Handbook for Leaders of the Scout Section

A method of non-formal education for young people from 11 to 15
Handbook
for
Leaders
of the
SCOUT SECTION
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW TO USE THIS BOOK</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1</td>
<td>Young people from 11 to 15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic concepts</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The main development tasks between the ages of 11 and 15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A profile of girls and boys by dimensions of the personality</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other aspects</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2</td>
<td>Symbolic framework</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symbols</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The taste for exploration</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interest in taking over a territory</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belonging to a peer group</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The symbolic framework in action</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3</td>
<td>The Patrol</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic concepts</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The patrol as an informal group</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The patrol as a learning community</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4</td>
<td>The elements of the Scout Method: group life</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The elements of the Scout Method</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group life</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5</td>
<td>The Scout Unit</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The nature of the Scout Unit</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The structure of the Scout Unit</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity of the Scout Unit</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 6</td>
<td>Law and Promise</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scouting’s educational proposal</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Scout Law</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some reflections on the Scout Law</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Scout Promise</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER 7
**The role of the Scout Leaders**
- Scout leaders 147
- Scout leaders as educators 160

### CHAPTER 8
**The growth areas**
- The dimensions of the personality 169
- Considerations on the growth areas 174

### CHAPTER 9
**The educational objectives**
- The nature of the educational objectives 193
- The proposal of objectives 202
- The progress stages 220

### CHAPTER 10
**The educational activities**
- Objectives, activities and experiences 227
- Types of activities 230
- The fixed activities 235
- The variable activities 247
- The proficiencies 254

### CHAPTER 11
**Assessing personal development**
- The introductory period 263
- Monitoring personal progress 272
- Conclusions of the personal progress assessment 278

### CHAPTER 12
**The programme cycle**
- General concepts 285
- Unit analysis 290
- Proposing and selecting activities 296
- Organizing, designing and preparing the activities 303
- Carrying out and evaluating the activities 312

### GLOSSARY
323

### THE AUTHORS
335
INTRODUCTION

Why has Scouting been so successful across different cultures and through the generations? What forces have helped to make it the world’s largest non-governmental educational youth organization, with 28 million members in 216 countries and territories?

Undoubtedly, the universal nature of Scouting’s values and the adaptability of its method hold part of the answer. There are other, more compelling reasons, however. Does not every teenage boy or girl, in every culture, nationality and social class, crave the friendship of a small peer group with whom to discover the world around him or her?

All adolescents long to be part of a team, explore new territories and have adventures. Right from the beginning, Scouting has responded to these urges. It has been able to capture the essence of the young spirit and satisfy its fundamental needs. Let it not be forgotten that Scouting expanded unaided as thousands of youngsters became avid readers of Scouting for boys and clamoured to join in. Just a few short years after Baden-Powell organized the first trial camp at Brownsea, in August 1907, with a score of 11 to 15-year-olds, the Scouts already numbered over 100,000 in Great Britain. The key to success lies in the fact that young people become involved of their own volition.

This book recaptures that early spirit and projects it outwards and onwards. It redisCOVERS the original symbolic framework that Baden-Powell developed and offered to young people – being a Scout, an explorer of new worlds. It recovers and elevates the true significance of the Patrol system, as a process by which an informal group of friends becomes a small educational community, giving its members a broad and effective role in decision-making. It restores meaning to the expression “learning by doing”, by offering young people the opportunity to use their creativity, experience authentic roles and grow through their experiences. It proposes an attractive system of personal progress, based on the precept of giving each young person the opportunity to build and evaluate his or her own educational objectives. It re-establishes the Scout Promise and Law as portals to a system of universal values that serve to forge profound human relationships and deepen the substance of life in society.

The timing of the publication of the Handbook for Leaders of the Scout Section gives it added significance, as the World Organization of the Scout Movement prepares to adopt a new, response-centred strategy based on the needs of adolescents. In addition, it continues the process of youth programme renovation and modernization under the auspices of which the international edition of the Handbook for Cub Scout Leaders was published in 1999.

These handbooks are not intended to impose a standard programme on all National Scout Organizations regardless of their culture and traditions. The strength of Scouting also lies in its ability to adapt to many different forms of expression. The Handbooks are intended to offer reference tools to help each Association rediscover the original force of Scouting, which can provide just as effective and valid a response to the needs of young people in the third millennium as it did in the early twentieth century.

We trust that the wide dissemination of this book will contribute to the birth of new vocations for Scout educators, as genuine programme designers, and thus promote “better Scouting for more young people” all over the world.

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Regional Director
Interamerican Scout Office

Geneva, July 2002
This book has 12 chapters. On the reverse of the flyleaf of each chapter is a summary of its contents, which lists the subjects that will be dealt with in each section and subsection.

The reader who wishes to access the book’s contents quickly can read through these summaries or flick through the titles of the sections.

The text in blue draws attention to the most important concepts involved in a particular subject.

The text in black corresponds to the basic information that is required on a subject.

The text in green is considered to be complementary. It is recommended further reading that deals with the subject in greater depth.

This design is intended to help the reader become familiar with the Handbook and consult it easily and often, according to his or her needs and interests.
Young people from 11 to 15
BASICS
CONCEPTS

- Adolescence, a stage of growth and of personal progress
- The duration and characteristics of adolescence vary from one person to another
- Puberty marks the beginning of adolescence

THE MAIN DEVELOPMENT TASKS
BETWEEN THE AGES OF 11 AND 15

- Forming a body image
- Developing self-esteem
- Affirming the sexual role
- Developing new forms of thought
- Learning to handle changing emotions
- Learning to put oneself in someone else’s place and build rules by consensus
- Beginning the search for identity, opening up to society around them and building a life plan

A PROFILE OF GIRLS AND BOYS
BY DIMENSIONS OF THE PERSONALITY

- A new body
- Emerging ideas
- Values of their own
- Contradictory emotions
- Friends for life
- A personal faith

OTHER ASPECTS

- Two age groups can be distinguished in the first stage of adolescence: 11 to 13 and 13 to 15
- Boys and girls are the same but different too
- Educating in equality of conditions, but taking the differences into account
- Each girl and boy has their own story and unique life plan
ADOLESCENCE, A STAGE OF GROWTH AND OF PERSONAL PROGRESS

In a general sense, by adolescence we understand the period of our lives that begins with the biological changes of puberty and finishes upon entry into the adult world.

Two hundred years ago, this period did not exist or went by unnoticed. The word “adolescence” was not even used and the only distinction made was between “children” and “adults”. The advent of the physiological ability to procreate, which we call puberty, marked the boundary between these two stages.

The emergence of the adolescent stage of sexual and social maturity has been determined by the growing complexity of society. As social functions became more diversified, they required more demanding qualifications for the world of labour and gave rise to the development of schools. In parallel, the prohibition of child labour, increase in life expectancy, and other factors that have transformed society have contributed to the consolidation of adolescence as a stage of development.

For a long time adolescence was referred to as a stage of “transition”: no more than a part of the passage to adulthood and one, moreover, that was troubled by restlessness and instability. Although the disturbed adolescent is not representative of the age group, adolescence was very readily alluded to as a troublesome period of emotional instability and an excessive emphasis was placed on youthful rebelliousness.

Today, with greater scientific knowledge of the process young people experience, adolescence is widely viewed as a period of vigorous growth and personal progress. Growth not only in the purely biological aspects of puberty, but also those mental and social changes that help to shape the adult personality.

Adolescence is much more than an unavoidable evil. It is a period of our life cycle with its own nature and features that clearly set it apart from both childhood and adulthood. It is a time full of possibilities that has to be lived and lived to the full. It is so rich in life events that it cannot be dismissed as a mere “step on the way” to the next stage. Young people need to be considered as such, not as “former children” or “future adults”.

The rebelliousness we attribute to young people is an appreciation from an adult perspective rather than an objective characteristic of the age group. Really, this so-called rebelliousness is nothing more than a young person’s self-affirmation of his or her difference, and it is indispensable for the gradual formation of his or her own personality.

