

3 The Patrol





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BASIC CONCEPTS



THE PATROL SYSTEM IS THE CENTRAL AXIS OF THE METHOD IN THE SCOUT SECTION

When we talk about the three basic urges of young people, on

which the symbolic framework is based, in addition to the need to explore and the interest in taking over a new territory, we are talking about belonging to an informal group of friends, or peer group.



The use of this trend for an educational purpose constitutes the heart of the Method in the Scout Section. In *Aids to Scoutmastership* (1919), the Founder made it clear that “the Patrol System is the one essential feature which sets Scout education apart from that of all other organizations.” Baden-Powell’s originality was to have discovered the opportunities that these peer groups provide for stimulating young people’s autonomous development.

The Founder of Scouting had used this idea during his military career, in a scientific process of trial and error. When he published a collection of tips on military exploration entitled *Aids to Scouting* in 1899, the book also began to be used in different ways by teachers, as a tool for their work with young people.

It was a bold technique for the time, and one that had never been used by any youth organization, when Baden-Powell himself tried out the Patrol System in 1907 with non-military young people in the first camp ever to take place on Brownsea Island. A short time afterwards, he developed the approach in his book *Scouting for Boys* and, from that moment on, Scout Patrols began to spring up and increase in number all over the world.

Like in 1907, young people today still have the natural tendency to form gangs or groups of friends. By using the Patrol System as the basis for most Scout activities, we are merely capitalizing on this natural tendency. The likelihood of success with this method is almost 100%, as long as it is used in an appropriate manner, i.e. as a way of giving the initiative and responsibility to the young people, and not as a way to make the job of the Scout Leader easier or divide the Unit into administrative subgroups.

Baden-Powell himself cautioned us against the potential misuse of the Patrol System: "...the main object is not so much saving the Scout Leader trouble as to give responsibility to the young person, since this is the very best means of all for developing character." (*Aids to Scoutmastership*, 1919).

THE SCOUT PATROL HAS A DUAL NATURE: FORMAL AND INFORMAL



The Patrol System is a means of organization and learning based on the Scout Method,

in which young friends voluntarily form a small group with its own identity, and with the intention that it should be long term, in order to enjoy friendship, support each other in their personal development, commit themselves to shared projects and interact with similar groups.

The Patrol is, first and foremost, a natural "form of organization".

Studies of organizations define a "group" as a set of individuals in which the behaviour and performance of each member are influenced by the behaviour and performance of the others. A distinction is made between *formal* groups and *informal* groups.

Formal groups are created intentionally by the authority of an organization for the purpose of achieving objectives which have been pre-defined by the organization as a means to attain its goals.

Informal groups, however, arise from individual efforts and develop around shared interests and friendship, rather than for any intentional purpose. They come together because their members have something in common.

The difference lies in the fact that formal groups are created by a formal organization as a means to an end, whereas informal groups are important in themselves and satisfy the associative needs we feel as human beings.

The Scout Patrol is, above all, an informal group. Keeping it this way is a fundamental task for Scout Leaders. "From the young person's point of view Scouting puts them into fraternity-groups which are their natural form of organization, whether for games, mischief, or loafing." (Baden-Powell, *Aids to Scoutmastership*, 1919).



However, the Scout Method uses the Patrol as a tool to achieve an educational purpose. This makes the Patrol a “learning environment”, which gives it a formal dimension too.

Since it is both an informal and a formal group, then, the Patrol takes on a certain complexity. It is informal, because it arises from the associative urge of the young people themselves; yet it is also formal, because the Method expects it to contribute to the development of its members through self-education. In other words, it could be said that it is informal from the point of view of the young people and formal from the perspective of the adult educator.

This dual character gives the Patrol a very wide perspective, placing it at a meeting point between the personal needs and aspirations of the young people, on the one hand, and the educational purpose of Scouting as an organization, on the other.

In order to take advantage of this privileged position, it is essential to understand that the Patrol will fulfil its objective as a formal group to the extent that its nature as an informal group is respected.

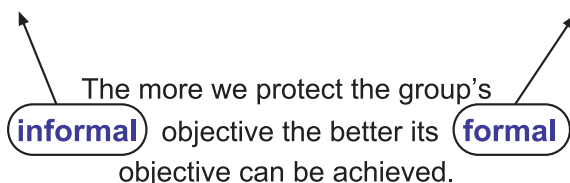


The Patrol as an informal group

A spontaneous organization, with its own identity, voluntarily formed by a group of friends with long-term intentions, to enjoy their friendship

The Patrol as a formal group

A learning community based on the Scout Method, by which a group of young people support each other's personal development, commit themselves to a shared project and interact with similar groups.



This way, the Patrol attains its highest levels of loyalty, commitment and energy to the benefit of the organizational purposes, much more than could be achieved if we were to burden the group with externally imposed rules, instructions and regulations in an attempt to make it play its formal role as the learning community. Understanding this is a key to understanding the Patrol System.

THE PATROL AS AN INFORMAL GROUP



THE SCOUT METHOD GIVES PROMINENCE TO THE INFORMAL DIMENSION OF THE PATROL

Although informal groups do not have specific, structurally designed tasks, they satisfy many of our most basic psychological needs, so much so that they are an integral part of the different environments in which our adult lives unfold.



Groups are, above all, a means of satisfying our *affiliation needs*, that is, our needs for belonging, friendship, and moral and affective support.

The original prototype of these groups is the family –also known as the “primary group”– which provides us with basic affiliation. At any age, however, as young people or adults, we realize that we need groups of friends, colleagues, recreational groups and many others which satisfy these needs.

These groups are even more essential between the ages of 11 and 15 when, at the onset of adolescence, young boys and girls need to be part of something, acknowledge themselves and be acknowledged. As a member of a Patrol, the life of a young person is interlinked with the lives of others: he or she shows concern for the other members of the groups and, even more importantly, they show concern for him or her. The absence of any one member would be felt and their contribution is appreciated.



Groups develop, increase and confirm our *sense of identity* and maintain our *self-esteem*. The family is also the group to initiate these basic processes, but peer groups play an important back-up role in determining or confirming our concept of who we are, how valuable we are and, consequently, how worthy we feel.

The Scout Patrol helps to reaffirm young people’s identity and sense of worthiness, not only through internal mechanisms, but also through its symbols, badges, traditions and other external expressions.



Groups help to *establish and confirm the social reality*. We can reduce our uncertainties about the social environment by discussing the problems it causes us with others, seeking common viewpoints and trying to reach a consensus about how to resolve them.

The style of the Patrol, with its activities, games and ongoing internal dialogue, helps young people develop their own personal way of participating without fear and being part of the world.



Peer groups also help to *reduce insecurity, anxiety and feelings of powerlessness*. The more people there are at our side, the stronger we feel and the less anxiety and insecurity we experience when we face danger, or something new or unknown. All the more so if we are at a stage in which we are creating new ways of adjusting to life, like young adolescents.



Groups provide a means for their members to *resolve their problems or face certain tasks they have to carry out*. The group serves to gather information, listen, help someone, provide another perspective, meet different people and, when it comes to deciding to do something, distribute responsibilities and achieve results through the talents of its individual members.

All these aspects can be achieved if we safeguard the informal nature of the Patrol, that is its *voluntary membership, permanent nature and own identity* as a group of young people who *enjoy their friendship*.

