ignores sound advice, overlooks weather predictions, and over-estimates his troop's endurance. This causes him to lead his troop over a wet, difficult, and overly long trail, arriving in camp late, drenched, and hungry. Through this experience the senior patrol leader quickly learns what he should and should not have done, and learns it well.

When Lord Baden-Powell started Boy Scouting, he wanted boys to be good citizens, to fulfill their duty to God, and to feel responsible for their fellow man—concepts that are expressed in the Scout Oath and Scout Law. He used the outdoor aspects of Scouting as a tool to bring this about.

Scouting leadership training is based on an important principle:

A boy learns how to lead by leading, not by being told how to do it.

The following quotation from the 1959 BSA *Scoutmaster's Handbook* shows how Baden-Powell thought boys should be made into leaders:

Boys learn what they practice. If you want them to become good citizens, you must encourage them to practice citizenship. If you want them to learn to play fair, to take responsibility, to get along with other people, to be self-reliant, you must give them the chance to practice all of these things.⁶

Thus, for a boy to learn how to be a leader he must practice being a leader. It is not sufficient to simply give him a title and tell him that he is a leader.

Each of the four Scouting programs adopted by the Church (Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing) trains boy leaders using methods appropriate for the ages of the boys in that program. The method used in Boy Scout troops is the patrol method. We will use this method to illustrate how Scouting trains boy leaders. It is useful in training boys in Varsity Scouting and Venturing as well, and some features of the patrol method may be utilized in the training of youth leaders in Cub Scout and Webelos dens.

⁶ Boy Scouts of America, *Scoutmaster's Handbook*, 5th edition, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Boy Scouts of America, 1959 [expanded in 1965 as the 7th edition]), 38.

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.

Sir Robert Baden-Powell⁷

⁷Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell, *Aids to Scoutmastership: A Guidebook for Scoutmasters on The Theory of Scout Training*, 1919, under heading of "The Scoutmaster." Online at <<http://www.pinetreeweb.com/aidstosm-2.htm>>

The Patrol Method

In this section, we will explore the patrol method and how it helps boys develop leadership skills.

When a boy joins a Scout troop it is a new experience for him. When he was younger, adults dominated all of his activities. He followed his teachers' instructions and did what his parents expected him to do. Now he finds that he is expected to make decisions on his own. This includes being the co-producer—the co-planner—of his Scouting program.⁸ His Scoutmaster expects him and his fellow Scouts not only to help shape their program, but also to govern themselves—which is the first step toward their becoming leaders.

Sometimes boys have difficulty adjusting to this situation, as explained in the *Scoutmaster's Handbook*:

Few youngsters when they join Scouting have had any experience running their own affairs. Many of them come from homes where all decisions were made by the parents. Such simple things as deciding on the best day for a hike or a good place to go camping may seem hard for them when they have had little previous opportunity to decide anything. The first few times you call on your boy leaders to suggest things to do, their suggestions may be farfetched or impractical—or almost nonexistent. But gradually, with practice, their suggestions get better. The boys take hold—they get to know what is involved and what to do about it.

It takes ingenuity on your part—and sometimes infinite patience—to get youngsters into the habit of making suggestions, then voting on them and assuming their share of the responsibility for carrying out whatever the majority decides. *But that in essence is the patrol method—a first step in self-government.*⁹

The Patrol

Scouting employs shadow leadership, in which the adult leader stays in the background and lets the boys lead. To have someone to lead, and to have a purpose for the activities that are held, there must be an organizational structure in place. In Boy Scouting this is the troop, and its basic unit is the patrol. This is where most of the action takes place.