The main development tasks of adolescence, encompassing all ages from puberty to the entry to the adult world, can be summarized as follows:

- Reaching sexual maturity, in all its dimensions, not just biologically.
- Consolidating an identity.
- Considering a life plan of one’s own.
And so we could say that adolescence begins with biology and ends with culture. It begins with the appearance of body changes that serve as indications of biological masculinity and femininity. As adolescence progresses, new ways of thinking help the young person to understand events in a more global way. Then comes the search for being oneself in a coherent and consistent way, and the stage concludes when the young person becomes integrated into the adult world with his or her own life plan, or at least the conviction that choices need to be made in life and that he or she is capable of making them.

**THE DURATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOLESCENCE VARY FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER**

Although in general terms adolescence begins between the ages of 11 and 13 and finishes around 20, the exact ages of its onset and conclusion vary enormously. These depend basically on the nature of each individual, his or her personal history and the social and cultural characteristics of the community in which he or she lives.

Adolescence is a long period, as the challenges of contemporary society impose ever greater demands on young people, who face ever increasing competition to satisfy them, and this takes time. The very length of the period makes adolescents prone to states of ambiguity and contradiction, advances and retreats, which are necessary processes for young people to find their own identity and the meaning of their lives.

In addition, the nature of adolescence is neither fixed nor unchangeable. It depends on the characteristics of each person, on the community situation and, above all, the extent to which the young person has been able to develop psychological and social resources during earlier periods. Quality of life during childhood strongly affects the experience and outcome of the adolescent period.

**PUBERTY MARKS THE BEGINNING OF ADOLESCENCE**

The onset of puberty cannot be identified with a fixed age, and there is no infallible definition of this first part of adolescence. Major parts of the body and the personality are changing, and this happens at different ages and at different rates. Rather than chronological ages, it is preferable to consider personal maturity and development histories.

In a very general way, it can be said that puberty begins between the ages of 10 and 12 in girls and between 11 and 13 in boys.
When certain hormones of the pituitary gland are activated and become present in greater concentrations, ovules begin to mature and be released regularly and spermatozoids begin to be produced, the primary and secondary sexual characteristics appear, there are changes in some non-sexual physiological functions and changes in size, weight, body proportions, strength, coordination and muscular skill.

The primary sexual characteristics refer to the make-up of the sexual organs involved in copulation and reproduction. During childhood these organs are less developed than other systems of organs. During puberty the penis, testicles, uterus, vagina, clitoris and the major and minor genital labia begin to grow.

The ability to procreate is not simultaneous with the onset of menstruation in girls or the first emission of semen in boys, which are very early phases in the process of sexual maturity. However, the ability to engender offspring develops before physical growth has been completed, which is one of the reasons why teenage pregnancy is considered to be a serious risk for both mother and child.

The secondary sexual characteristics refer to the changes in the body that serve to indicate biological masculinity and femininity. Pubic hair –from the Latin pubes, meaning “body hair”, which gives puberty its name– appears around the genitals and underarms of both sexes, more markedly in boys. In boys it also grows on the chest and the face. In girls, the development of breasts is often the first sign of the onset of puberty.

In both sexes, the larynx alters between the ages of 14 and 15 approximately, causing the typical changes in the voice, which are most noticeable in boys.

The sebaceous glands and sudoriferous or sweat glands also develop. The sweat glands begin to give young people the characteristic odour of underarm perspiration. The sebaceous glands give rise to the familiar blackheads owing to the accumulation of oily secretion and dust retention, which can cause acne if pores are blocked and become infected. The skin begins to display pigmentation, darkening certain areas of the body such as the nipples and the genitals.

In general, skeletal and muscular structures stretch and elongate, although at different rates. Girls tend to grow earlier, but around the age of 15 boys usually overtake them in height. Skeletal growth alternates with weight gains.
THE MAIN DEVELOPMENT TASKS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 11 AND 15

FORMING A BODY IMAGE

Bodily changes are the most obvious transformation that young people experience between the ages of 11 and 15. Their body image, which is the mental picture we have of our own body, is confused by these changes.

During childhood, alterations are gradual and so children can easily integrate them into their body image as they occur. In adolescence, however, the speed and intensity of the changes make it difficult for the young person to assimilate them and maintain a sense of stability and familiarity with his or her body.

DEVELOPING SELF-ESTEEM

Body changes follow an irregular pattern and the physical appearance tends to lose the harmony of the childhood years. Since body image is not an objective appreciation, but is imbued with subjective values, the irregularity of these changes strongly influences the image boys and girls have of themselves and, consequently, their self-esteem. In addition, while in childhood self-esteem depends almost exclusively on what family members or other adults in positions of authority say, now it depends on their own experience of themselves and the opinions of their peers. This causes insecurity and the desire to assert their attractiveness and their social and affective acceptance.
AFFIRMING THE SEXUAL ROLE

The changes in the body are associated with the process of sexual maturity. During childhood, sexuality was almost a game. It was expressed basically as curiosity and self-stimulation for one's own pleasure. But when sexual impulses burst into adolescence, problems of sex and love appear at the conscious level and tensions accumulate as a result of the demands of sexual development.

The resolution of those tensions depends on the strength of the impulses, the skill in assessing reality and the extent to which the cultural environment facilitates or prohibits it, the values that shape the character, personality-control mechanisms, personal history and the particular circumstances of life.

Throughout this period, sexual development leads to a gradual and proper affirmation of the sexual role. This is contingent upon a strong and positive identification with the paternal or maternal figure—whether that person is the same-sex parent or a substitute figure—, on gratifying experiences with the opposite sex and identification with other young people of the same sex. This is the period in which boys grow closer to their fathers and their male friends, and girls to their mothers and their female friends. Only as they pass the age of 13, do they begin to form links and friendships with their peers of the other sex, at first occasionally and then more frequently. This is particularly relevant to the option between mixed or single-sex patrols, as we will discuss in detail later.

DEVELOPING NEW FORMS OF THOUGHT

At the same time, an intellectual transformation takes place throughout adolescence. New ways of thinking enable a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of events. The formal intellectual operations of generalization and abstraction develop in an increasingly stable way. As they gain in experience and practice, young people become better able to make logical judgements based on causal reasoning. “Allowing them more effectively to understand and coordinate abstract ideas, to think about possibilities, to try out hypotheses, to think ahead, to think about thinking, and to construct philosophies” (Raising Teens: A Synthesis of Research and a Foundation for Action, A. Rae Simpson, PhD, Center for Health Communication, Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, 2001).

A 7-year-old child will play with matches without stopping to think that he or she may cause a fire. A child of this age is incapable of establishing causal relationships and therefore cannot foresee consequences. A young person of 12, however, can understand symbolic representations, anticipate a situation which has not yet occurred and knows that the house may catch fire under certain conditions, even if there is no fire at the time when he or she makes that link.
If a group of 7 to 9-year-olds are playing in the street and their ball goes across to the other side of an intersection, they will try to recover it at all costs, without realizing the risk involved. Young people of 11 to 13 in those same circumstances, however, are able to size up time and space, distance and depth, and therefore appreciate the risk involved in trying to reach the lost ball. Nevertheless, these skills are acquired gradually, so we must not assume that young people of this age are in a position to assess all the risks that they may face.

In all probability, a 7-year-old playing tennis will do little more than respond to the shots that come his or her way and try to get the ball back over the net. From the age of around 11 he or she will begin to acknowledge the formal rules of the game and, based on these and on observation of the opposing player's style, he or she will perceive the patterns of play and of mistakes and be able to generate a strategic response. The child has learned to take an abstract approach, to generalize, establish causal links and, therefore, produce more valid answers.

These examples help us to understand that something similar happens in the domain of abstract concepts and values. This is why teenagers often come up with unforeseen “strategic responses”, leaving parents and teachers disconcerted. Rather as if the tennis player of our example surprised us with an outstanding passing shot in the middle of a relaxed knock-about.