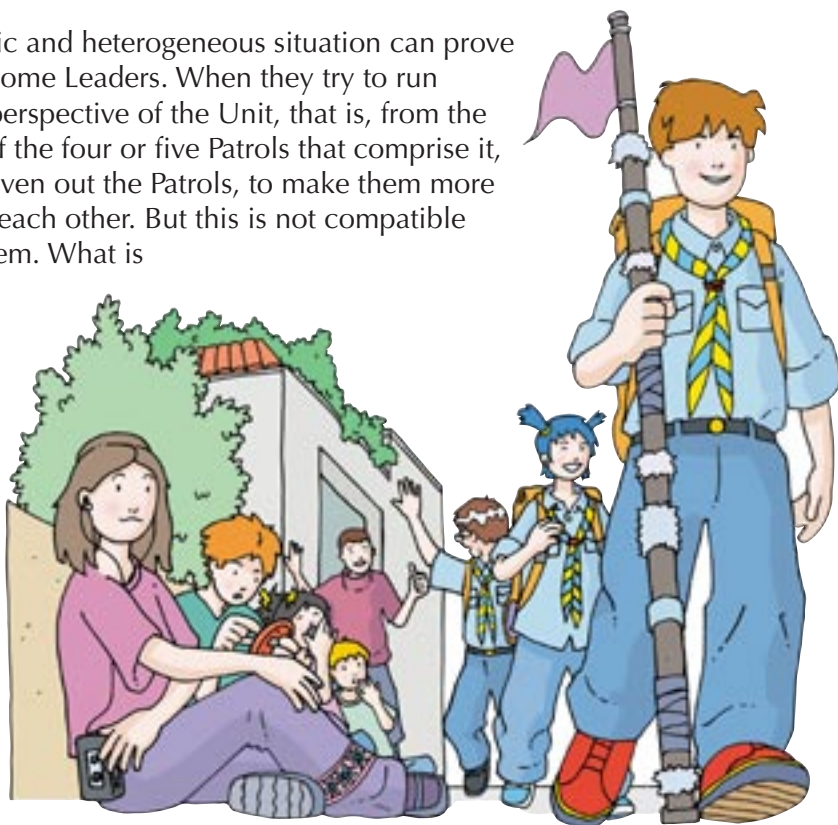


YOUNG PEOPLE JOIN THE PATROL VOLUNTARILY

This is an essential element of an informal group. Belonging –or not– to a Patrol is a matter of free choice for a young boy or girl and of acceptance by the rest of its members. Young people prefer to be with people they like, with whom they feel comfortable, friends with similar interests. Every Scout should be in the Patrol in which he or she feels accepted and able to operate.

This voluntary membership also means that young people may change to another Patrol if both groups agree with the move. This means that Patrols are not always established or formalized units and that a Unit may often have Patrols of differing numbers and strengths.

This dynamic and heterogeneous situation can prove uncomfortable for some Leaders. When they try to run activities from the perspective of the Unit, that is, from the overall viewpoint of the four or five Patrols that comprise it, they tend to try to even out the Patrols, to make them more or less the same as each other. But this is not compatible with the Patrol System. What is important is that the Patrols should be genuine groups of friends, not that the Unit looks balanced or evenly distributed. We must learn to view the Unit as a federation of unlike but internally bonded Patrols.



VOLUNTARY MEMBERSHIP DETERMINES THE WAY YOUNG PEOPLE JOIN



Given the principle of voluntary membership, when a new Patrol is created or a Unit is built up from a single Patrol, a good means of proceeding is to identify a gang or natural peer group and invite them to join Scouting and become a Scout Patrol. What is more, it is the ideal way to grow.

When, for whatever reason, a Patrol has declined in number and new members need to be added, normally it is best to let the young people invite other friends to join.

If the new members come from the Pack of the same Scout Group, the Patrols must be informed in advance, so that they can have the opportunity to meet the future Scouts, forge personal links, discuss the possibility of joining and arouse the candidate's interest. This is a process of recognition and negotiation that goes on "among the young people".

In the case of a young boy or girl from outside the Scout Group wishing to join the Unit, who is not already a friend of any of the Patrol members, the Adult Leaders should suggest or provide ways for these links to be created. This situation arises when a young person is brought by their parents, arrives at the suggestion of a teacher or simply on their own initiative. Young people may seek to join on their own initiative because of the Unit's prestige in the local community or because they have seen what the Scouts do and would like to be one too.

Fortunately, young people forge friendships quite quickly, which facilitates integration. In any case, for integration to be successful, three conditions must be met: the desire of the interested party, a link of friendship and the acceptance of the Patrol.

In all these cases, it would be a mistake for the Adult Leaders to restructure and make up the Patrols at their own initiative, carry out massive membership campaigns from the Unit level, divide up the cubs who are moving up from the Pack "evenly" among the Patrols or put Patrols together and take them apart in an arithmetical manner every few months. All these practices have proved to be very effective means to destroy the Patrol System, since they remove the informal-group-of-friends aspect and –what is worse from the point of view of Scouting's objectives– prevent it operating as a learning community.



"The main object of the Patrol System is to give real responsibility to as many of the young people as possible with a view to developing their character. If the Scout Leader gives the Patrol Leaders real power, expects a great deal from them, and leaves them a free hand in carrying out their work, that Scout Leader will have done more for those young people's character expansion than any amount of school instruction could ever do." (Baden-Powell, *Aids to Scoutmastership*, 1919)



THE PATROL IS A PERMANENT AND WELL-BONDED GROUP

Despite the points we have made about joining voluntarily, the Patrol is not an ad hoc group created to achieve an immediate objective. It is a stable group with stable members which, through its members' experience and actions, builds up a history, establishes traditions and shares its commitments. All this is gradually passed on to new members of the Patrol.

The stability of the group of friends depends almost exclusively on its bonding. Bonding is the force that keeps the members of the group together and makes them stronger than the forces trying to separate them. Bonding is what makes young people feel attracted to each other and proud to belong to their Patrol.

The fact that the objectives of the Patrol coincide with those of its members contributes to the bonding of the group. Other bonding factors are: participative leadership by the Patrol Leader; the success of the group in the tasks it sets itself; internal roles being carried out as planned; listening to the opinions of all the members of the group; carrying out attractive activities; the young people seeing that the Patrol helps them to achieve their personal objectives; continued shared interests and other similar factors.

Some important aspects of the Patrol are related to this bonding or cohesion:
the *number of members*, their *age*,
the *degree of shared interests*,
and the *appropriate choice*
of *activities and tasks*.





NOT FEWER THAN 5 MEMBERS AND NOT MORE THAN 8

There is no “ideal number” of members for a Patrol, but experience suggests that between 5 and 8 is best. Within these limits, the best number is the number of friends in the group or the ideal number that they have set for themselves. Patrols do not operate better for having a certain number of members, but as a function of their internal bonding. This is what should determine the best number and no-one knows more about that than the Patrol members themselves.



PATROLS MAY BE VERTICAL OR HORIZONTAL, DEPENDING ON AGE

A *vertical* Patrol consists of young people of varying ages within the scout age group, so that the members of the

group are at different stages of development. With this kind of mixture, it can prove difficult to generate shared interests and carry out activities adapted to the ages of all the Patrol members. However, the diversity means that the older members can help the newer ones along, using their experience to help the younger ones face and overcome challenges that might seem beyond their scope. This generates an interaction between demonstrating and emulating, and thus facilitates learning, teaches teamwork and contributes to the growth of the younger members.

A *horizontal* Patrol is made up of young people who are of similar ages and therefore have quite similar development tasks. This facilitates integration among the young people and makes it easier to find activities that are attractive to all of them.

The monitoring relationship that is generated in the vertical Patrol is less apparent here and, as all the members leave within a relatively short period, it is more difficult to create traditions and ensure the continuity of the Patrol with new members.