*“The patrol is the heart of the patrol method. . .”*¹⁰

“The formation of the boys into patrols of from five to eight [boys], and training them as separate units each under its own responsible leader, is the key to a good troop. Where this system is applied, it is absolutely bound to bring success. It cannot help itself!” said Baden-Powell. . . . That’s the way of making Scouting grip the lives of your boys.¹¹

When a boy joins a patrol he “learns to get along with other boys and other patrols in work and play. He helps to plan the activities of his [patrol], to carry out the plans in a cooperative manner. He learns to adjust himself to the wishes of the majority. The patrol method is self-government in action—democratic living on a level which a boy can understand and appreciate.”¹²

⁸ This assumes that his Scoutmaster is following the patrol method. Some Scoutmasters do not use the patrol method and, as a result, the boys lose the great leadership opportunities that Scouting provides. What follows in our discussion assumes that the Scoutmaster is using the patrol method.

⁹ Boy Scouts of America, *Scoutmaster's Handbook*, 60 – 61. (Italics added for emphasis.)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹² *Ibid.*, 39.

A patrol takes care of its own needs. “On *troop hikes* each patrol takes care of its own commissary. . . . they compete with each other in cross-country games, . . . In *troop camp* each patrol has its share of the work. Tents are grouped by patrols, cooking is done by patrols, games and activities are run by patrol teams.”¹³

These quotations show that there are patrol duties and tasks to perform and, most importantly, that these are real tasks and not artificial ones generated just to occupy a boy’s time.

The Patrol Leader

When a boy becomes a patrol leader, it may be his first experience with significant leadership responsibility. He is in charge of holding patrol meetings, preparing the patrol for outdoor activities, and seeing that the patrol carries out its troop assignments. Doing this, he discovers how to work with his fellow patrol members to accomplish these tasks. Baden-Powell wanted this experience to be a real one, where the boy would wrestle with real problems that had to be surmounted. This would require him to use his imagination, his resourcefulness, and his persuasive abilities, to do the job and get his patrol buddies to help him do it.

Let them lead! Again and again we come back to the important point that you can’t expect a [group] of boys to build a good patrol without a boy leader who has been trained to lead. And as Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting, said “*To get the best results, you must give the leader real freehanded responsibility. If you only give partial responsibility, you will only get partial results.*”

Let patrol leaders take over in practically everything. Let them work out their own problems with the boys in their patrols. Interfere as little as possible—but always be there to give guidance when they ask for it. Mistakes are bound to be made—therefore, be ready in a friendly spirit to urge the boy leader and his [patrol] to try again.

“Train ’em, trust ’em, and let ’em lead!” *That is the formula for success in using patrol leaders and for building strong patrols.*¹⁴

To provide the patrol leaders with the training they need, the Scoutmaster holds special training sessions for them. Thus they gain experience not only by trying to operate their patrol successfully, but also through the additional leadership skills that the Scoutmaster teaches them. This training is provided in a multitude of ways.

These boy leaders are the same boys, whether they get together for businesslike planning sessions, or whether you take them out as a special group on a hiking or camping trip to give them ideas they can use in running their patrols. Everything you do with them is training of some sort. And your enthusiasm is an essential part in all this training. When you get behind an idea eagerly your boy leaders will do the same.¹⁵

William Hillcourt, who authored many of the Boy Scout handbooks written during the 20th Century, described the most effective means of on-the-job training for a patrol leader:

Patrol leaders are initiated into the parts they are to play in troop leadership in the meetings and deliberations of the patrol leaders’ council, and in troop junior leader training. Simultaneous with this, but at separate gatherings, is carried out their training for successful patrol leadership, for their work as the heads of groups of boys clamoring for things to do.

¹³ Ibid., 122.

¹⁴ Ibid., 122 – 123. (Italics added for emphasis.)

¹⁵ Ibid., 60.