**LEARNING TO HANDLE CHANGING EMOTIONS**

This period is also marked by typical emotional alterations, which are associated with or are a consequence of hormonal and intellectual changes. It is a time of confused feelings, when young people want to “be grown up” and independent, and yet long for the old security and warmth of childhood. Prodigious initiatives come one after the other only to be abruptly interrupted by periods of apathy, laziness and pensiveness. Moments of uncontrollable joy can suddenly give way to sadness or even tears. Periods of intense awe and thoughtfulness at the awakening of their own sexuality often develop into anxiety, before shifting towards curiosity and the discovery of similar processes in the other sex.

Young people of this age do not make linear progress towards adulthood. Childish impulses and needs reappear along the way, and coexist with the desire for a new position in the world. Time and patience are required, especially from the adults around them, who too often look for a quick answer and fail to behave consistently with the young person. One minute we say “you’re not a child anymore”, and the next we remind them “you’re not grown up yet”. This can easily generate anxiety and encourage them to seek premature adaptive solutions to the natural tensions of the period. However, anxiety plays a positive role by encouraging learning, increasing the ability to do things and raising the level of expectations.

Our own confusions and contradictions as adults are reflected in our thinking, and young people can perceive this more clearly now than they did in childhood. This adds a new factor of uncertainty to the anxieties they experience in their attempt to interpret and interact with the world in a coherent way. Young people therefore tend to emulate adults whom they perceive as having a defined system of values.
Adolescents gradually develop and apply “a more complex level of perspective taking, having learned to ‘put themselves in another person’s shoes’” (Harvard, idem). This new and powerful ability to understand human relations helps them to solve the problems and conflicts that arise in their relationships.

These new skills are also reflected in a shift from unilateral respect for rules that adults have made to mutual respect for rules on which they have reached a consensus with their peers. This is why young people of this age need to be given the space to question and even reject the rules that are imposed by adults, so that they can rebuild them or establish new ones that they can internalize. We will come back to this topic in more detail in chapter 6, when we talk about the formation of rules in young people and the Scout Law.

This ability for reflective thought, for looking at their own way of thinking and that of others, leads young people to question the guidelines that come from their childhood and that were formed largely within the family group. These are the first signs of the step from childlike dependency to adult autonomy, which will increase in pace as adolescence becomes more advanced.

Opportunities and the appreciation of others increasingly depend more on the outside world than on the family environment. Thus, like at other stages of life, a conflict arises between past and future. The opinions of their peers begin to carry more weight than those of their family or of other adults. Changes in the body and intellect oblige young people to seek new kinds of social adaptation. They begin to construct their identity by means of a synthesis between their childhood identity and the new impulses and abilities, as they seek to establish a sense of continuity.
The process of identity-building does not finish during this period, however, nor will it during adolescence, since it continues to be structured over the years of young adulthood. But in this period boys and girls clearly manifest a desire to be considered not as dependent children, but as individuals who are capable of making their own differentiated contributions, to their own lives and that of the adults around them, based on their self-awareness.

On the social front new interpersonal relations appear, and boys and girls seek to act in a way that will let them express themselves in a wider social sphere than the family group. However, the social sphere does not yet open with the width, questioning and concerns that it will in later stages of adolescence.

Finally, boys and girls begin to make the shift from a style and life plan that is complementary to family life, towards the development of their own existential plan. However, only during later phases will they visualize it clearly and be able to try it out in practice, since their identity is still not consolidated in this period.

We will come back to “development tasks” in chapter 9, when we look at the educational objectives for this age group. However, it is well worthwhile studying all this information in greater depth in order to encourage young people in their activities and especially to assess their personal growth. Good texts on the psychology of education will be helpful to broaden and build on the information contained here.
A PROFILE OF GIRLS AND BOYS BY DIMENSIONS OF THE PERSONALITY

This section examines some of the characteristics of this period in the different growth areas. Many of these will be familiar to you and will remind you of young people in your Unit.

A NEW BODY

They discover their bodies anew every day, and their bodies are renewed every day. Things happen to their bodies that disconcert them, but that also encourage them to explore, to push themselves to their limits. The changes in their bodies reveal beauty, make them feel shy, exceed all proportions, matter too much or too little, make them glad or sad, hurt, give pleasure and are part of the process of becoming a man or a woman.

They always seem to be tired, and only perk up at the suggestion of food. Tidiness is not their strong point, they are drawn to sport, their appearance worries them, their clothes don’t fit them, and if they do fit they don’t like them. The day is too short to do everything they want to do and too long when there is too little to do.

Everything is constantly changing, growing and developing. So much so that it is difficult for them to pin down an image of themselves.

EMERGING IDEAS

The world is beginning to expand and change too. There are new concepts that do not necessarily need to be tied to reality. Ideas have a life of their own and can be combined with each other to make new ideas.

And this world of ideas, little by little, displaces the real, practical and concrete world in importance. Making things happen and “getting them to put two feet on the ground” is always a challenge. It is even difficult for them to put what they feel and what they think into words.
Questions that they used to address to the outside world are now turned inwards. “Who am I?” and “What am I like?” are questions that will not be fully answered for a few more years, but they push young people to question everything, especially things they used to accept as immovable truths.

**VALUES OF THEIR OWN**

The world of right and wrong is also the target of doubts and questions. Young people analyse, create, backtrack and start again, they change as quickly as they change ideas and concepts. They suddenly develop a powerful ability to put themselves in someone else’s place and everything can now be questioned from “another” point of view, in an exercise that is apparently endless.

This is the starting point for constructing a code of conduct that begins to be assimilated personally. This code no longer depends on family opinion –which is seldom taken into consideration now- and is based instead on their own beliefs and especially on the ongoing dialogue with other young people of the same age.

**CONTRADICTORY EMOTIONS**

The inner world grows in importance. Sensations, emotions and feelings come one after another, in waves that pile up or contradict each other, always intense and much more lasting than during childhood. Feelings flood in, fill them up, disconcert them, make them lose control, and become the central axis of their lives. Learning to recognize, handle and control these feelings are some of the development tasks for this period.

Loving love, hating hate, being friends with their friends and enemies of their enemies are typical features of young people, who are too big to be children and too small to be adults.

As they attempt to find themselves and define their own identity, adolescents sometimes seem like children to us and sometimes like adults. This duality occasionally makes us lose our patience with them, but mostly it shows us how they are growing day by day and gives us the satisfaction of knowing that our efforts to support them are worthwhile.
**FRIENDS FOR LIFE**

Friends are for trusting, for believing in. Young people rely on their friends, and draw renewed strength from them. They have fewer friends now, but the ones they have are closer. They form a tight-knit circle that helps them all to grow. Friends act as a mirror and as an engine of development.

And sometimes it seems that the family does not really understand, that the parents are too close or, perhaps, too far away. Young people always seem to feel that family means too little freedom and too many responsibilities.

The constant struggle between being with others or being with oneself, between company and being alone, between the inner and outer self, is an apparently endless tug-of-war.

Young people move back and forth between the family and discovery of society around them and the confrontations that arise along that axis. They still have no real concept of everything that global society means, however, and still less do they question it.

**A PERSONAL FAITH**

Living the transition between a child’s faith, given by the family like a gift that illuminates their childhood, and an adult faith that is personal, intimate and consistent with one’s acts, is also a process that begins in this stage and will not end until later. Much later, in most cases.

This transition is marked by the duality between a continual criticism of form and a constant search for meaning; and by a questioning by which they attempt to differentiate the adult belief that is imposed from “outside” and their own belief built from “inside”.

Discovering that transcendence is essential to human existence is something that takes time and effort, on the part of both young people and the adults who accompany them in this process.
Two age groups can be distinguished between the ages of 11 and 15, based on the abrupt sexual maturing experienced by young people, the rapid growth that follows, the mental changes that are associated with the biological transformations and the resulting demands that society makes on them.