Many Units devote lengthy analysis to which of these two models will suit them best. In a Patrol System where members join voluntarily, however, the Adult Leaders do not, in fact, have the prerogative to opt between the two possibilities. One or the other will simply occur depending on the circumstances or on how the Patrols develop, and the Adult Leaders must work with these realities.

The vertical or horizontal nature of a Patrol is only relevant insofar as the Adult Leaders should be aware of its strong points and the aspects where it needs most support. There should be no question of a Unit Leader refusing to let a group of friends of mixed ages form a Patrol on the basis that “we only have horizontal Patrols in this Unit”. Nor indeed should they “top up” a well-bonded Patrol of young people of 14 and 15 years of age with cubs just out of the Pack with the argument that the Patrol needs to “restore the vertical dimension”.



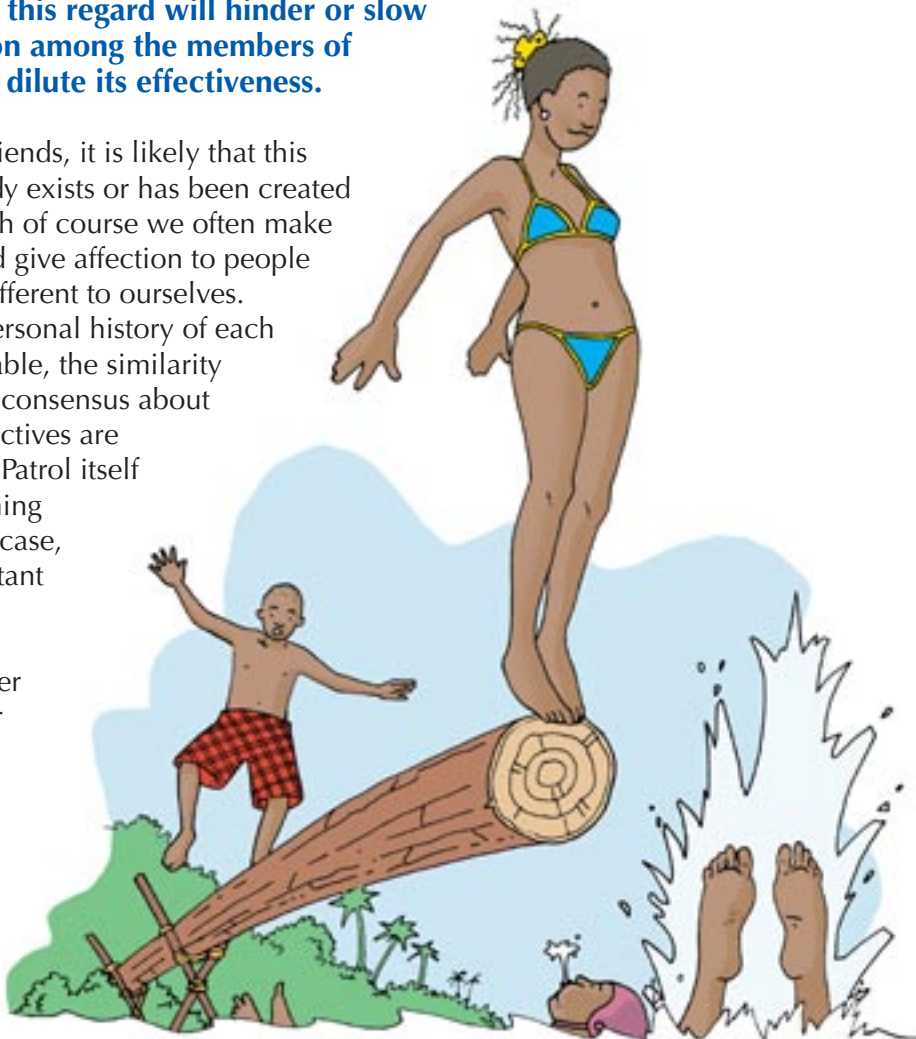
The only way of solving difficulties such as those mentioned in the cases above is to leave the Patrol to decide on its own membership; the adults should not interfere with the group's internal cohesion. In the example of the Patrol of 14 and 15 year-olds, a comment from the Adult Leaders on the historical continuity of the Patrol may be enough for the youngsters to consider the point and themselves seek to gradually bring in younger friends.



THE PATROL MEMBERS NEED TO HAVE SIMILAR INTERESTS

Like any group of friends, it is natural for the Patrol to have a varying number of members of different ages. However, it will help the bonding and stability of the group if the young people have similar interests and experiences, as well as a minimum of consensus on basic values and the objectives that will steer their joint actions. Differences in this regard will hinder or slow communication among the members of the group and dilute its effectiveness.

Being friends, it is likely that this similarity already exists or has been created rapidly, although of course we often make friends with and give affection to people who are very different to ourselves. Although the personal history of each child is unalterable, the similarity of interests and consensus about values and objectives are acquired in the Patrol itself during the learning process. In any case, this is an important factor and one which the Unit and Patrol Leader should consider in their work with the small group.



The choice of activities for the Patrol to carry out should be in keeping with its human resources and the materials available. The allocation of tasks among Patrol members should be in relation to their abilities and skills. If the activities are not sufficiently challenging and the tasks are minimal, then they will lack motivation. On the other hand, if the activities are beyond the Patrol's ability or the tasks are very demanding, they may end up feeling frustrated. Both feelings will affect the cohesion of the group and, in consequence, its stability.



ACTIVITIES AND TASKS MUST BE APPROPRIATE

This balance between activities, tasks and resources is part of the Patrol's learning process, which is won through a constant process of trial and error. If no progress is made in this respect, it is the task of the Unit Leaders to support the Patrol Leader in creating the conditions for the group to achieve the right balance.



THE PATROL HAS ITS OWN IDENTITY

The identity of a Patrol as an informal group is its awareness of what it is like, which lasts over time and in the face of different situations. Identity has to do with its *internal structure*, its *status and roles*, its *rules*, *leadership* and *symbols of belonging*.



THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE IS FLEXIBLE



All Patrols have a kind of spontaneous internal structure which is constantly evolving. Young people differ in age, experience and temperament and they all come to occupy and adapt different positions in the group as they get to know each other, as they grow, and as the older members leave or new members join.