This second phase of their training is, obviously, the more difficult and exacting of the two. In the meetings of the patrol leaders' council the patrol leader may lean upon other junior leaders, but in the meetings of his patrol he must stand on his own feet, at all times giving his leadership. He must be trained to the point where he can do this. And it is the Scoutmaster who imparts this training.¹⁶

The Patrol Leaders' Council (PLC)¹⁷

The patrol leaders' council is the next link in the leadership training chain. This is where the patrol leaders meet together to plan the troop's program, solve troop problems, and discuss how the troop can be improved. The senior patrol leader (whose duties will be described shortly) conducts the PLC meeting. As outlined in the 1959 *Scoutmaster's Handbook*, the adult leaders and junior assistant Scoutmasters attend this meeting but they do not vote on the decisions that are made. Nevertheless, the Scoutmaster (who acts as an adviser) has veto privileges when, in his mature judgment, unwise or harmful decisions are being made.

The patrol is the heart of the patrol method, but the brain that guides it is the patrol leaders' council. It is through this council that the Scoutmaster carries out one of his two jobs: Helping boy leaders make the patrol method work. It is here that your patrol leaders, under your guidance, plan the activities of the troop and learn to run their patrols. . . . One of your greatest satisfactions as a Scoutmaster comes to you when you see your boy leaders developing into a smooth-running patrol leaders' council, learning to run the troop.¹⁸

In these PLC meetings, a patrol leader learns many leadership skills. Before he comes to the PLC meeting he has polled his patrol members, so he knows what they want the troop to do. The other patrols, however, may have different ideas. As the meeting progresses each patrol leader argues the case for his patrol's choices. Then he must consider the proposals that the other patrol leaders make. Finally, each patrol must compromise in order to forge a troop program. This teaches a boy that he must support his patrol, but still respect the desires of others and work harmoniously together for the good of all. Undoubtedly, this all provides good training for a young boy.

The Senior Patrol Leader

"Each Scout troop should have a senior patrol leader, who [in Church units] is nominated by the bishopric and sustained by the quorum/troop members, which for Scouting purposes constitutes election."¹⁹ When a boy becomes a senior patrol leader he meets situations that require more advanced leadership skills, even in a small troop. His position is somewhat like that of a corporate junior executive. He works with each patrol leader to help him operate his patrol, giving special attention to the new, inexperienced patrol leaders. His Scoutmaster provides guidance, but getting the job done is the senior patrol leader's responsibility, and not the Scoutmaster's. When Scouting operates as Baden-Powell expected it to, the Scoutmaster teaches the senior patrol leader and he, in turn, teaches the patrol leaders, who then teach the boys in their patrols.

The senior patrol leader also plans the weekly troop meeting, receiving help from his staff and following the decisions made by the PLC. Before this meeting, the Scoutmaster meets with the senior patrol leader and his staff to discuss the coming meeting. Then the senior patrol leader, and *not* the Scoutmaster, conducts the weekly troop meeting. Following the meeting, the Scoutmaster again meets with the senior patrol leader and his staff to discuss how the meeting went. Here the Scoutmaster points out how the senior patrol leader can improve his leadership skills and conduct a better meeting. The Scoutmaster also compliments the senior patrol leader on his strengths in order to help the young man gain confidence.

¹⁶ William Hillcourt, "Patrol Leaders' Training," <www.inquiry.net/patrol/green_bar/index.htm>

¹⁷ Where have we heard about "councils" before? Ward councils, maybe?

¹⁸ Boy Scouts of America, *Scoutmaster's Handbook*, 59 – 60.

¹⁹ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Scouting Handbook*, (USA: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 3.

If the patrol method is followed the Scoutmaster never steps in and takes over in the middle of a troop meeting should things not move smoothly—that is, unless some mature interference is absolutely needed. In this way the boy leaders experience the weight that leadership responsibility brings. Of course, this also means that the Scoutmaster must prepare his senior patrol leader and his staff in advance, so they are prepared and are able to carry this responsibility and grow from it. Failures can occur, but they must not be catastrophic, and they must lead to a final success that the senior patrol leader can be proud of.

The relationship between the senior patrol leader and the patrol leaders can be compared to the line of authority between the stake president and the bishops. In yet another simile, the Scoutmaster guides and counsels the senior patrol leader in much the same way as a high councilor guides and counsels a bishop. In both cases, following the advice that is given, getting the job done is left up to the patrol leader in the patrol and to the bishop in the ward.

