



New Scouting Policy on Homosexuality: A Study in Not Being Prepared

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On May 23, 2013, delegates at the National Annual Meeting (NAM) of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) voted to revise their long-time policy prohibiting what they have termed “open and avowed homosexuals” from participating in the ranks of Scouting. The language of the new policy, which will take effect on January 1, 2014, reads, “No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone.”

Following is a review of the major arguments made for the change and why they were, and remain, unpersuasive.

“Compassion” for Troubled Boys

At the Boy Scout’s annual meeting, those of us in the audience heard repeatedly from the podium and from the floor that the BSA needed to change its policy on “open and avowed” homosexuality so as to better help young men experiencing a sexual identity crisis. This is an echo of something affirmed in Scouting’s recent “Membership Resolution Points of Clarification:”

Youth are still developing, learning about themselves and who they are, developing their sense of right and wrong, and understanding their duty to God to live a moral life.¹

This sounds noble: Coming alongside confused young men, listening to their concerns, offering them counsel, and helping them find their way to sexual normality (i.e., heterosexuality).

What’s odd is that this already takes place. Currently in Scouting, no boy is asked to leave because he shares his struggles with same-sex attraction with an adult volunteer. Rather, the boy is offered counsel and friendship. Scout leaders make sure he is not around younger boys in private surroundings, and normal Scouting life continues.

What is distinct about the new policy approved in May (“No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone”) is that it changes the terms of the discussion. The language of the now-passed proposal does not talk about boys who are wrestling with their sexuality. Rather, the language in essence accepts deliberate and public sexual self-identification and, with it, requires the affirmation of Scouts and Scout leaders.

In other words, as opposed to a boy who seeks confidential assistance with same-sex attraction, the new policy says, in as many words, that a boy can walk up to another Scout and say, “My name’s Jim, and I’m gay. Affirm that that’s OK with you or we have a problem.”

The gay Scouts who have been most fervent about advancing this kind of policy change have decided to identify themselves as homosexual. They have not asked for counseling, guidance, or help in dealing with same-sex attraction; they have demanded at least tacit acceptance of their sexual self-identification as, not only tolerable, but *moral* and thereby consistent with the Boy Scout Law and Boy Scout Oath. Read the comments of such Scouts as Matt Comer² and Pascal Tessier.³ These young men do not ask for “compassion,” a term used concerning them by Chief Scout Executive Wayne Perry, but inclusion and acceptance – period. Normalizing homosexuality is, for many of these young men and their advocates in the “gay rights” movement, the real end-game.

Same-Sex Attraction, Same-Sex Conduct

Advocates of the new policy counter that they draw a distinction between same-sex attraction and conduct. Consider the words of Chief Scout Executive Wayne Perry, published in *USA Today* the day of the vote (May 24):

We are unaware of any major religious chartered organization that believes a youth member simply stating he or she is attracted to the same sex, but not engaging in sexual activity, should make him or her unwelcome in their congregation. We reviewed a variety of policy options and concluded this option would provide kids a place to belong while they learn and grow.⁴

He’s right, in that no Jewish or Christian faith community would dismiss a boy simply because he’s attracted to a member of the same sex. But what if that same boy were to join a local Scout troop chartered at a church and announce, “I’m a gay teenager. It’s not something I struggle with; it’s who I am, and I’m proud of it. Homosexual behavior may be viewed by your churches as a sin, so I’ll be celibate until I find my life-partner (after that, all bets are off). So, I insist that you let me become a full-fledged member.”

This is not an unrealistic scenario, and it is playing out today in Scouting. The issue is not just sexual abstinence (Scouting still maintains that outside of marriage, “any sexual conduct, heterosexual or homosexual, is contrary to the virtues of Scouting”). The issue is compulsory affirmation of a form of sexuality orthodox Protestants and the Catholic Church refuse to accept as moral or definitive.

Additionally, it is undeniable that older boys compose a substantial number of sexual predators. According to the respected anti-abuse organization “Stop it Now,”

Most people already are aware of the risk of sexual abuse that some adults present to our children. There is growing understanding that the vast majority of children who are sexually abused, are abused by someone they know, and often trust. Unfortunately, very few adults recognize that children and adolescents also can present a risk to other children. In fact, over a third of all sexual abuse of children is committed by someone under the age of 18.⁵

In light of this, would it be prudent to place boys and younger teens in contexts where older, same-sex oriented young men will be in close contact with them? Common sense would say “no.”

There Already are Gay Boys and Men in Scouting

Critics of Scouting’s traditional ban on homosexuality note, rightly, that there are already gay boys and young men in Scouting. So, they maintain, lifting the ban is a mere matter of acknowledging the obvious.

Again, the nuance of difference is subtle but significant. Everyone in Scouting knows there are homosexuals at almost every level of the organization, yet they are discrete about their sexuality. Why? Because parents don't want their boys and young teen sons introduced to sexual controversy around a campfire instead of the family living room, and because many of them understand, intuitively and accurately, that homosexuality is incompatible with a wholesome Scouting environment.