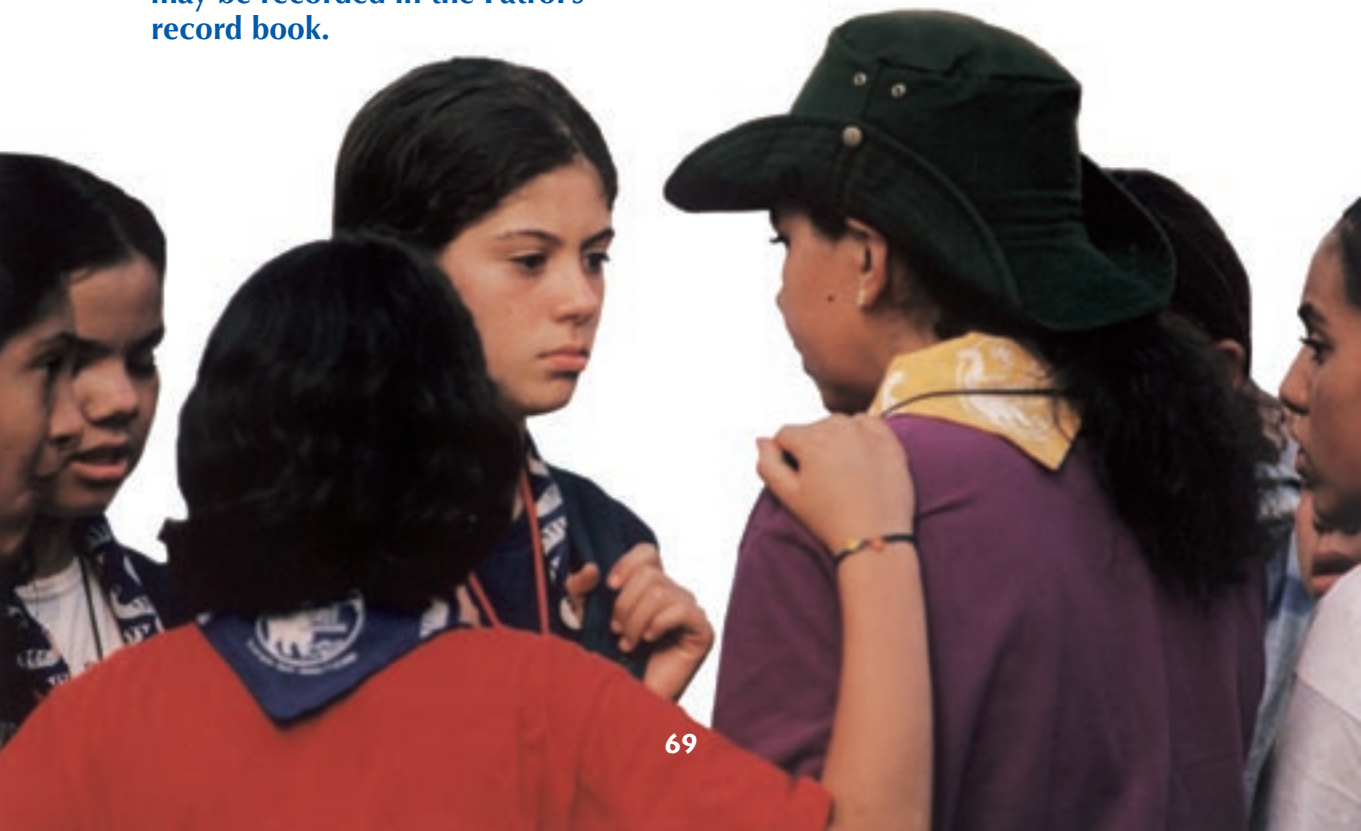
The model of relationship that exists between the different positions constitutes the structure of the small group. Any external proposal about the structure, stemming either from desires of the Leaders or the “tradition of the Unit”, or the institutional rules, should respect this situation which is characteristic of informal groups. External suggestions should be flexible, so that each Patrol can use or adopt them as their spontaneous structure permits.

The less rigid the formal structure proposed by the Unit, the more the informal nature of the Patrol as a group will be protected. And we have already seen that the more the Patrol is protected as an informal group of friends, the better it can fulfil the mission the Method assigns to it as a learning community. The effectiveness of the Patrol System depends to a large extent on the Leaders never forgetting this apparent paradox.



THE PATROL HAS A SINGLE FORMAL STRUCTURE: THE PATROL COUNCIL

The Patrol Council should be a formal platform for making relevant decisions, in which all the members of the Patrol take part, under the orientation of the Patrol Leader. The Patrol Council may meet whenever the Patrol considers it necessary, although these meetings should not be so frequent that they turn into the regular Patrol meeting, which should be more operational. The resolutions of the Council may be recorded in the Patrol's record book.



The business addressed by the Council must be relevant, for example:

- ✚ Approving the Patrol's activities for a programme cycle and activities to propose for the Unit to carry out.
- ✚ Electing a Patrol Leader and Assistant Patrol Leader.
- ✚ Evaluating Patrol activities and long-duration activities.
- ✚ Defining and assigning roles in the Patrol and assessing performance.
- ✚ Contributing to the self-assessment of each Patrol member, with constructive comments.
- ✚ Administering the resources of the Patrol.



THE STATUS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ASSIGN TO EACH OTHER DEFINES INTERNAL ROLES AND TASKS

Status is the standing that others acknowledge a person within the group to have. While in formal groups, status is generally based on the position the person occupies in the formal organization, in informal groups status may be based on any circumstances that are relevant to the group. In the Patrol, young people assign status among themselves according to age, length of time in the group, experience, affective ties, personal abilities and specific skills.

The status assigned almost always determines the formal hierarchy. In keeping with this, Patrols usually designate relatively stable *positions* for all their members:

- ✚ Patrol Leader, who is responsible for the main leadership, coordinates the Patrol and represents it at the Unit Council.
- ✚ Quartermaster, who looks after the Patrol's materials and distributes the work of maintaining them among the other members.
- ✚ Assistant Patrol Leader, who deputises for the Patrol Leader and also represents the Patrol at the Unit Council.
- ✚ Cook, who ensures that the Patrol continually improves the quality and variety of its meals.
- ✚ Secretary, who is responsible for keeping up the Patrol Book, keeping a record of resolutions and reminding all the members of their commitments and deadlines.
- ✚ Nurse, who keeps the Patrol's first aid kit and makes sure that everyone knows the main rules of safety and first aid.
- ✚ Treasurer, who administers the Patrol's financial resources.
- ✚ Gamesmaster, who knows many games and always has a good one to propose.
- ✚ Arts Master, who is responsible for songs and for a good performance in all things artistic.
- ✚ Other responsibilities that may arise from the needs of the Patrol organization.



The young people rotate these positions every so often although they may be re-elected to the same ones if the Patrol Council is in agreement. It is not a good idea to establish set terms of office. Rather, the Patrol should be left to regulate this aspect internally, while taking care to maintain relative stability among the positions.

At the same time, *tasks* are assigned according to the activities underway. Positions and tasks offer an opportunity to exercise responsibility, gain knowledge, assimilate attitudes and acquire skills. Practising these roles, assessing them continually and making changes to them constitute a gradual learning process.

However, most difficulties within a Patrol arise when the perception of one of these roles is distorted or inaccurate. This can happen when there are divergences between how the Patrol members expect a person to behave (expected role), how that person believes he or she should behave (perceived role) and how he or she actually does behave (presented role). The cohesion of the Patrol, and therefore its stability and duration, depend on getting these three concepts of role to coincide. Inconsistencies between them normally generate conflict and the Patrol Council must make the changes and adaptations required to restore the smooth operation of the group.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S IMPLICIT RULES CREATE THE INTERNAL CULTURE OF THE PATROL



The rules of an informal group are the standards that its members share and that are perceived as important by them. They usually concern aspects that are significant for the members of the group. All informal groups of young people have a great variety of rules which are communicated verbally, not in written form, and in many cases are not even explicitly defined but which, somehow, are known to all the members of the group.



Apart from the basic rules laid out in the Scout Law, and those which are related to transcendental aspects, the Patrol naturally creates many other rules referring to the way it works. The rules form what we might call the internal culture of the Patrol. This culture changes as the Patrol develops, and young people express it very clearly when they say that “that’s how we do things in our Patrol”.

The internal culture is reflected, for example, in the way meetings are held, the time devoted to the Patrol, the style of the Patrol Book, the state of repair of their equipment, their pride in belonging to their Patrol, the relationship between the Patrol Leader and the other members, the extent to which they imitate each other, punctuality and responsibility, the secrecy they attribute to their resolutions, the internal structure that is generated, the things they consider acceptable and unacceptable, their personal tastes and the relationship between girls and boys.

It is important to be aware that a number of interesting phenomena occur in all informal groups in relation to rules, including those known as *identification*, *contagion* and *inspiration*.