In the first of these stages, from approximately 11 to 13, the adolescent is usually concerned mainly with the biological aspects of the self. Young people have difficulty in adjusting to the incredible speed of biological maturing and become introverted. As they feel insecure, they are not very interested in their peers of the other sex, do not seek them out and may even tend to avoid them. This attitude changes around the age of 13, however, as young people adapt to the new conditions, consolidate their body image and gain security. A shift from same-sex to mixed groups of friends therefore occurs as they develop.

On the physical level, we must remember that the “growth spurt” – the rapid increase in height and weight that follows sexual maturity – occurs at different times in boys and girls.

In girls, development starts to accelerate between the ages of 10 and 11 on average. They grow most quickly around 12 and at about 13 growth slows rapidly to rates similar to those seen before the growth spurt, although they will continue to grow slowly and steadily for several years more. By contrast, growth in boys usually accelerates just before the age of 13, is most rapid around 14 and shortly afterwards slows to pre-growth spurt rates.

The fact that girls tend to reach their adult height and weight about two years earlier than boys feeds the common misapprehension that “girls mature faster than boys”. This is an erroneous assumption, as the process of reaching maturity involves the whole personality, not just physical development.

In both boys and girls muscular development progresses in pace with their gain in height and is fastest just after they have reached their maximum height. Muscular growth in boys, however, is faster than in girls. The total increase in boys’ muscular tissue and strength is also greater, a characteristic that carries over into adulthood. It is important to consider this when designing educational activities and games, especially when working with mixed Patrols or Units.
Sexual maturity and physical changes are followed by psychological changes. As young people develop their identity, they gain an awareness of the self as something distinct or separate from others, while also finding and savouring a certain feeling of consistency over time, both in relation to themselves and to others. These aspects of adjustment occur simultaneously with sexual maturity and the growth spurt, but take more time to become integrated, as individual identity is slow to form. Although the rate of physical growth may have decreased, psychological aspects such as independence from the family and the shift towards the peer group as the main source of security and status are thus more marked from the ages of 13 to 15 and even beyond.

From the ages of 13 to 15, in general, the cognitive development that is associated with physical changes gathers momentum. Young people move more clearly into the stage of formal operations or abstract thought, which consists of the capacity to think about affirmations that are not related to concrete objects in the real world. At this age, young people demonstrate a greater capacity to formulate and try out hypotheses and to think about what could be as well as what is. This makes them more introspective and analytical. Their desire to demonstrate their new cognitive skills is manifested in an increasing use of irony, the ability to criticize and even a taste for double meanings.

The pace at which these new intellectual skills develop intensifies as society makes increasing demands on 13 to 15 year-olds, especially in terms of education, vocation and independence. This gradually alters their relationship with adults and speeds their integration into the peer group.

From the point of view of the Scout Programme, these two age groups generate two different columns of objectives. Although they are aimed at the same final objectives, these two columns take into account the particular features of each age group as we have described it.

BOYS AND GIRLS ARE THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT TOO

As we have discussed, the hormonal changes that trigger the awakening of adolescence mark physical and motor differences and rates of growth that are different in boys and girls.

We also see affective and cognitive changes, which refer to the characteristics, behaviour patterns, attitudes and interests of boys and girls. Whether these differences are attributable to non-physical aspects of the personality has been extensively debated, but today it is generally accepted that men and women acquire their forms of behaviour almost entirely as a function of the environment in which they have been educated and the models around them, which represent an “inherited” pattern of manhood or womanhood.
The strongly “cultural” origin of these differences is closely related to certain stereotypes that prevail in our society. Although much progress has been made towards equality of rights and opportunities for women and men—especially at the theoretical level—quite marked stereotypes of what can be considered feminine and masculine are still widely prevalent.

Given the characteristic need to affirm their sexual identity in this period, young people tend to seek out members of their own sex to establish friendships: boys with boys and girls with girls. Natural groups therefore tend to be single-sex, particularly in the first part of this age group, from about 11 to 13. Although young people may begin to feel an impulse to explore the relationship with members of the other sex, this tends not to be resolved at this initial stage. The urgency of dealing with their own inner changes is stronger and even generates a certain “defensive” distance between the two sexes. From about the age of 13, depending on the environment and personal characteristics, young people become more familiar with their new impulses and can handle them better. They are therefore in a better position to turn their interest to members of the other sex.

Care should therefore be taken over the ages and sexes of the members when forming Patrols. It is also important to be aware of stereotypes, which tend to be reinforced in single-sex groups. Correct use of the Scout Method helps to compensate for this tendency and maintain a balance among the young people. Even in very open societies, like the Scandinavian ones, there is still a tendency to propagate stereotypes by educating girls in skills of personal relations, consensus and negotiation, and boys in skills of competition, confrontation and assertiveness.
We must try to avoid being conditioned by these stereotypes in our Unit. For example, we should guard against the tendency to encourage only boys to carry out activities that involve challenge and leadership and give the girls more passive activities and service tasks.

On the other hand, the need to affirm gender equality should not make us forget the differences between the sexes and their natural complementarities.

That is why we say that boys and girls are the same, but different too.

**EDUCATING IN EQUALITY OF CONDITIONS, BUT TAKING THE DIFFERENCES INTO ACCOUNT**

The educational process should therefore educate in equality of conditions so that young people really learn about and experience equality of rights between men and women, guaranteeing both sexes the same opportunity to develop their full potential. This means encouraging them to get to know each other, learn to respect their particular features and the complementary nature of the two sexes.

At the same time, we should educate taking the differences into consideration, picking out and highlighting the infinite potential of being a man or being a woman. This means that each young person should be free to develop their individual skills and interests in the Unit, without any particular kind of behaviour being prematurely defined as inappropriate for their sex.

The differences between the sexes should not imply antagonism of any kind or the superiority of one sex over another, but equality of opportunities does not have to mean uniformity or symmetry.

In order to achieve an educational process that respects both equality and difference, it is essential that parents, teachers and youth leaders act in agreement with each other. This is the only way of overcoming the male chauvinist tendency that subsists in our culture and the rather ideological reaction of feminism, of the kind that is pitted against male chauvinism as a kind of inverse version of it.

**EACH GIRL AND BOY HAS THEIR OWN STORY AND UNIQUE LIFE PLAN**

Knowing the general characteristics of boys and girls from 11 to 15 and recognizing them as the same but different is essential for our work as free-time voluntary educators.

However, despite the similarities, young people are obviously not all the same and do not all face the same demands from their environment. A young person from an economically deprived area, who lives in poor housing conditions or in a segregated neighbourhood has problems that are vastly different from the difficulties faced by an adolescent from a well-off, united and protective family living in a privileged neighbourhood.
All adolescents have a number of experiences and problems in common. They all go through the physical and physiological changes of puberty and the growth that follows. They all face the need to establish their identity and make their own way as independent members of society. But there is no set model that we can label “the adolescent” or the “youth of today”, despite the discourses that are frequently heard. Both elated references to “the country’s future” and negative allusions to “everything that’s wrong with our society” are unfair and misleading simplifications.

An overview of the features of adolescents is therefore not enough. In a stage of growth marked by major, irregular and individual changes, it is also necessary to know each boy and girl personally. It is not enough to know what adolescence and puberty or even what the challenges of this period are.

To learn what a boy or girl is like as a person, it is essential to observe the particular features that make his or her personality unique. These depend on their genetic make-up, the home they were born into, their place in the order of their siblings, the school they attend, their friends, their environment and how their life has developed. Each boy and girl has his or her own story and individual reality.

No books, courses or manuals will ever be enough to give you this sort of information about the boys and girls in your Unit – especially the ones whose development you monitor and assess. The only way is to spend time with them and observe them, get to know their environment, share moments with them, witness their reactions, understand their frustrations, listen to their feelings, unravel their dreams, in short, to discover each one as a person.