As the National Association of Evangelicals declared in 2004, "homosexuality is not an inherited condition in the same category as race, gender, or national origin, all of which are free from moral implication. We believe that homosexuality is a deviation from the Creator's plan for human sexuality."⁶ The Catechism of the Catholic Church states succinctly, "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered" and "contrary to the natural law" – as human biology itself attests.⁷ As such, they are neither healthy nor moral. A man can have large muscles, stride confidently, and speak with authority – but if he is attracted to the same gender and acts on this attraction physically, he chooses to use his body in a way for which it was never intended or designed. It contradicts his created nature as a man.

Homosexuality and Sexual Abuse of Minors

Scouting asserts that "the BSA makes no connection between the sexual abuse or victimization of a child and homosexuality. The BSA takes strong exception to this assertion." In taking such "exception," the BSA is clearly bowing to the politically correct dictates of organizations like the American Psychological Association. Yet in doing so, they are blinding themselves to the actual evidence. That evidence includes their own so-called "Perversion Files," which document thousands of cases of sexual abuse (rape, molestation, and, on rare occasion, consensual sex)--virtually all of which were homosexual in nature.

As Family Research Council has explained and documented elsewhere, "it is undisputed that the percentage of child sex abuse cases that are male-on-male is far higher than the percentage of adult males who are homosexual. This suggests that male homosexuality is a *risk factor* for child sexual abuse."⁸

Advocates for the "mainstreaming" of homosexuality, however, argue that men who molest boys should not be considered "homosexual" (or "gay"). They argue that a sexual attraction to children or adolescents of the same sex is completely unrelated to a sexual attraction to adults of the same sex. That claim is undermined, however, by scholarly evidence – such as a survey of men incarcerated for sexual abuse of minors, which found that "eighty-six percent of offenders against males described themselves as homosexual or bisexual." It also cannot be disputed that there is a sub-culture within the homosexual movement that openly advocates "intergenerational" sexual relationships.

Of course, most homosexuals do not sexually abuse minors. However, if allowing "open and avowed homosexuals" into Scouting increases even marginally the risk of such abuse, that risk is unacceptable.

Gay Scouts, Not Gay Scout Leaders

Scouting's decision makes the age of 18 the demarcation point for "open and avowed" homosexuals in Scouting. Why? Because according to Scouting's senior leadership, homosexuals are not good role models for boys.

It's absurd for Scouting to have adopted the new policy and concurrently assert that homosexual men are more of an inherent threat to, or more undesirable roles models for, boys. As anyone familiar with Scouting knows, older boys mentor and lead younger boys in Cub Scout dens and Boy Scout troops. If a self-professed gay teenager is a good role-model for boys up to the age of 17 years, 365 days, why does his example suddenly become untenable for boys the day he turns 18?

Attorney Ed Whelan, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, says the new policy will invite the reevaluation of the Supreme Court's *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale* decision, issued in 2000:

In *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale* (2000), the Supreme Court ruled that the BSA has a constitutionally protected right under the First Amendment to its existing membership policy. That victory rested heavily on the BSA's position that (as the Court summarized it) "homosexual conduct is inconsistent with the values it seeks to instill." The proposed resolution, however, is conspicuously silent on this matter. It states only that it "will maintain the current membership policy for all adult leaders," but doesn't offer a reason why. Is it still the position of the BSA that adult homosexual conduct is inconsistent with the values it seeks to instill? If so, why doesn't it say so clearly? Since it doesn't say so clearly, how can it expect to win the litigation against its existing policy for adult leaders that the overall change in policy would inevitably trigger?⁹

Ken Klukowski, the director of Family Research Council's Center for Religious Liberty, argues that given the adoption of the new policy, the BSA "would forever step outside the protection handed to it by the Supreme Court in *Dale*. The organization would forfeit the First Amendment protection they currently have from this form of 'expressive association.'"¹⁰

A delegate at the NAM who said he was a law professor spoke before the delegates and scorned the idea that a change of policy would result in substantial litigation. But the caseload attendant to the release of the "Perversion Files" is sadly instructive: The costly lawsuits filed against the Scouts due to the BSA's laxity in protecting boys and young men from predation have been numerous and their volume shows no sign of abating.¹¹

Conclusion

Following last month's vote, Chief Scout Executive Wayne Perry said, "This is a very difficult decision for a lot of people, but we're moving forward together."¹²

"Moving," yes, but certainly not forward or together: Mr. Perry is too good a lawyer to believe that such trite phrases can mask the fissure he and his colleagues have opened in Scouting. The projected loss of hundreds of thousands of Scouts is a rather obvious refutation of any sense of "togetherness" within Scouting pursuant to this decision.¹³

The effects of this policy will be the mandatory exposure of boys to homosexuality; ultimately, the entry of "avowed" homosexual Scout leaders into the organization; a loss of parental control in the way their sons are familiarized with issues of sexual intimacy and controversy; and the decline of Scouting as an institution, given the hundreds of thousands of families that now will leave Scouting.

For the sake of being "morally straight," those families have little choice.

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- 9 Ed Whelan, "The Boy Scouts' Ill-Considered Proposal to Revise Its Membership Policy on Homosexuals," *National Review Online*, accessed on June 24, 2013, <http://www.nationalreview.com/bench-memos/346280/boy-scouts%E2%80%99-ill-considered-proposal-revise-its-membership-policy-homosexuals>.
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