Identification is a mechanism by which the members of a group unconsciously adopt shared rules and attitudes in order to be accepted by the group. This makes them feel like each other and reduces the fear of being rejected as “strangers”. *Contagion* is what transmits rules and attitudes from one member to another, through imitation. Once two or more members act in a given way, it is normal for this behaviour to be adopted by the others too. Lastly, *inspiration* concerns the natural acceptance of rules and attitudes demonstrated by the leader or by those who hold a position perceived to be “superior”.

These phenomena also happen in the Patrol. In order to gain a sense of belonging to their Patrol, its members do similar things to the rest of the group, they imitate and emulate the examples of their friends and naturally assimilate the rules established by the Leader. These phenomena are neither good or bad, they simply are. But it is the task of the Adult Leaders to ensure that the Patrol Leaders are aware of them, learn to handle them and try to avoid them occurring to excess, which would hinder the generation of rules in a free, conscious and consensual manner, a process which is part of the formation of individual conscience and autonomy.



PEER GROUP RULES COINCIDE WITH THE SCOUT LAW

Scientific research has shown that the rules that are accepted within informal peer groups of young people, even criminal gangs, include those which encourage mutual trust based on truth, loyalty and commitment among its members. It is easy to see the impressive coincidence between such rules and the values inherent in various articles of the Scout Law.

Why is that? Because the Founder of the Movement visualised the Scout Law not just from the perspective of Scout principles, but also taking the aspirations of young people into account. And so the first proposal of the Scout Method to the Patrols is to make the Law their own and include it among their fundamental principles. The moment the members of a Patrol accept the Scout Law in their lives, the Patrol will begin to play its dual role as a peer group and learning community.

It can be argued that by inducing the assimilation of the values of the Scout Law into the rules of the Patrol, the formal dimension of the organization is impinging on the small group informality. Indeed it is, and this should come as no surprise in an educational movement. However, the Scout Law coincides to such a great extent with the feelings and aspirations of young people and the rules that they spontaneously acknowledge in their informal groups –as research has shown– that this intervention is minimal, especially compared with the benefits of having a basic written code to steer the lives of the young members. Just as important as having a code is the fact that it is self-imposed, as this makes the young people judge their lives by their own conscience. It is precisely this code that gives the Patrol such an immense comparative advantage over any other type of informal group.

In any event, adopting the Scout Law is always a case of personal experience. When an experience is gratifying, i.e. when it produces good results, it tends to be repeated. If a young person continually forms his or her attitudes by the values of the Scout Law and in doing so feels satisfied at having acted in keeping with the way he or she feels and earning the acknowledgement of the others, those values will gradually become permanently incorporated into his or her behaviour. Through this process, the Scout Law ceases to be something external and becomes a personal code of living.



THE PATROL LEADER IS ELECTED AND PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE



The internal leadership of the Patrol is determined by the status that the young people assign among themselves. This is why the Patrol Leader is elected by the young people and, if the Patrol Council asks the Leader to name an Assistant Leader instead of electing him or her, the Leader should name the person whom the Patrol has naturally assigned the function of deputy. The Leader and Assistant Leader represent the Patrol at the Unit Council.

A Leader is essential in the small group. The young person who becomes a Leader is a highly respected member of the group, who continues to be one of the Patrol, but fulfils certain "critical functions". The Patrol Leader:

- Helps the Patrol to attain its objectives.
- Enables the members to satisfy their needs.
- Acts as a mediator in conflicts within the small group.
- Makes the values of the Patrol into a living reality: the Leader personifies the values, motives and aspirations of the other young people.
- Initiates the actions of the Patrol.
- Strives to maintain the cohesion of the group.



Baden-Powell highlighted the importance of the Patrol Leader's position and pointed out that "the Patrol Leader is responsible for the efficiency and smartness of his Patrol. The Scouts in the Patrol follow the Patrol Leader not from fear of punishment, as is often the case in military discipline, but because they are a team playing together and backing up their leader for the honour and success of the Patrol." (*Scouting for Boys*, 1908). In another of his texts he made the clear definition that "the Scout Leader works through the Patrol Leaders." (*Aids to Scoutmastership*, 1919).

Baden-Powell had already stressed this idea in an earlier article, in which he said to the Leaders, "To get first-class results from the Patrol System you have to give the young Leaders real freehanded responsibility. If you only give partial responsibility you will only get partial results." (*Headquarters' Gazette*, May 1914).

The Patrol Leader is not a young charmer who does the Adult Leaders' wishes, nor someone who knows it all. As far as can be expected of a young person of this age, the Patrol Leader should have vision, clear objectives, good communicational skills and the will to work and act in cooperation with others, both at the level of the leaders –the Unit Council and Team of Adult Leaders– and at the level of his or her companions of the same age or younger. The Patrol Leader concentrates on initiating dialogues that encourage and maintain commitments directed at cooperation to achieve planned objectives. The Patrol Leader must be, on the one hand, open enough to keep the group spirit working and, on the other, strong enough of character to keep the Patrol on course towards its objectives.

It must be borne in mind that the Patrol Leader is not the only one to exercise leadership. Depending on their attitudes and skills and the activity in question, some Patrol members may assume leadership in specific circumstances, the extent of which will vary according to the situation.



THE PATROL HAS SYMBOLS OF BELONGING

The main symbols of the identity of a Patrol are its *name*, *meeting place* and *Patrol Record Book*.



By choosing a *name* the Patrol affirms its individuality, the sense of belonging felt by its members and its autonomy. Normally an animal name is chosen, representing certain attributes for which the members of the Patrol would like to be recognized.



The meeting place or *Patrol corner* is a place which should be exclusive, as a basic expression of this age group's thirst for territory. The corner is arranged and decorated according to the tastes and interests of the members of the Patrol and reflects their dedication to this personal and private space. This is the place where Patrol meetings are held and where its equipment and other belongings are kept. When the Patrol camps with the whole Unit, the need for a space of its own should be considered in the choice of sites, which should be sufficiently independent from each other to permit some intimacy and their own camp life.



The *Patrol Record Book* is a book which is kept with a certain artistic flair and which is used to record important facts and events in the life of the Patrol and its members. It holds the history of the Patrol, which feels proud of its past and wants to leave a record of its present and pass its experiences on to future members. It is a private book, which is kept in a special place and only shown to other people if the Patrol wishes to do so. The responsibility for keeping it up-to-date is assigned periodically to a Patrol member, although all may write in it.

Patrols may generate other symbolic elements at their own initiative, such as a yell, motto, flag, song, colours, secret codes, a whistle and many others. While respecting the initiatives of the young people, the Leaders should encourage austerity and simplicity in this matter on the part of the Patrols. The idea is to avoid overburdening their symbols of belonging with artificial elements which make them appear closed or childish groups.





THE PATROL IS A PLACE TO ENJOY BEING WITH FRIENDS

As we conclude our analysis of the Patrol as an informal group, we must emphasize that young people's main motivation in belonging to it is being with a group of friends. This is its distinguishing feature and it must never be lost.

For different reasons, a Patrol may take longer to attain the educational objectives than we, the Adult Leaders, expect it to. Indeed, its performance may even occasionally decline. But if it continues to be a community of friends who are happy to be together, it will always be possible to get it back on track towards its objectives. A Patrol cannot be expected to function as a "learning environment" unless it is a "form of organization" based on friendship.

The Patrol is a place where the affective aspect comes first and, for that to be real, feelings must be genuinely felt. This will be helped by the Adult Leaders treating the young people affectionately, creating a warm atmosphere in the Unit for the Patrols to interact.