Other Youth Positions

Thus far we have only mentioned patrol leaders and the senior patrol leader, but there are many other positions for boys to fill. These have changed over the years as the content of the Scouting program has changed. For example, troops might no longer have a bugler or a cheerleader, as earlier Scout troops did. There are still, however, many patrol and troop tasks that need to be done and every boy can have a useful job to perform. These positions include, among others, the assistant senior patrol leader, the assistant patrol leader, the patrol and troop librarian, the patrol and troop quartermaster, and the patrol and troop scribe. Just as we want no member of the Church to be without a calling, so no boy in a Scout troop need be without an opportunity to serve.

For older boys there is also the position of junior assistant Scoutmaster, where a boy assumes a more mature leadership role. This allows him to learn even more advanced leadership skills as he learns how to play the role of a counselor in assisting the Scoutmaster and the senior patrol leader, and helps the troop achieve its goals.

Because there is a ladder of responsibilities, a boy can begin at the lowest level and climb the ladder, gaining more experience in leadership as he moves from rung to rung, up or down, depending upon his current position in the troop.

Leadership Skills Learned in Outdoor Activities

Outdoor activities, allowing boys to learn and practice leadership skills, deserve special mention. To illustrate this, we consider the summer camp.

When the troop camps, the duties of boy leaders increase and sharpen. Reporting becomes more detailed since the numerous camp responsibilities are interlinked. Among these outdoor responsibilities are camp administration (the duty of the senior patrol leader and patrol leaders), meal preparation (the duty of cooks and assistant cooks), meal support (the duty of the waterman, fireman, and cleanup), and campsite management (which is often parceled among individual patrols). Every job has its specific duties, which neatly fit into a chain of command. When one link in the chain fails, everyone feels the consequences. This exercise tests the leadership of the troop, and gives it an immediate report card. If the camp is successful, it builds the confidence of the leaders. On the other hand, if the campout is unsuccessful, what better training can there be than to suffer through what your failures have brought you?

If the Scoutmaster is using the patrol method, he will have trained his patrol leaders well in advance of summer camp by showing them how to handle their tasks. Then in camp they will be able to assume full responsibility for the operation, and they can teach other boys what their duties are. This will make it unnecessary for the Scoutmaster to step in and micromanage the processes.

When the patrol method is used, the boy leaders handle all of the mechanics of camp management. Their responsibilities include getting boys up in the morning and to bed at night, keeping camp equipment in operable condition, and holding camp assemblies as needed to keep the operation running smoothly.

Patrol leaders also learn how to schedule patrol activities properly. Otherwise, tasks such as preparing and cooking the food—which involve a chain of different tasks—become a daylong affair. The beauty of this process in camp is that it is self-correcting. Boys like to eat, and if, because of their ineffectiveness, their food is cold, half-cooked, or burnt, they are motivated to improve their management skills—that is, unless the Scoutmaster doesn't follow the patrol method, and steps in to do their jobs for them.

A patrol leader learns more than just how to organize. For example, on a hike he must know how to handle a dispute that arises when the map the patrol is using is ambiguous, and patrol members disagree on what trail the patrol should take. He must also learn how to motivate his patrol to keep moving on a dark and rainy night, when the trail is difficult and camp is still four miles away. These types of situations pose real problems that must be solved. There is nothing theoretical about them.

Implementing the Patrol Method

Putting the patrol method into practice is not difficult. The following simple steps will help you begin to implement the patrol method in your organization:

- Group the boys into patrols and give them the responsibility for making the patrol work.
- Train your boy leaders by letting them lead. Counsel them when they need it. Pick them up when they stumble. Do not ever take over their responsibilities.
- Encourage the boys to pull together, form a working team, and get the job done even when the going is tough.
- Ensure that the boys are learning. What will boys learn? More than they think. After all, boys just think that Scouting is having fun.