This effort is your first task and your success depends on the quality of the relationship you build up with each young person - an educational relationship, which demands interest, respect and love.
CONTENTS

SYMBOLS
• Symbols represent and educate
• The Symbolic Framework of the Scouts: exploring new territories with a peer group
• The role of the Symbolic Framework
  * Encouraging imagination and developing sensitivity
  * Strengthening the sense of belonging to a community that is pulling in the same direction
* Giving the leaders an attractive way to present Scout values and helping the young people to identify with them
* Giving cohesion to the activities
* Encouraging the achievement of personal objectives and making them important to the young people

THE TASTE FOR EXPLORATION
• Discovering new worlds
• Expanding physical skills
• Expanding knowledge and using ingenuity
• Taking a different view of life
• Putting all we have into a commitment
• Making exploration a permanent quest

INTEREST IN TAKING OVER A TERRITORY
• Gaining ground
• Making the world a better place
• The adventure of growing up
• Discovering oneself and forming one’s own personality

BELONGING TO A PEER GROUP
• Friends build our individual history
• Between 11 and 15 peers are role models
• The peer group plays an educational role
• The Scout Patrol “organizes” the natural peer group

THE SYMBOLIC FRAMEWORK IN ACTION
• Keeping the spirit of adventure alive
• Evoking the hero and transferring the symbol
• Story-telling is weaving magic
A symbol is an image or a figure with a certain feature that enables it to represent an object, situation, concept or process. Every symbol comprises a signifier and a signified. The signifier is the perceptible image of something and the signified is the concept to which the signifier refers.

Scales, for example, are considered to be a symbol of justice: because their essential nature has to do with balance, they are taken to represent equity, which is essential for justice. The scales are the signifier and justice is the signified.

The language we use to communicate with each other, for example, is a system of symbols. The words represent realities and enable us to identify, understand and relate them, but they are not realities in themselves. Our ability to function on the basis of a symbolic system enables us to mentally construct or represent reality, even when the content to which the signifier refers is not actually present.

The fleur-de-lys is the symbol of Scouting. Its design varies from one national association to another, and derives from the ancient maps in which it figured in the compass rose pointing North. In the words of Baden-Powell, it represents the “good path that all Scouts should follow”.

On an educational level, the existence of a symbol helps to build up the momentum needed to move towards becoming something with which we identify. A symbolic framework encourages young people to look a little further than what they see before their eyes. It inspires them to make the ordinary extraordinary, the impossible possible, and the imperceptible something that can be felt intuitively. It helps them to see, think and feel things and situations that they may not usually notice.
A number of conditions are necessary to bring about this transformation:

- **The signifier has to correspond—or be “in tune”—with the signified.** For example, some supposed Scout “traditions” which some Units have unwittingly or carelessly added to the original symbol—such as the overuse of Amerindian images or emblems of medieval chivalry—conspire against the identity of the symbol, which the founder quite clearly indicated was *exploration*.

- **The signifier must be relevant to the psychological needs of the age group.** A girl playing with a doll may be a positive identity symbol, since she is identifying with one possible life model and the potential role of motherhood. But an adult woman playing with a doll would be a sign of regressive identification, since the game bears no relation to the normal development needs of a person her age. For the same reason, the symbol of the fairy tale of the *Free People of the Wolves*, of Kipling’s *Jungle Books*, cannot be used beyond the age of 10 or 11, since by that stage children are changing their form of thought.

- **The signifier needs to be continually present to evoke the signified.** For seven centuries, for the Spanish the image of Santiago de Compostela riding into the wind on his white charger evoked the fight to recover their land from its invaders. The symbol of the Scout Section has lost clarity and force in some Scout Units, either due to empty routine or because the leaders attribute little importance to it. The symbol will not have the strength needed to inspire styles of behaviour if it is used only occasionally as a jaded reference in formal celebrations.

### THE SYMBOLIC FRAMEWORK OF THE SCOUTS: EXPLORING NEW TERRITORIES WITH A PEER GROUP

The symbolic framework that the Scout Method proposes for young people of 11 to 15 years of age—exploring new territories with a peer group—is closely related to the needs that they naturally experience and express in their own activities at this age.

It is built on three essential urges which are characteristic of this age group:

- **The taste for exploration.**
- **Interest in taking over a territory.**
- **Belonging to a peer group.**

These concerns are also to be seen in other age groups, but in early adolescence they are particularly important.
The role of the symbolic framework

Strengthening the sense of belonging to a community that is pulling in the same direction

The purpose of Scouting is to help the young people become self-reliant, supportive, responsible and committed people able to participate in building a better world. This purpose is implicit and, of course, is not likely to figure among the interests of a young person when he or she decides to join Scouting, but it is made explicit through the symbol.

For a young person involved in Scouting, exploring new territories is the signifier with respect to the search for new dimensions for his or her personality. And the group of friends is the signifier of the value of peers at this age and, consequently, of the significance of their Scout Patrol.

The symbolic framework is a referential environment that underpins the shared life in the Patrol and the Unit, helping to make everything that we do consistent.

It offers educational advantages from several different perspectives:

Encouraging imagination and developing sensitivity

One of the virtues of symbols is that they give things different meanings from those they apparently or usually have. The testimonies of explorers, discoverers and scientists are far apart in space and time and we have little possibility of reproducing them. However, they broaden our horizons and serve to demonstrate that self-fulfilment is achievable. The signifier of these testimonies is the possibility of building significance in one’s own reality. Reality thus takes on a dimension that it might not otherwise have, or a dimension that one might not have the sensitivity to perceive without the help of the symbol.

Strengthening the sense of belonging to a community that is pulling in the same direction

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Giving the leaders an attractive way to present Scout values and helping the young people to identify with them

To really assimilate values, we need to see them exemplified by others who have been able to embody them in their own lives. There is nothing more powerful than a person living by what he or she really thinks. These people are the real heroes. When there are no heroes, young people have no choice but to make do with idols. From a hero we draw inspiration, but an idol only serves to imitate their appearance. A hero signifies something that is permanent, while an idol merely encourages imitators. A hero makes people free, an idol enslaves them. A hero never fails, unless he or she is idolatrized – or made into an idol. Sooner or later an idol always proves to be a disappointment.

In Scout education, the example of people who have lived in accordance with their principles is used to present and underpin the values contained in the Law and to create enthusiasm about doing a little more with our own lives.

Giving cohesion to the activities

In a system of activities in which the young people are asked what they would like to do before a programme is prepared, that programme often ends up consisting of activities that are very different in nature. The presence of a common signifier – exploring new territories with a peer group – connects and unifies the meaning of everything that we do.

Encouraging the achievement of personal objectives and making them important to the young people

As we will see later, the gradual and sequential accumulation of personal experiences from the activities leads to the achievement of the objectives proposed by the Method. The young people personalize these objectives to adapt them to their needs and aspirations.

This process might run the risk of being dry and scholastic, if it were not part of an adventure that is experienced in the manner of a game. The symbolic framework provides this sense of adventure and fills the life of a Unit with enthusiasm and excitement.

This is not a trivial game, however, or a pastime that provides mere sensations. As the symbolic framework represents the type of man or woman we aspire to be, it is directly related to the testimonies of the heroes we meet, to the values of the Scout Law and to the behaviour through which each young person shows that he or she has achieved the proposed objectives.
THE TASTE FOR EXPLORATION

**DISCOVERING NEW WORLDS**

On the threshold of the adult world, where there is so much to discover, including one’s own personality, exploration and discovery are particularly relevant in the life of young people.

Amazed by the transformations in their bodies, young people gradually shed the childhood securities acquired in the home. They start to respond to the impulse to seek new sources of identification, which will shape their future adult identity, and which may or may not coincide with the aspirations of their parents’ life plan.

In any case, this gradual change in ways of thinking and approaching life means that the frame of reference which they have moved within until now suddenly becomes too narrow. Even though they may later concur with their parents’ plans, for now these young people need broader horizons to enable them to express their new and greater abilities. There is nothing that gives more pleasure at this age than discovering new things and being surprised by the unexpected.

The Scout Method proposes adventure as a means to let these tremendously dynamic needs and abilities develop. This is no longer gazing awestruck from the outside at things that have happened to other people. Now it is time for their own story.