Affection can be learned as a behaviour toward others insofar as one experiences it oneself. If the Unit has a vertical and compartmentalized structure, with Leaders who are distant and with whom the young people do not feel motivated to interact, the Patrol Leaders are likely to adopt a similar style of leadership. In turn the Patrol Leader's style will influence the rest of the Patrol, thus eroding its characteristics as a group of friends.

Affection is central in the Unit. People listen to each other; humour is spontaneous and supportive, not hurtful; young people help each other and celebrate the everyone's good results; visitors are received with smiles; there is absolute respect for other people's opinions, even when they are not shared;

and warmth is genuine, not feigned. In such an atmosphere, young people can consolidate and deepen their friendship within the Patrols, achieving the first objective of the system, on which the second is built: being a learning community.





THE PATROL AS A LEARNING COMMUNITY

The moment a young person makes a commitment to the Scout Law, the Patrol comes to be more than just a group of friends he or she enjoys being with: it also becomes a learning community that supports his or her personal development and invites him or her to commit to a shared project.

The kind of learning that happens in the Patrol is aimed at generating a change in behaviour, be it in terms of knowledge (knowing), skills (knowing how to do) or attitudes (knowing how to be). It is not just gaining knowledge –which is basically what happens in the classroom or in a study group- but growth of the person from within, in all the dimensions of his or her personality: intelligence, will, character, feelings and emotions, solidarity and spirituality. It is learning that encompasses the “whole” person.

BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE THAT ENCOMPASSES THE “WHOLE” PERSON AND LEARNING TOGETHER



As we learn in very different ways, this internal growth happens as part of a continuum which includes listening, observing, asking, doing things, investigating, thinking, self-assessment and helping others to learn. Consequently, learning also happens “together”.





PATROLS LEARN BY DOING

This is essentially *active learning*, partly conscious, partly unconscious, which happens basically on three levels:



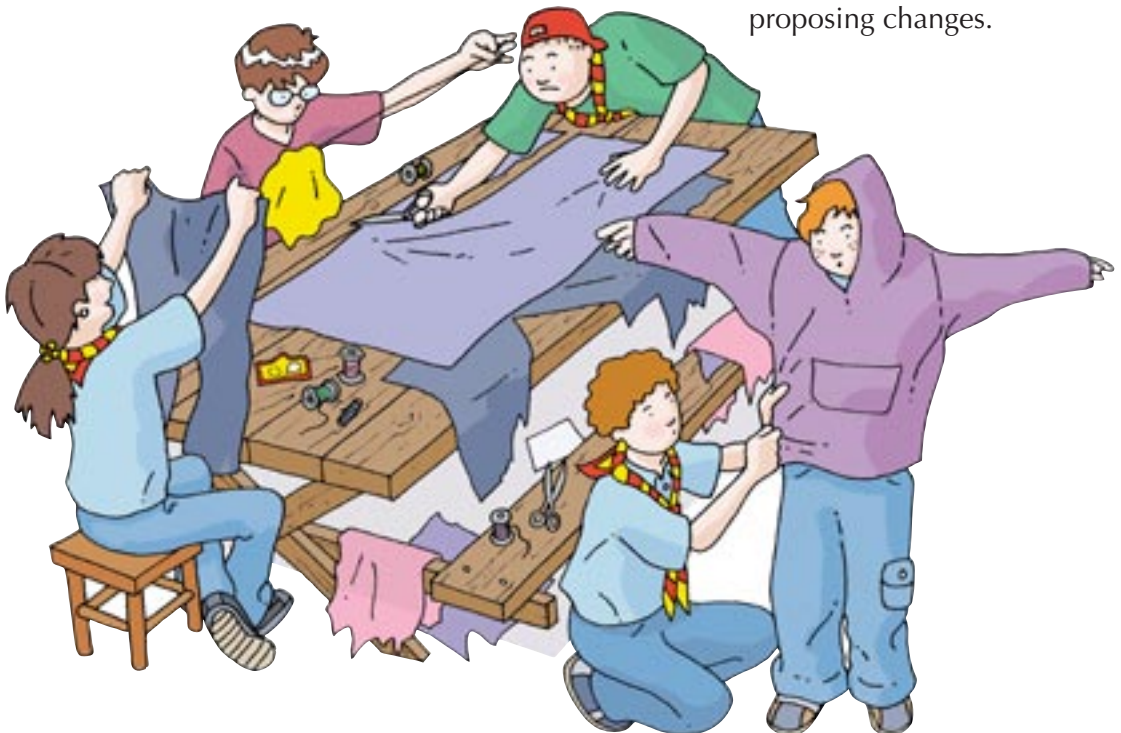
Through shared life, shared meanings, learning to see and interpret things and events together, passing on dreams, exemplifying values through behaviour and designing and committing to a project, which is partly shared and partly individual. This is the aspect in which the Patrol plays the role of *life community* founded on shared affection and within the value framework of the Scout law.



Through planning, execution and evaluation of activities. Here, the Patrol operates like a *micro-business*, dreaming up the activity, designing it, acquiring the abilities and technical skills needed to carry it through, generating and obtaining the resources, supporting its members in their tasks, evaluating the results and bringing out strengths, weaknesses and mistakes. In the Patrol mistakes are part of the learning process; they are not seen to be to anyone's discredit, but rather as opportunities to see what could have been done differently.



Activities generate experiences, and a sequence of accumulated experiences enable the young people to achieve the behaviour envisaged in Scouting's educational objectives, which they have made their own by adapting and complementing them in accordance with their own personal interests. This part of learning is based on objectives, in which the members of the Patrol play the part of *mutual tutors*, helping each other with personal development, giving encouragement for their achievements, reinforcing their self-image and proposing changes.





LEARNING IN THE PATROL ENABLES A RESPONSE AT THE RIGHT TIME

On all these levels,
learning within the Patrol
provides for the *response*

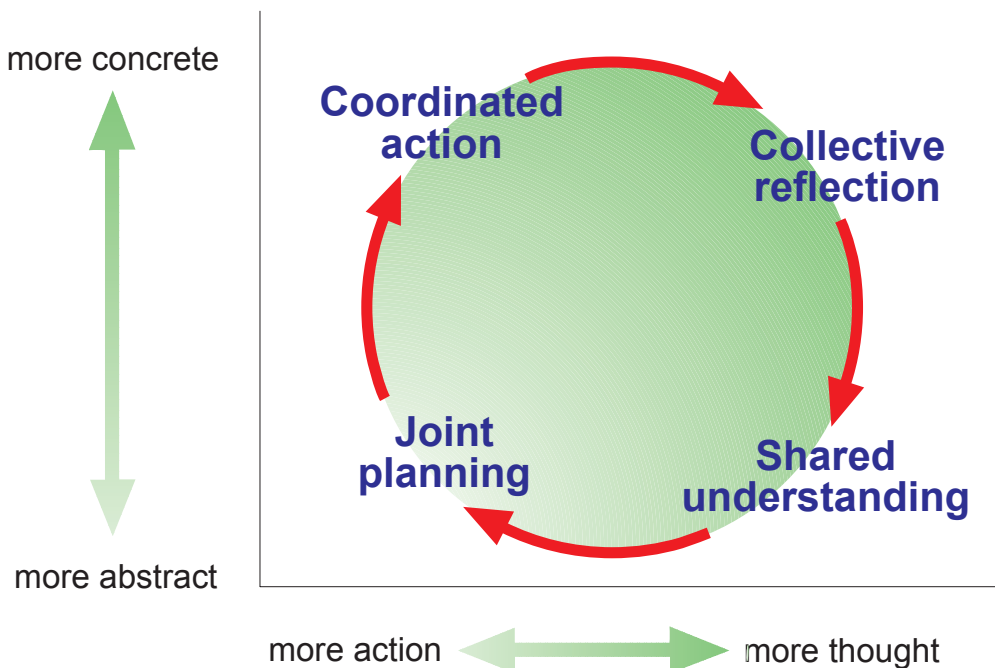
at the right time, which means that instead of accumulating facts and data in their minds until they may be needed later, young people put the information they learn to practical use at the appropriate time.