They learn – how to size up a problem—how to approach it.

They learn – how to muster support. Getting their patrol to follow them is not automatic, and they learn how to do this.

They learn – how to make a complex operation (for them) work, even though it has many interacting parts that must work together.

They learn – how difficult tasks can be done by pulling together and taking pride in doing these tasks—the more difficult, the better.

They learn – how to pick themselves up after a failure and try again. There are many opportunities to fail, and recover from failure, in Scouting.

They learn – how to recognize a mistake when they make one. Not having a warm sleeping bag on a cold night teaches preparation better than any lecture ever could.

They learn – how to be practical because nature requires them to be.

They learn – how to cooperate, which allows them to do things that they could not do individually. How else could they put a twenty-five foot flagpole in place and tie it down?

They learn – how to delegate authority. That's how a troop works.

They learn – how to live together with other boys (shades of things to come on a mission).

- They learn – how to handle not always having their own way. Sometimes they have to give up something they want to do for the good of the patrol.
- They learn – how to follow, since, as troop and patrol assignments change, sometimes they are a follower and sometimes a leader.

In other words, they learn to be leaders by leading.

Results Obtained From Using the Patrol Method

There are many benefits of using the patrol method to teach boys to become leaders. First and foremost, of course, is the set of leadership skills described previously. There are others. For example, the success of a Scouting program depends upon how interesting it is for boys—how it holds their attention. If boys do not come to Scouting activities, the activities are of no value, no matter how good the adult leaders think they are. One of the advantages of the patrol method is that it lets boys help shape their own program. You need not worry about having a program that boys won't like, because they have helped plan it. Then, as the following dialogue indicates, they will have a program that will hold their attention:

“How does it strike you? Looks pretty good?”

“Well, it IS good—

*“Because it was planned in a democratic manner to suit your particular troop by the boys who are going to enjoy it and by the boy leaders who are to make it happen.”*²⁰

Why Some Scoutmasters Have Difficulty Making the Patrol Method Work

Sometimes the patrol method doesn't work because it has never been tried. Some Scoutmasters group

“their boys in patrols, but beyond that, nothing very much happens . . . Some men don't grasp the possibilities of the patrol method . . . Some men lack faith in boys' ability to carry out responsibilities. . . . Others don't like to part with authority. . . . [They] don't realize they are stifling their boys' chances for character development.”²¹

“The troop that is run as a club, with the Scoutmaster as boss, dies when the boss leaves. But where patrol leaders are trained to lead, they will keep their patrols active, and thus carry on the troop in case you have to be away for a time, or [when adult leadership is changed].”²²

The Test of When the Patrol Method Is Working

The following quote from the 1959 *Scoutmaster's Handbook* gives some sage advice:

An old experienced Scoutmaster said once: “*The test of the patrol method is in the easy chair!*”

His audience looked puzzled, so he elaborated: “Get an easy chair and place it in a corner of the troop meeting room. If you can sink into it just after the opening ceremony and just *sit* throughout the meeting, without a worry for its success, until time comes for the closing—well, then your troop is using the patrol method—your boy leaders are actually leading.”

²⁰ Boy Scouts of America, *Scoutmaster's Handbook*, 104.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 41 – 42.

²² *Ibid.*, 40.

It will take time and earnest effort before you reach this point, but it is the goal you are working toward.

It requires humility—to sit back and let others run the show.

It requires patience—to train boy leaders to do the job, to help them, guide them, and inspire them.

It requires faith—faith in boys to the extent of considering them responsible individuals who can be taught to handle their own affairs.

It requires a firm belief in the democratic way of life and a willingness to let democratic processes take their course.

It requires a strict adherence to the one important point that will ensure the success of the patrol method: *Keep the patrol the unit always, through thick and thin, in victory and defeat, in games and projects, at meetings, on hikes, and in camp.*

If you stick to these convictions and give the patrol method its chance, you will get your compensation as you see your boys take on responsibilities, go ahead on their own initiative, pick up new skills, learn to live and work together. In other words, you will see them step forward to take their place as intelligent citizens in a democracy.

