



# Boy Scouts of America should let boys be boys

By Mark Hancock

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Do the leaders of the Boy Scouts of America understand the first word of their organization's name?

With its recent announcement that it will admit girls, the Boy Scouts organization has not simply shown a profound disregard for its admirable roots. It has further abandoned boys to a culture that values them less and less.

Dressed in the language of equality and fairness, the move by the Boy Scouts may seem harmless enough. But I believe it's unhelpful at best and damaging at worst – to both boys and girls.

However much some may wish it were otherwise, the reality is that males and females are fundamentally different in many ways – physically, emotionally and in their relationships. Pretending otherwise in the name of progress or permissiveness might be culturally acceptable, but it does both sexes a disservice.

Sadly, the Boy Scouts appear to have bought into the idea that rather than being something to be celebrated and championed, boyhood is something to be watered down.

One of those differences, in most cases, is the way boys and girls learn. Girls are more likely to do well in the quiet control of a classroom, while boys squirm and struggle.

Daring, action and competition – potential strengths that rival focus, reflection, and consensus – are qualities that need to be fostered and filtered. Boys know that rough-and-tumble play – like playing with squirt guns and laser tag – does just that. Restrictions on this are alienating and downplay the natural tendencies of boys.

Boys need strong male role models. They also need a place for adventure and opportunities to test themselves in pursuit of awards that challenge and channel their innate drive and daring. In this way they can be helped to grow into men of true strength, real character, and genuine conviction – not Hollywood's distorted version of manhood.

Sadly, the Boy Scouts appear to have bought into the idea that rather than being something to be celebrated and championed, boyhood is something to be watered down. They are discounting a historically male-focused experience that made presidents, astronauts and leaders of mere men. Indeed, making the inclusivity announcement on the International Day of the Girl Child could be considered the ultimate put-down.

Indeed, I believe one of the main reasons we see the sort of indefensible behavior by men in power – like the actions Harvey Weinstein is accused of – is a lack of the kind of mentoring and coaching that models true manhood.

Don't misunderstand: I'm not inferring that girls are lesser or inferior. The Boy Scouts message is actually that boys are lesser and inferior because their uniqueness needs to be denied rather than directed, stifled rather than strengthened.

While I'm clarifying something, let me also emphasize that my conviction that we must provide space for "boys to be boys" does not mean I'm advocating a breeding ground for a future generation of sexual predators.

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I'm talking about instilling in today's boys a culture of respect, honor and integrity. Properly guided, the drive and daring tendencies in boys will lead them to become the determined, focused, winning men of tomorrow who appreciate the uniqueness and dignity of women.

You don't have to look too far to see that at every level of society we are losing ground in areas as basic as kindness, self-control, respect, honor and purity. These should be taught and modeled for boys in an atmosphere designed for their unique temperament under the tutelage of men with the mettle to guide, alongside their peers.

Robert Baden-Powell would not now recognize the organization he founded in 1910. But while the Boy Scouts may have lost their way, they are not alone. They are just another group favoring trendy political correctness over time-honored principled convictions.

The results of all this are sadly too evident when it comes to our sons. Boys are losing out in any number of categories, from heightened special education involvement and ADHD diagnoses to lower high school rankings and college attendance.

While my dismay at the Boy Scouts decision centers on what this means for boys, I am also concerned about its impact on girls. What's bad for the gander is equally bad for the goose.

Girls, though wired differently, equally need an environment that caters to their unique traits and qualities. You can't deliver a program at a character-changing level with any real effectiveness in the same style to two different types of learners.

As Baden-Powell observed: "Girls should ... take a real and not a visionary share in the welfare of the nation."

But they shouldn't be squeezed into a Boy Scout uniform.

One size does not fit all.

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