Once learned, facts and information are easily forgotten if they are not used to deal with real problems. In the Patrol, learning occurs when a fact which is related to a specific subject is assimilated at the very time it is needed. If a young person is helped by an older, more experienced Scout the first time they have to make the meal in camp, learning to combine the different ingredients under the helpful observation of the other, teaching and learning come together in a single act.



IN THE PATROL, YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN AS A TEAM THROUGH A SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES

We have said that learning in the Patrol is partly conscious and partly unconscious. This is because team learning, especially when related to the activities, follows a constantly repeating cycle, which passes in succession from the more concrete to the more abstract and from the more active to the more thoughtful.





Through *collective reflection*, the members of the Patrol become observers of their own acts and thoughts. Generally this phase begins with the evaluation of an activity. How did it go? What did we think and feel when we were doing it? What circumstances affected us? What went wrong? Do we see things differently now? Was it better than we thought it would be? Why? This is a phase rich in diverging opinions, where the members of the Patrol who have the ability to see things from different angles –the “pernickety sticklers for detail”– will stand out. This way of thinking should be encouraged since, though it may sometimes seem harebrained, it is a necessary step on the road to creativity and innovation.



In a very natural, almost imperceptible, way, reflection gives way to a *shared understanding* of what happened, seeking links and connections between what was done and what could now be done. What roads could we take from here? What have we learned? What could we do next? This is a time to put ideas in order, tune our vision, find possible alternatives and discover similarities between facts. This is the moment of the “discoverers of connections”, those who have the ability to work out why things happened in a certain way.



Next comes *joint planning*, in which decisions are made on the basis of the possibilities thrown up in the previous stage, and the things to be done from now on are planned together. This stage generally includes changes in the group members’ way of acting and their roles. Taking decisions implies learning to choose between options: “this is what we should do and this is why”. This is where young people good at “convergent thought” come to the fore, people who are outstanding at thinking up solutions, enjoy experimenting and are always impatient to get to the point where the action starts.



Finally comes the stage of *coordinated action*, in which each person works on different tasks directed at the same objective, backed by the analysis of all the preceding stages. This is the stage at which the “practical ones” are best, experts at adapting theory to reality; and if they see that the theory will not work, they have a natural ability to make alterations along the way, which makes them essential.



When the activity or task is over, the process swings right back to the reflective thought stage with the question, “How did it go?” And the cycle continues its unending course.

The different styles or types of intelligence we have described at each stage do not always come together in a single Patrol. However, the constant use of the learning cycle will bring out and make the most of all the styles which are latent in the Patrol. If they do not all appear, the Patrol Leader will know where the weak points are and the Unit Leaders will help him or her to compensate for what is lacking. If all these aspects of intelligence do appear, the Patrol will have very good results, but the internal climate will be hectic and the Patrol Leader will have to learn to orientate debates in a group that is highly productive but difficult to govern.

The stages in which understanding of a problem is shared and planing is done jointly develop the *capacity for abstract thought*, which is one of the prerequisites for the formation of knowledge. Coordinated action and collective reflection develop the *ability to be concrete*, an important component of personal fulfilment.

In turn, joint planning and coordinated action lie in the terrain of *action*, while collective reflection and shared understanding belong to the terrain of *thought*. This gives young people the opportunity to learn that all acts in life move along that busy line which constantly comes and goes between thought and action, theory and practice.



YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN TO LEARN

One of the advantages of this cyclical learning is that the young people do it almost without realizing. If the Unit Leaders gradually encourage the Patrol Leaders to realize that their main role is to keep this “wheel” turning, then this way of proceeding will become a way of life for the young people, just as scientific method is a way of life for a laboratory scientist.

By becoming aware of this cycle, young people not only learn, but they also learn to learn. Baden-Powell called this “self-teaching”, and today it is known as “learning potential” or “metalearning”. In a contents-based training system, people may learn, but they learn in a static way, with the illusion that they have learned once and for all. In a process-centred system, by contrast, learning is dynamic, because people learn to learn.

In the constantly changing contemporary world, in which what changes most is the speed of change, it serves us little to base learning on content, since what we learn today will be obsolete tomorrow. If, on the other hand, learning emphasizes processes, we are learning to learn, to unlearn and relearn, knowing how to seek or generate content when it is needed.

This is what happens in the Patrol in terms of learning, or what “should happen” if we use the Patrol System correctly. Processes are not learned by listening to talks or carrying out experiments. They are learned by living them, and therefore the Patrol, where everything is part of life, is an ideal environment for learning processes.

To make this learning happen and happen well, we also need to create a “learning field”.



THE SCOUT METHOD CREATES A “LEARNING FIELD” IN THE PATROL



A *learning field* is an intangible but real structure, which criss-crosses a Scout Unit in all directions, influencing the behaviour of all its members and facilitating learning. Today we know that these types of field exist –just like gravitational, electromagnetic or quantum fields- not because we can see them, but because we feel their effects. When we communicate by mobile telephone we are using a network of electromagnetic waves we cannot see, but which nevertheless exist and traverse space in different directions. The same is true of sound waves or gravitational force.

As Scout Leaders, we have seen for ourselves these learning fields in action in our courses. We carefully prepare the atmosphere and layout of the room, the audio-visual aids for the presentations, the mechanisms of the dialogue, the provision of support materials. Then the participants input dialogues and set up relationships which we would never have generated or even imagined. Suddenly, we perceive that all these factors have created a “learning field” which in many aspects makes us unnecessary.

Similarly, the spaces occupied by our Patrols and our Scout Unit are not empty, but shot through with an invisible weave of linked attitudes and dialogues which create the atmosphere that shapes behaviour. Some of the factors which interact to create a learning field are:



- Interest shown in the personal development of each young person
- An environment free of destructive criticism, punishment or repressive measures
- Incentives for participation, creativity and innovation
- Free flow of information
- Sense of challenge
- Timely acknowledgement of achievements
- Tolerance of spontaneity
- Willingness to listen
- Atmosphere of experimentation
- Encouragement of diverging opinions
- Continual interaction
- Willingness to learn on the part of the Adult Leaders
- Patience with individual paces of learning
- Flexible approach to running things
- Little “regulation”

Creating a learning field does not mean talking about it or giving presentations to explain it. It is enough to create conditions like those mentioned above and the learning field will develop by itself.

All Patrol Leaders who make careful preparations for a camp, who choose a suitable place, who divide up tasks, who encourage the individual efforts of the members of the Patrol, organize their *corner* in the open air, carry out attractive activities, get everyone to participate and give their opinion carefully and responsibly, follow a programme and create lots of other conditions like those mentioned above, will suddenly see that “things are working out well”, that the young people seem different and that achievements are beginning to come one after another. Without them realizing it or even knowing that the environment their actions create has a name, they have nonetheless managed to generate a learning field.



One of the main tasks of the Leaders –especially Unit Leaders and Patrol Leaders and Assistant Patrol Leaders– is to create and maintain learning fields. The existence of these stimulates the Patrol as a learning community. Its absence makes the Patrol System deteriorate or turns it into a mere administrative division in the Unit.

