

SCOUTS-L

**BSA - SEXUAL
MORALITY**

Date: Mon, 16 Sep 1996 12:36:04 -0600
From: Jonathan Dixon <dixonj@ROCOCO.COLORADO.EDU>
Subject: Re: Boy Scouting and Sexual Morality
To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

Well the reluctance to speak definitively on sexual morality seems to go back to BP himself. While he does speak of encouraging the boys to be honorable in their conduct, most of what I have seen from him says that this is a matter for boys and their parents/clergy/etc. (He does also make exception in Aids for Scoutmasters for those boys whose parents would prefer the SM talk to the boys).

The problem is that families have widely different takes on what is appropriate behavior, and except where those behaviors interact/interfere with scouting I'm not sure that it is appropriate for the BSA to speak more on it. I.e., it is perfectly reasonable for the BSA to prohibit sexual activity on campouts, but as far as addressing dating habits that would seem to be a family affair.

Where the troop can act is working through the discussion/reflection activities (such as DELTA) to teach the boys how to make ethical decisions even in difficult situations. They can also help teach the boys to have the courage to implement the decisions which are made. Then it is up to the family and church to teach the morals upon which the decisions will be made.

At least that is how I see the matter. As a SM, I would be very hesitant to say much to any of my scouts on the issue, except to encourage them to talk with their parents or pastor/priest. If they didn't feel they could do that, and really wanted to talk with me, I would try to defer long enough to talk generally with the parents and get their permission as well as a read on what the family rules are. Only in an extreme situation would I just go ahead and talk with the boy.

Jon

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Date: Mon, 16 Sep 1996 17:06:39 EDT

From: "Lisa A. Varner" <lavarner@JUNO.COM>
Subject: Re: Boy Scouting and Sexual Morality (long)
To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

On Mon, 16 Sep 1996 12:06:03 -0400 John Economides
<JohnEcon@AOL.COM>
writes:

>While we are concerned with the moral development of our youth >(lying, cheating, proper treatment of others, verbal & emotional abuse), I >find nowhere in the Scouting literature any reference to how we are to >direct our hormone laden teen-age charges when it comes to matters of >the opposite sex. In fact, if there is any reference, it seems to imply that >this is a family/religious matter. As the father of a 14 year old >who is thinking about dating and all that goes with it, I have often >wondered why the Scouting program could not include some >training/guidelines/program that could be respected and appreciated by >all for its moral content.

IMHO--flame suit on!...

As a GS leader and also as the mother of a (as of tomorrow) a 14 year-old (girl), I have also rolled these questions around in my head. I think since we are so big on diversity, we cannot possibly teach on such a personal level without injecting opinions on how we would raise our own children. My feelings are, that in 1 hour a week I cannot possibly fully educate (including differing religious beliefs and customs) on subjects such as sexual morality, with all else there is to work with in scouting.

However, I think there are many other ways to give our scouts the tools to deal with these issues, that are already available in scouting. As they grow in scouting they learn...

- **respect for myself and others,**
- **how to handle it if someone violates them (whether physically or verbally),**
- **self-confidence, especially to stand up to peer pressure,**
- **decision making through thought processes,**
- **where to go to find answers to their questions, (be that to a book or an expert),**
- **not to be afraid to use adults as counselors, or for guidance,**
- **self-reliance, to not be afraid to depend on their instincts,**
- **diversity, in respecting and learning about people's differences.**
- **treating others as equals**

****how to communicate
...and so many others.**

I do like the fact that GS's has contemporary issues available if you should find a subject that is affecting the troop as a whole. It will give you some guidance to help the troop understand what is happening to them as a whole, or one of them (which in turn is affecting the troop). But, I do not believe issues such as these should be normally discussed as a part of scouting when instead we should be teaching and reinforcing the tools of life such as some of those I've stated above.

For example... taken from the Cadette Girl Scout Handbook...

AT WHAT AGE DOES DATING BEGIN:

Some girls begin to date at a younger age than others. For some, dating may start at 12 or 13; others may begin at 16 or 17. There's no right time to start. Consider your own feelings and needs. How does your family feel about your dating?

Now, I personally do not believe a girl should be dating at 12 or 13. If the majority of the parents in our troop were to let their daughters date at 12, my child after reading and discussing this with them would feel I was being very unfair ("Everyone else is doing it"). And may cause several years of friction between my daughter and I.

Scouting should be supporting the family structure and development, not breaking it down. It should be reinforcing any moral decisions a family might have, and teaching the scouts to relish in their differences.

When these issues are put in writing, such as in a scout handbook, then it follows that each leader will teach only to the best of their knowledge. Without a doubt I'm ashamed to say, I have met many leaders that I don't agree with what may go on in their house, but that is not any of my business, as long as it doesn't come into the scout troop.

Hopefully we as scout leaders know we must show exemplary behavior both in and out of uniform as the scouts watch us very closely. But the fact that we are there to give them someone to model after is an excellent way to teach. When we teach that behaviors that may be appropriate at their homes, but not in the troop, this tells them that different things have

different rules. The same rules do not apply for everything. When found in a situation these kids begin to search out their boundaries, or rules. When thrown into an unknown situation that seems to have no rules, they have hopefully learned enough about themselves and others to set their own rules for themselves and what they want out of life.

--shoot, I just crushed the soapbox!--

YiS,

Lisa Varner <<LAVarner@juno.com>>

Please send e-mail over 60k or with attachments to:

lvarner@freenet.columbus.oh.us

Haven't been there. Don't want to go. Don't need another t-shirt!!

Date: Mon, 16 Sep 1996 15:54:12 -0700
From: "James A. Sheckels" <sheckej@EARTHLINK.NET>
Subject: Re: Boy Scouting and Sexual Morality
To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

John Economides posted:

>At the risk of starting a controversial thread, I want to post a question
>that I have>puzzled over for a long time as a Scout leader.
>While we are concerned with the moral development of our youth (lying,
>cheating,>proper treatment of others, verbal & emotional abuse), I find
nowhere in the
>Scouting>literature any reference to how we are to direct our hormone
laden
teen-age
>charges>when it comes to matters of the opposite sex. In fact, if there is
any
>reference, it>seems to imply that this is a family/religious matter. As
the father of a 14
>year old>who is thinking about dating and all that goes with it, I have
often wondered
>why>the Scouting program could not include some
training/guidelines/program
that
>could be respected and appreciated by all for its moral content. After all,
>BSA is>not afraid to take on moral issues!! (gays, athiests)

BSA has literature titled "Youth Frontiers - Ethical Decision Making".
Sorry, I don't seem to have a copy right here with me, so I don't have the

item number.

Some years back, BSA was queried by the United Way (I think it was anyway) as to how they were going to tackle the things you mention. Many youth serving organizations using UW funds were asked the same thing. They were not "approved" that year for funds until they covered this topic in their presentations to the UW.

BSA used the Youth Frontiers materials (which had already been issued by BSA, BTW) as the cornerstone for how Scout leaders were to address these issues. BSA also stated that while we were concerned with the issue and concerned with finding solutions, that BSA did not feel it was a Scout leader's place to educate young people on the rights and wrongs of these issues, but rather on the ethical decision making process in relation to these issues.

Hope this helps in some way.

YIS, Jim Sheckels - I used to be a Bobwhite...SE 308-7 '82/'72-WWW-B'Hood

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Scouting IS NOT an exact science, so use your brain - noone else is! <]:->