An inspirational background based on an imaginary world is no longer enough for this kind of experimentation. It is no longer enough to have fictional characters and groupings who are attributed almost absolute values to exemplify types of behaviour and models of society. Now we have to get into the real world, the world of real live events and people of flesh and blood, the world in which history actually took place and the reality that is happening.
The jungle world that was offered to Cubs during their childhood, with its imaginary characters who left the first prints on the trail, is now replaced by the attraction of the great explorations and their exemplary leaders. These explorations and their protagonists not only arouse enthusiasm, but also help to develop new identifications, offering an example that can be emulated here and now.

And so we pack our rucksacks and set off, like in the great explorations, heading for the unknown. The normal camping expedition comes to represent much more than it really is, or much more than it seems to us as adults, and it takes on a new significance in the young mind and spirit. A young person who sets off on an excursion is building a bridge between his or her reality and the adventures of the great explorers. They are following, for example, the route of Lewis and Clark, who set off in May 1804 at the request of President Jefferson, on a historic journey up the Missouri River, in an attempt to find a route to link the centre of North America and the Pacific Ocean.

Just as Meriwether Lewis, William Clark and the other members of their valiant team travelled for almost two and a half years up the tumultuous river, bearing the rain, wind, dangerous currents, sand banks, the threat of hostile natives, hunger and snake and mosquito bites, a young man or woman will face challenges on any excursion. These may be more in proportion to their strength than those faced by Lewis and Clark, but not for that any less attractive or exciting. And like Lewis and Clark, they will grow in the attempt and live through episodes that will make an indelible impression on their young lives.

The potential discomforts of life in the outdoors are almost nothing compared with the legendary 1914 to 1916 voyage of Ernest Shackleton and his 27 men. The Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, which set out to cross the Antarctic Continent on foot, comprised expert sailors and scientist graduates from renowned universities. After sailing 1,500 kilometres through icebergs, Shackleton’s vessel was trapped in pack ice just a day’s journey away from the point where they meant to start out on foot. The ice dragged them far from the continent for 10 long months, before finally crushing the ship like an eggshell.
Sir Ernest Shackleton (1874-1922), leader of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1914-1916).

The expedition survived for another 10 months in the Antarctic with a bare minimum of equipment, camping and walking hundreds of miles on massive ice floes, or sailing in fragile crafts they had been able to salvage from their ship, eating raw animal entrails to fend off scurvy. No one had the remotest idea where they were, until their endurance paid off and they were rescued at last by Pilot Pardo and the tugboat Yelcho of the Chilean Navy.

The example of Shackleton and his men is not intended to place the young people in a situation that requires them to run the same kind of risks. Rather, this episode is an example of how to resolve difficulties with fortitude and integrity, as symbolized by the name of their ship, the Endurance.
EXPANDING PHYSICAL SKILLS

Looking for new trails, treading paths that were previously unknown, climbing a hill, crossing a gully, scrambling down a river bank, sleeping out under the stars, preparing one’s own food, getting shelter and finding safety are activities that enable us to use our body to discover the world, explore our own possibilities, test emerging strengths, develop new certainties and gain self-confidence.

There are many outstanding testimonies of physical effort in the great explorations of the Americas.

In 1799 the great German naturalist, geographer and historian Alexander von Humboldt stepped onto the Venezuelan shore. For 5 years, in the company of the French naturalist Bonpland, he explored the plains, travelled up the Orinoco and then reached the Black River and the Equatorial jungle via the River Casiquiare. They were in Cuba and Colombia, they sailed up the River Magdalena to reach Quito, from where they headed towards the Andes, climbing the Chimborazo. They crossed the mountains, studied the Upper Marañón, returned to Lima and visited Mexico in 1804, before returning to Europe.

Before, during and after Humboldt’s travels through the Americas, many other researchers explored the continent in extremely adverse conditions. José Celestino Mutis was a doctor from Seville settled in Bogota, who mounted an expedition in the 18th century with learned men and artists who prepared over 24,000 files on the flora of the Americas, representing almost 5,000 species. The library he left in Bogota was considered by Humboldt to be “better than the best in the world”.

Francisco José de Caldas, a learned Colombian born in Popayán, came to be a great friend of Mutis. Caldas first presented himself to Mutis with a train of 14 mules weighed down with trunks containing his travelling museum. In Caldas’ own words, the many and varied objects, descriptions and observations from his travels included “...a respectable herbarium of five or six thousand skeletons dried amidst the trials and speed of the trip...”.

Antonio Raimondi was a native of Milan, an Italian botanist, chemist, geographer, geologist, physicist, meteorologist, traveller, naturalist, historian, teacher, illustrator, painter, archaeologist and anthropologist, but above all an explorer. He began his scientific explorations in Peru in the mid-19th century. His collections include 595 anthropological pieces; 11,575 zoological items; 590 botanical exhibits; and 7,513 fossils, minerals and rocks; in addition to the 20,000 species in his herbarium. Addressing the young people of Peru, to whom his work is dedicated, he writes that “trusting in my own enthusiasm I have undertaken a task greatly superior to my strengths. Help me. Call a cease-fire in your political passions and devote yourselves instead to discovering your country and its immense resources.”

These and many other testimonies of exploration in the service of humanity would not have been possible without an effort on the part of their protagonists to develop their physical potential to the maximum.

This dimension of exploration coincides perfectly with the need of boys and girls of this age to develop their physical abilities!

It was on the basis of this educational coincidence that Baden-Powell founded the Scouts and gave them their name. The word “scout” means explorer, the one who goes out in front, the one who brings news of what lies ahead, as Humboldt, Mutis, Caldas, Raimondi and so many others who explored and brought the first knowledge of the Americas did in their time.
The urge to develop physical potential also underpins the importance that the Scouts attribute to life in the outdoors. Exploration means, above all, going out, getting going, acting, being on the move, travelling, searching. “Explore” comes from the Latin explorare, which means to conduct reconnaissance. And “adventure” comes from venire, which means movement towards a specific place.

For most young people today, whose prospect of adventure is reduced to the television screen or video games, the testimony of the great explorers enhances the ability to dream, opens up new horizons, and enriches the world of their games. It is made real through activities and projects, and beckons them to act, to set things in motion, to discover the potential of their own body.
As we have seen in these testimonies, exploration also tries the intellect. Indeed we often use the expression “explore” as a synonym of “investigate”.

Likewise, the word “scout” does not only mean “explorer”. Its origins go back to the Latin word auscultare, meaning to listen, examine or scrutinize.

What a magnificent opportunity for young people and their emerging capacities for abstract thought, deduction, questioning and generalization!

No exploration is free of problems or conflicts, and no explorer can do without the ability to solve conflict by means of ingenuity. And ingenuity needs knowledge. For exploration to be relevant, mental development and growth are required as the exploration progresses.
The key lies in turning knowledge into science and technique. The application of appropriate science confers legitimacy and value on the exploration. All kinds of feats are seen nowadays, but without science these cannot be described as exploration; without science no feat is more than random wanderings. It would be as if Scouts camped without their pioneering techniques, ropes and knots and without devising clever ways to protect the environment. Or as if we were to describe a group of friends out on a picnic as “explorers”.

At 6.00 a.m. Greenwich Mean Time, on Sunday 21 March 1999, Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones became the first air balloonists to fly non-stop round the world, after piloting their balloon for 19 days, 21 hours and 55 minutes, covering a distance of 41,920 kilometres. This would not have been possible without their amazing 55-metre high balloon, which held a pressurized cabin 6 metres long, with the latest technology supported from the Earth by meteorological equipment which enabled them to predict airstreams 3 days in advance.

And it is not only in the technological era that exploration has required intellectual development. Everything would have been even more difficult for Lewis and Clark on the Missouri River without the help of Sacagawea, a young Shoshone Indian who joined the expedition with her French husband. As she knew the land, she served as a guide, and as a speaker of other languages, she was able to serve as interpreter with the Indians. Knowing the herbs and fruits of her native land, she was able to prepare medicines and food for her expedition companions. Sacagawea herself would have been in dire straits had Lewis not had the skills to assist in the difficult birth of her son John Baptist.
Taking a different view of life

Exploring not only implies new lands, physical exertion and the discovery of science. It also means acquiring new dimensions from which to observe everyday facts in a different way.