That is the aim of Scouting.²³

When Scouting Does Not Build Leaders

What has been said up to now may have given the erroneous impression that Scouting automatically produces the results described previously. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing in Scouting is automatic. Scouting has no magic wand that can be waved to suddenly produce leadership ability, or any of the other qualities for which Scouting is noted. These qualities come only when Scouting principles are followed. Sadly, many Scoutmasters pass through Scouting without ever having an encounter with the patrol method.

Such a Scoutmaster treats the Scout troop like a poorly managed Sunday School class where boys just sit and listen (or *don't* listen) as the teacher lectures to them. In such a troop, everything is micro-managed. Boys do only what the Scoutmaster tells them to do. He solves all of their problems for them, both in the troop and in each patrol. He conducts every meeting, plans every event, and sets every goal. In camp, he cleans up his boys' messes, cooks their meals, does their assignments when they fail to do them, and "mother-hens" them when they don't work on their merit badges. He appoints boy leaders, gives them a title, but never gives them any authority or opportunity to lead. If a boy leader does act on his own and makes a mistake, the Scoutmaster immediately takes over. Then he wonders why he is not producing any leaders.

The solution to this problem is to insist that adult leaders are **trained** in their positions. If the adult leaders are properly trained many things will occur. They will want to implement the patrol method. They will want to train the boys to be leaders. They will want to exercise the principle of shadow leadership as they guide the boys on their Scouting journey. And they will have the tools to do all of this.

"Supplement 5: Training Ward Scout Leaders" and topics 55 – 58 of *A Scouting Reference for Ward Leaders* give detailed guidance on the type of training each Scout leader must have to be considered fully trained, and information on additional training that will make the Scout leader an even better shadow leader.

²³ Ibid., 69 – 70.

The Small Troop

Latter-day Saint troops must always have at least two patrols. One is the eleven-year-old patrol that operates under the Primary. It meets separately from the other patrols in the troop, and is directed by the leader of the eleven-year-old Scouts who is registered as an assistant Scoutmaster. The other patrol, or patrols, operate under the supervision of the Young Men presidency and are directed by the Scoutmaster. Sometimes the Scoutmaster may have only one small patrol and sometimes the eleven-year-old patrol may also have just a few boys. Even in this case, according to Church policy, the two patrols should meet separately and not be combined into one patrol.

In these cases the Scoutmaster and the leader of the eleven-year-old patrol may think that the patrol method will not work for them. But this is not true. The patrol is the basic unit of Scouting. It contains all of the ingredients necessary to acquire leadership experience. It is true that in a small two-patrol troop (with the deacon-age patrol separate from the eleven-year-old patrol) the patrol method must play out differently than it would in a larger troop. For example, the role of senior patrol leader must be redefined. Otherwise, how can you distinguish the senior patrol leader from the patrol leader? The troop meeting will also be different when you only have a single deacon-age patrol. But most of the opportunities to lead, to solve problems, and to develop leadership skills will still be there.

Under these conditions the character of the patrol leaders' council also changes, because it might only consist of the senior patrol leader and the deacon-age patrol leader. The eleven-year-old patrol leader should also occasionally meet with the deacon-age patrol leader to discuss common problems and plan activities that are appropriate for them to hold together. While a small troop does affect the range of leadership training that Scouting can provide, it does not justify *not* using the patrol method where it is applicable. After all, there are still two patrols to operate, and each patrol leader needs the experience of learning how to run his patrol.

Older-Boy Programs

Boys differ in how rapidly they develop, but most boys will have experienced steady progression in the offices of the Aaronic Priesthood before they can honestly be called a true leader. And this is what one should expect, because maturity is one of the ingredients that leadership demands. A boy needs to grow up in order to be a true leader, and until this happens he will only be an apprentice leader, working toward becoming a leader. As evidence of this, note how differently a deacons quorum president, a teachers quorum president, and a priests quorum first assistant handle their assignments.