THE PATROL ENCOURAGES THE YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY



On the pretext that the young people are at “a formative stage”, many Units operate solely within the confines of the Unit and the Patrols do the same, which makes them inward-looking. Firstly, there is no single formative stage. Rather, our whole life is one long formative stage in which we never stop learning. Secondly, our firm view is that learning needs to be projected onto a greater dimension in order to be effective.

The first sphere of projection of a Patrol is its immediate community, which is its Scout Group, the sponsoring institution, school, companions, neighbourhood, parents and families of the young people. Openness to these environments brings its own learning, since interaction with them acts as a “mirror” which unveils the progress in their personal development.



In addition, the nearby environment offers a splendid opportunity for service. Many local community organizations never learn the purpose of Scout Groups, or believe that Scouts are fine in themselves but not much use for anyone else.



THE PATROL IS ALSO INTERESTED IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY



The wider community begins where the local community ends. By wider community we mean the city, region, country and the world. In Scouting, this means the district, the association and the World Organization of the Scout Movement.

In an interconnected and globalized world, in which a great part of what happens locally derives from global events, the Patrol cannot learn in isolation. It needs to know how the world works, with its networks, influences, problems and players. Young people inevitably and necessarily need to learn through reading, access to information and the productive use of the Internet, developing the ability to disentangle the assumptions and causes that underlie items of news.

Things work in circles. How can we live at one point of the circle and not be interested in finding out how this point is connected to the others? The inquisitive tendency that is latent in young people finds expression in the dynamics of the Scout Method. Let us not forget the “need to explore”, and the “interest in taking over new territories”. The interest in the wider community will develop vigorously as soon as we encourage it.

THE PATROL CAN BE SINGLE-SEX OR MIXED



Whether Patrols should be mixed or not is a controversial subject. Both

those in favour and those against usually wheel out the same few arguments, which are not always well founded or from an appropriate perspective. The debate is almost always imbued with habits, traditions, fears, fashions, and cultural and ideological concepts.

In order to clarify this point, we propose to reason on a number of bases that are consistent with the physiological development of young people and the Patrol System proposed by the Scout Method.



The question of whether a Patrol should be mixed or not should respond first of all to the natural structure of the peer group. If we maintain that the Patrol will operate as a learning community to the extent that its nature as an informal group is respected, the first rule is quite clear: if the peer group which becomes a Scout Patrol is mixed, the Patrol must be mixed too; and if the members of the informal group are all of the same gender, the Patrol should also be single-sex. If we are to be consistent with our own arguments, there is not much more to discuss on this point.



The same criteria should be used when it comes to new members joining. The Patrol Council is the first to be consulted on whether the Patrol wishes to continue to be mixed or single-sex, or accept a change in this regard.



The two points above are not to the detriment of the precepts of any particular culture or the educational concepts of a determined environment. If peer groups are not mixed in the culture or in the concepts in question, then the Patrol will not be mixed either. The recommendation is not to act contrary to the culture, but to let the Patrol reflect the natural composition of the peer group.



Having said this, we should ask ourselves, “What is the natural tendency of young people of this age?” Between the ages of 11 and 13, the more “biological” stage of adolescence, in which young people tend to turn inward, rather taken aback by the changes in their body, in all cultures there is a tendency to form single-sex groups. This does not mean that young people do not have friends of both sexes, but what a young person considers to be “his group” or “her group” is likely to be made up of peers of the same sex.



From the age of 13 or 14 on, depending on the culture or subculture and the particular situation of each individual, young people sooner or later return to having members of both sexes in their close groups, although not in quite the same way as they did in childhood. Once the surprise at the physical transformation has passed, embarrassment overcome and the changes assimilated, interest in the other sex begins to emerge naturally and, almost always, with some mixed and confused emotions.

✦ Since the Scout Section covers the age groups between 11 and 15, and there are good reasons for keeping this development cycle as the first stage of adolescence, the extent of the dilemma will depend on whether the Patrol is vertical or horizontal.

If the Patrol is more horizontal than vertical and consists mainly of young people in the first age group, there is unlikely to be much doubt: the Patrol will tend to be single-sex. If it is horizontal, and the members are mainly in the second age group, the young people are likely to want it to be mixed. There is no problem in either case, except when a minority of the Patrol members are of a different age group to the rest; this must to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, ideally by the Patrol itself, which will know what the best solution is.

The dilemma is more severe in the case of a vertical Patrol in which the ages of the members are equally divided between the two groups. Here, it is likely that the issue will bring out contrasting trends in favour of mixed or single-sex, or perhaps not, because each Patrol is different and responds differently to its environment.

As the young people grow and new members join, the Patrol may shift from a horizontal structure to a vertical one, or vice versa. These variations may affect the gender structure too. Depending on how the age groups within the Patrol vary, it may change from single-sex to mixed or vice versa. There is no reason to avoid this kind of flexibility in the Patrol, as it reflects the Scout concept of prioritizing the informal dimension of the peer group.





CRITERIA FOR A POLICY ON MIXED PATROLS

After working through the arguments above and defining the areas where the dilemma arises, we recommend handling the situation in accordance with the following criteria:



Suggest that the Unit Council have a flexible policy, open to all the alternatives, and avoid imposing any one doctrine “a priori”. This means that a single Unit may have all-girls Patrols, all-boys Patrols and mixed Patrols at the same time, depending on the natural composition of the peer group.

This also means that a Patrol is not necessarily single-sex or mixed indefinitely, since that will depend on how it develops over time, the characteristics of its members and the changes in its composition.

Of course, the existence of mixed Patrols instead of just single-sex requires the Adult Leaders to have some different skills. Obviously, the Team of Adult Leaders must be mixed, the leadership styles will vary and it is advisable for personal progress to be monitored by a leader of the same sex as the young person.



Since this policy of openness is part of the Unit’s rules, it is a good idea to put it to the approval of the Unit Assembly. As Baden-Powell advised, “ask the young person”.

What is more, the first time that the possibility of mixed Patrols is raised in a single-sex Unit or a mixed Unit with single-sex Patrols or in an environment where mixed groups are not the norm, it is highly advisable to analyse the issue together with the different players involved with the Scout Group: the parents, sponsoring institution and the Group Council.

An appropriate educational debate held in advance on this point will keep the parents suitably informed, provide a wider understanding of the educational reasoning and avoid misunderstandings. Depending on the environment and the flexibility of the actors, the decision is likely to be more consensual and better supported later. In any case, whenever possible, the decision should be taken by the Unit Council.



Once there is consensus on a flexible policy in accordance with the above criteria, individual cases arising should be judged by the criteria established at the outset. That means respecting the natural composition that the peer group has or would like to have.





An attempt should be made to ensure that being mixed or single-sex does not interfere with the natural dynamics of the small group, affect its internal bonding or, as a result, its development into a learning community. If a Patrol cannot reach an agreement on this point, and the debate threatens its cohesion, the point should be resolved by a dialogue between the Patrol and the Unit Council.



In cases of mixed Patrols or a mixed Unit with single-sex Patrols, careful attention should be paid to the basic requirements laid out in chapter 5 for mixed Units.



Lastly, it is a good idea to consult complementary guidance material provided on this subject by our Association.



THE PATROL WORKS ON THE BASIS OF THE SCOUT METHOD AND INTERACTION BETWEEN PATROLS TAKES PLACE IN THE UNIT

When we defined the Patrol as a learning community we mentioned two aspects which have not been analysed in detail thus far. The first is that the Patrol is a community which operates “on the basis of the Scout Method” and the second refers to the “interaction” between Patrols.

Chapter 4 analyses the elements of the Scout Method and the way in which they work together to form *group life*; while chapter 5 looks at the Scout Unit as the space in which the Patrols interact.