After each expedition or camp, parents are surprised to see their children come back slightly different. From these new lands they come back a little more autonomous, a little better able to enter into a discussion between equals, and also transformed, with a different look in their eyes. This new way of seeing everyday things is so important that in his long work In Search of Time Lost, the French writer Marcel Proust claims that “the only real voyage of discovery is not going to new places, but seeing them with new eyes”.

In 1924, when he was 83 years old, the Frenchman Clement Ader came to be recognised as the first person to venture into aviation, despite the fact that in 1873—30 years before the Wright brothers became famous—he had already manufactured a mechanical bird which he had managed to raise from the ground. As a child others had laughed at him because he would spend hours watching birds in flight. When he began his research he travelled to Strasbourg to study the flight of the storks and to Algeria to observe the great African birds of prey. In 1881 when, with great trepidation, he mounted the first plane-building workshop in the Parisian street of Assomption, he had a huge cage installed with birds to serve as models for the workers.

In 1891, when he was just 18 years old, Santos Dumont, a Brazilian forerunner of aviation, hung an automobile from a tree in the middle of a Paris square, to see if the engine would vibrate when suspended in the air. Finding that it did not, he installed gasoline engines in aerostatic balloons. He came to build 6 balloons and 8 dirigibles or airships. In 1906, he managed to fly 120 metres at a height of 6 metres, in an aeroplane of his own construction, which he baptized “14-bis”.

Putting all we have into a commitment

Although it almost goes without saying, we should mention that exploring is more than a feat of muscle. Physical and mental exploration bring with them the development of character, the expression of feelings and emotions, social sensibility and a spiritual quest.

When Neil Armstrong – a Scout, as Baden-Powell had predicted that the first man to walk on the moon would be – landed there on 20 July 1969, he was testing all the values that had tempered his character.

Annie Smith Peck, an American Latin teacher who conquered the 6,768-metre Northern Summit of the Huascarán in the Peruvian Andes at the age of 59 in 1908, did not begin her mountaineering career until the age of 45. She was not an expert, but what she lacked in experience she made up for with her considerable tenacity. She reached heights that no other woman had reached before her, and her last climb was Mount Madison in New Hampshire, when she was 82 years old.

When a group of roped climbers ascend by their fingertips to a narrow ledge, each step is an adventure and also a gesture of love and solidarity with the other climbers who are tied to them by fragile strings.

This certificate is proudly displayed in the World Scout Bureau. It reads: “I certify that this World Scout Badge was carried to the surface of the moon on man’s first lunar landing, Apollo XI, July 20, 1969. Neil A. Armstrong, Crew Commander, Apollo XI”.

Aldrin and Armstrong moved with a hopping gait over the moon’s surface, amazing millions of people who were following their every move on television.

The image of the moonwalk came to be an icon of the 20th century and symbolizes the human spirit of exploration.
When, in her rudimentary laboratory in Paris, the Polish scientist Marie Curie was exposed to the radiation that would eventually cause her death, as well as exploring the mysteries of science she no doubt thought of the lives her discovery would help to save. At the age of 56 she wrote, “We cannot hope to build a better world if we do not improve individuals. With this in mind, each of us must work on improving ourselves, accepting our share of responsibility in the wider life of humanity.”

Cándido Mariano Da Silva Rondón spent years exploring the Brazilian interior, setting up telegraph lines in vast zones with no roads, populated by Amerindians alone. His expeditions clocked up over 40,000 kilometres, which is equivalent to the distance round the earth. Despite the merits of this gigantic work of progress, Rondón was better known for his respect for indigenous cultures and his spirited defence of their rights and way of life, which earned him the name “Marshal of Peace”, by which he is known to this day. His motto was “…to die, if necessary, but never to kill”. There are Scout Groups named after him in almost all the regions of Brazil.

When Piccard and Jones had completed their journey round the world and were about to land their balloon on the sands of Egypt, Piccard wrote “…for now I let the biting cold of the night remind me that we have not landed yet, that we are still experiencing one of the most beautiful moments of our lives. The only way I can make this moment last is to share it with others. We were lucky, thanks to the winds of Providence. Let the winds of hope keep blowing around the world”.

All these testimonies show that exploring is an activity which combines with other human activities to celebrate the human spirit and involve all the facets of the personality.
Exploring is not just setting off. Coming back is also part of the adventure. Once the trial is over, the path found, we come back and share what we have learned. From the Latin word *venire* is also derived *adventus*, which means arrival.

But after being back at base and sharing the experience for a while, something inside urges us to set off again. *Adventus* gives way to *explorare*. And suddenly we find ourselves on the eve of a new journey, be it into the depths of a new idea, the intricacies of a different culture or our own interior. We need it to rebuild ourselves, to grow, to be more, to keep living.

Robert D. Ballard, a scientist of the Mystic Exploration Institute of Connecticut, who found the spot where the famous Titanic sunk, said “life is an epic journey and an epic journey you begin with a dream or concept, something crystallizes in your mind and then you have to prepare for it. You have to go and assemble your Argonauts to do it”.

Ballard, who describes his work like those old legendary quests, adds, “the spirit of exploration is an integral part of a human being”. And he concludes, “we are all explorers. How could anyone spend their life looking at a door without ever opening it?”

Exploring comes naturally to young people. It came naturally to them before the Scout Method existed and even if it did not exist they would still explore. The value of the Method lies in the fact that it makes the most of this characteristic of the young spirit and turns exploration into a motivation, into a symbol, a style and a passion which mingles with our search for the origins, nature and destiny of humankind.
In the ancient expeditions, with much of the world still to be discovered, exploration was associated with the quest for new territories. Practically all explorations were marked by this purpose.

This was what drove Erik Thorvaldson, better known as “Erik the Red” to leave behind the fjords and shores of Norway in the 10th century and head off into the freezing Atlantic. His fragile vessel was no more than 5 metres wide, and he had no compass other than the sun, the moon and the stars. At the age of barely 20, Erik organized the flight of his family, ruined by the taxes of the kinglet Haarfager, who had eliminated almost all of the Norwegian kings and suppressed the rights of land-owners.

Erik and his family reached the “land of ice”, or Iceland, where the Swedish Viking Floki had arrived before him and where a colony was later established. But Erik set off again, this time alone, heading always North West, further and further towards the eternal ice of the Polar Circle.
For millions of years, ecosystems have been delicately balanced. Exploration in itself does not alter them. But when men emigrate to newly discovered regions, they cause permanent changes. The explorations of bygone times showed our ancestors the marvels of the Earth and they passed their testimony on to us. It is our duty to preserve these marvels for future generations. We live in the epoch of the exploration of new dimensions of life on our planet.

Explorers have visited remote tropical jungles, but scientists still know very little about the forest “canopy” — the layer of foliage 30 metres above the forest floor — for example. Most of the plant and animal species that live there have not even been named or identified yet. However, commercial development destroys almost 150,000 square kilometres of forest every year.

In an immense ocean with neither day nor night, under a pale sun that never set, he finally reached a verdant coast, where he spied forests of willow trees and birch, blackberries laden with fruit and pastures perfect for raising cattle. Erik called this place “Green-land”.

About the year 1000, Leif Erikson, Erik’s son, who had inherited his father’s temperament, assembled 40 young men and built a fleet of vessels, in which they set sail South West into the Atlantic. They discovered coasts of leafy woodlands which they called “Markland” or “land of wood”, and other lands further south that they named “Vinland” or “country of wine”. After a year’s travel they returned to Greenland to announce their discoveries, but the inhabitants were not enthusiastic about the new lands.

Modern historians accept that Leif reached the coasts of Nova Scotia in what is Canada today, and therefore acknowledge that he was the first European to reach the American Continent, 500 years before Christopher Columbus.