Scouting recognizes this maturing process, and the BSA has developed four Scouting programs (Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing) to take this into account. The leadership techniques in each program are geared to the age of the boys that it serves.

The patrol method described in this supplement is geared to Boy Scouting, but the main principle behind it, letting boys learn to lead by leading, applies to all four Scouting programs. The methods are different in each Scouting program, in order to take into account the differing abilities that come with that age. The sophisticated procedures of a Venturing crew would be beyond the abilities of an eleven-year-old Scout. A Boy Scout troop needs much more adult supervision than does a Varsity team, and a Varsity team needs more adult supervision than does a Venturing crew. Venturing officers should be able to run their own program with minimal help from their Advisor. This is possible, however, only if the leadership qualities that should have been taught in the troop and team have been taught. When a gap is left—when one of the links in the Scouting chain is missing—we should not be surprised to find Venturing-age boys with few leadership capabilities.

Additional Comments About the Patrol Method

Below are some isolated comments from the 1959 *Scoutmaster's Handbook* that relate to how the patrol method should work (and why some Scoutmasters can't make it work):

The patrol method is self-government in action. . . . [It] places the responsibility for the success of the troop where it belongs: *with the boys themselves*. By letting your boy leaders run THEIR troop under your guidance, you are not tied down to the details . . . the boys train each other in the patrol.²⁴

The patrol method is the one thing that makes Scouting different from other programs for boys. It is as much a part of Scouting as the Scout Oath (or Promise) and Law.²⁵

Scouting succeeds where the patrol method is used. It succeeds where the wise Scoutmaster has faith in boys and in their ability to govern themselves and constantly uses patience to help the boy leaders carry on.²⁶

A SCOUTMASTER'S JOB is to train and guide boy leaders to run THEIR troop.²⁷

Why the Patrol Method Is Superior to Other Methods for Training Boys

The 1959 *Scoutmaster's Handbook* gives a common sense reason for using the patrol method:

“And why insist upon it?” you may ask. “Aren't there many other ways of working with boys?” There are—ranging the whole way from the schoolroom method of past generations with a schoolmaster trying to force a bit of knowledge into the minds of his pupils, to the method of dividing a group of boys into teams and keeping them happily occupied for hours banging a basketball about. [Sporting teams are often temporary, but patrols are not.] But none of these methods will give you the results which you can get through the patrol method [or shadow leadership methods in general]. . . In other words: The patrol method is not ONE way of running a troop—it is the RIGHT way.²⁸ (Bracketed comments added by the editor.)

²⁴ Ibid., 39 – 40.

²⁵ Ibid., 36.

²⁶ Ibid., 40.

²⁷ Ibid., 35.

²⁸ Ibid., 35 – 36.

“The Patrol Method is not ONE method in which Scouting can be carried on. It is the ONLY method!”²⁹

Roland E. Phillips

²⁹ Roland E. Phillips was an early supporter of the Scouting Movement, and authored *The Patrol System* in 1913. He was killed in action during the First World War, on July 7, 1916 while serving in France. His biography is found online at <www.scouting.milestones.btinternet.co.uk/roland.htm>. The quote was found at <www.inquiry.net/patrol/hillcourt/method.htm>.

A Comparison: The Ward and the Troop

The similarity between a ward and a troop is striking. A ward is an assembly of organizations that operate under the oversight and direction of a bishop. The troop is an assembly of patrols that operate under the oversight and direction of a senior patrol leader.

In a ward, each organization has its own set of officers usually headed by a president. In a troop, each patrol has its own set of officers headed by the patrol leader.

In a ward, each president of an organization has his or her own staff (counselors, teachers, and assistants of various sorts) and the bishop has his staff (counselors, executive secretary, ward clerks, and so on). In a troop, each patrol leader has his staff (such as an assistant patrol leader, a patrol scribe, and a patrol quartermaster) and the senior patrol leader has his staff (the assistant senior patrol leader, the troop quartermaster, the troop scribe, and other troop officers as needed).

In a ward, there is a clear line of authority with a system for reporting. In a troop, there also is a line of authority with a system for reporting.

In a ward, the bishop seeks advice from ward officers at the ward council meeting. In a troop, the senior patrol leader seeks advice from the patrol leaders as they meet in the patrol leaders' council.

In a ward, the organizations have an assigned purpose and are often responsible for a particular age group or gender. In a troop, the troop's purpose is often too diffuse for boys to grasp. They often think that its purpose is only to have fun—but adults know better. They know the purpose of Scouting is to develop boys into good adults as well as good leaders.

Everyone recognizes that making a ward function properly and effectively is not a simple task. Much effort is needed to correlate the individual contributions that everyone makes. Few people, however, appreciate that making a Scout troop function properly and effectively is also not a simple task, especially because the boys who operate it are young and have very limited leadership ability when they begin.

While boys often start their Scouting career with little leadership ability, their abilities grow. Think of the experience that a young troop leader gains as he tries to make his troop function smoothly. He is wrestling with problems that are somewhat like those that the bishop faces as he tries to make the ward function smoothly: keeping everyone aware of their assigned goals, working out differences between leaders, providing encouragement when needed, and so on. The Scouting structure is simplistic compared with a ward and compared to what the bishopric must handle. It is a first step, and good training for a young man who may be called upon to be a bishop one day.

Making a troop and patrol work is not just bringing boys together and trying to get something accomplished in an ad hoc manner. It takes organization. The troop is a microcosm of a ward or a small business. In it boys learn to be leaders by leading.

I had stipulated that the position of Scoutmasters was to be neither that of a schoolmaster nor of a Commanding Officer, but rather that of an elder brother among his boys, not detached or above them, but himself joining in their activities and sharing their enthusiasm, and thus, being in the position to know them individually, able to inspire their efforts and to suggest new diversions when his finger on their pulse told him the attraction of any present craze was wearing off.³⁰

Lord Robert Baden-Powell

³⁰ Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell, *Lessons from the Varsity of Life*, Chapter X, Part One, "Scoutmaster," available online at <<http://www.pinetreeweb.com/bp-varsity10-1.htm>>

Conclusion

Scouting is a wonderful training program for Aaronic Priesthood-age young men. This is why it was selected by the Church to be the activity program for deacons and teachers, and is recommended to be the activity program for priests. Nevertheless, the development of leadership qualities for which Scouting is known does not happen automatically. Scout leaders must understand the principles of Scouting and follow them in order to have a successful program. Whether this is done, or is not done, will determine if “Scouts are just young riff-raff who race through the chapel on Tuesday night making a racket and tearing up the place,” or “the Scouts are young men governing themselves and becoming the leaders that the Church needs.” Using, or not using, the patrol method is a major factor in determining the outcome.

When a boy turns twelve he enters two parallel leadership-training programs: one mainly focused on priesthood leadership skills, and the other centered on Scouting leadership skills. Both programs are important. Some leadership skills he learns in these two programs are common to both, while others are unique to one program or the other. Scouting and quorum training complement each other. For a boy to become a leader in all phases of his life, he needs both types of training. He will be a better Melchizedek Priesthood leader because he has served in Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies, and he will also be a better Melchizedek Priesthood leader because he has been a patrol leader, a senior patrol leader, or has held some other Scouting position.

The Church needs leaders, and Scouting is a wonderful training ground for creating them (starting when a boy is as young as eight years old and becomes a Cub Scout). We sometimes stress leadership training in priesthood quorums but fail to appreciate the importance and usefulness of Scout leadership training. These programs should work together to create the future leaders of the Church, but they can only do this when bishops and priesthood leaders recognize the leadership training potential of Scouting, and Scout leaders appreciate the need to use the patrol method.