History is strewn with epic explorations like this one, each of which took the dream of one man or one people and forged it into the means to appropriate a new territory.

MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

Thanks to the tenacity of generations of explorers, there is barely an unknown or unnamed place left on the Earth. We know what there is in the depths of the ocean and on the summit of the highest mountain. Maps register the arid rocks of the desert and the glaciers of the coldest Polar Regions. Not even the Earth’s gravitational force has prevented explorers from penetrating outer space.

Now that the most far-flung places have become familiar to us, the nature of expeditions has changed. Now the challenge is not to discover unknown lands, but to understand the planet with its climate and its living beings.

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It may seem as though little remains to be discovered in the Amazon, but in fact scientific research is only just beginning—with great difficulty—to delve into the forest’s natural recycling system, its soil and water, its development and its insect life.

The Antarctic has been explored and is apparently well documented, but the 3.5-kilometre thick ice-cap is a massive, almost untapped database, with much to tell us about how the Earth’s climate and atmosphere have evolved over the last 160,000 years.

The satellites which circle the Earth at a height of 900 kilometres are no longer a novelty, but minute-by-minute they send us signals which computers convert into high-precision photographs that can be used to map the remotest of regions, locate mineral resources and detect pollution and crop infestations.

The exploration of the deserts dates back a long way, and one in eight of the Earth’s inhabitants live in desert or low-rainfall areas, but the scientific study of these areas is only recent. More than a million square kilometres of fertile land turns to desert every 5 years. Today’s challenge is not to explore these deserts, but to investigate what we can do to reverse the desertification process as soon as possible.
Left blind and deaf by scarlet fever when she was 19 months old, by the age of just 13 the American writer Helen Keller had mastered German, could translate Latin, had some knowledge of Greek and was beginning to speak French. The “new territory” of her life consisted of substituting sight and sound for a world of tactile sensations and some taste and smell. This tangible world of volumes and shapes, of sensations and smells, enabled her to study, learn, communicate, write, love and devote a great part of her life to others like herself. This woman, who is known and admired throughout the world, wrote from her own experience in the shadows “...life is an adventure or it is nothing at all”.

For John Dewey, an American philosopher who has strongly influenced modern education, the test of life lay in the adventure of growth. In his book “Reconstructing Philosophy”, Dewey states that the objective of life is not perfection as a final goal, but the “constant process of perfection, maturity and refinement”. This process will always be an adventure and will always mean exploring new territories, dimensions and perspectives.

An eloquent testimony of the exploration of new dimensions was passed down to us by the Mexican poet and humanist Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz, who came to be one of the most outstanding figures of 17th century Latin American literature. In 1667, at the age of 16, she abandoned the life of the Court of the Viceroy of New Spain to join a Carmelite convent. As she herself stated, only the monastic life could offer her the opportunity to carry out her intellectual purposes. To be able to write her beautiful poetic works, she had to vindicate the equality of educational opportunities for women, a territory strictly reserved for men in her time.
The spirit of adventure symbolized by the appropriation of new territories and dimensions is clearly expressed in the urges of young people. And if it is not expressed, it is latent. Getting it to develop is simply a question of motivation or changing conditioning factors that are usually inherent in the surroundings.

Like the explorers, boys and girls of this age continually turn their spirit of adventure towards gaining new territories or dimensions, as if the act of building a new dominion was a reflection or a projection of the desire to discover oneself and build one’s own personality.

Signs of appropriation of new territories begin to appear naturally in family life, sooner or later, according to the educational criteria of the parents. Having a special closet for keeping “their” things, having their own house key, not being interrupted or checked on when they are with their friends, having a more flexible timetable, having a room to themselves if possible, sleeping over at a friend’s house and having a weekly allowance may seem like trivial things, but they nevertheless mean stepping over an existing boundary and entering “new territory”. They are marks of autonomy or, at least, a recognition of independence that affirm one’s own image and personality.

Unlike school, which always seems to discover the youthful need for “new territory” too late, the Scout programme of activities is a purposefully inexhaustible source of new dimensions.
Life in the Unit, organized by the youngsters without any manipulation by the leaders; the “secrets” of the Patrol, jealously kept in the Patrol Record Book; the Patrol’s meeting place or “corner”, which is exclusive to each Patrol; expeditions to diverse far away or new places; and facing individual and group responsibilities that have never been given to them before, are just some of the new territories and dimensions that give them the opportunity to explore and get to know themselves, gradually define their identity and become part of the world.

The new territories of girls and boys today will probably never be as threatening as the coast of Greenland was a thousand years ago for the solitary Erik in his fragile boat, nor will they demand the precision required to interpret a satellite signal, nor the kind of sacrifices that Hellen Keller had to make. But what is important is that they are just as significant for boys and girls and that from the example of those great explorers, they can draw the strength and the values they need to enter and deal with these new dimensions.

The Scout Method not only opens frontiers to new territories but also implies assigning a new meaning to familiar ones. As young people grow, these new territories will become ever more challenging. This is the adventure of growth of which Dewey spoke.

There is no need to fear the educational use of their powers of imagination. As Piaget showed, at this age young people have no difficulty in conceiving abstract spaces with no link whatsoever to concrete reality. There is time enough for total realism. Besides, who among us has not been shaped by the promises of our imagination?

The great English writer William Shakespeare said, “What is of interest is not the night itself, but dreams that we dream always, in all places, at any time of the year, awake or asleep.” And Goethe added, “Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, magic and power in it.”

This is the impulse we are talking about when we say that one of the urges that drives young people is to take over territory. What is special about Scouting is that it turns this urge into a lifestyle and an educational strategy.
Friendship is one of our commonest feelings and virtues, and it is one of the many different kinds of expressions of love. It is not erotic or filial love, neither is it passion. It is disinterested love that springs up in our relationship with some people—not all, or even many—based on a certain identity that we establish with them.

Freely given affection is not a duty since—like love—it cannot be given to order. Personal affection is free of envy, it is reciprocal and leads to a sense of community, sharing, and fidelity. And it grows with time.

Anne Sullivan, who had a sad and difficult childhood, and who had her sight restored by a series of operations, was Hellen Keller’s teacher and dear friend for over 40 years. She was instrumental in helping Hellen to overcome her blindness and deafness. Maria Montessori called her “creator of a soul”, also exclaiming, “They call me a pioneer, but she is the pioneer!” Indeed, in the education of Hellen Keller, Anne Sullivan was twenty years ahead of the great Italian educator in applying the principle of encouraging self-education on the part of children. Hellen Keller herself speaks of the value of friendship when she says, “My friends have built the story of my life, have made an effort to transform my limitations into beautiful privileges, enabling me to walk serene and cheerful among the shadows...”
Aristotle said that “without friendship life is a mistake” and Raïssa Maritain, writing about the friendship between the French Christian Humanists of the first half of the twentieth century, adds that “our friends form part of our lives and our lives explain our friendships.”

If we think about it, the experience of Raïssa Maritain is not very different from the experiences we all have. Any one of us could see our life as part and fruit of a community of friends. We build ourselves through sharing with our friends, loving them and learning from them, often borne up by them.

When Meriwether Lewis sought a companion to co-direct the exploration of the Missouri River, he wrote to his friend William Clark, who complemented him perfectly, “If there is anything … which would induce you to participate with me in the fatigues, dangers and honours [of the journey], believe me there is no man on earth with whom I should feel equal pleasure in sharing them as with yourself.”

Clark, who had spent a great deal of time on the frontier of Ohio and Kentucky, learning to fight and to negotiate with the Indians, build refuges in the undergrowth and find trails in unknown lands, was four years older than Lewis. He was less educated, but had much more practical experience and a firm and resolute character. He replied immediately to his friend’s invitation, saying, “This is an undertaking fraught with many difficulties, but my friend I do assure you that no man lives with whom I would prefer to undertake such a trip than yourself.”

On their return, when Lewis reported to the President of the United States, he wrote of his friend William Clark, “If any credit be due of the success of this arduous enterprise, [William Clark] is equally with myself entitled to your consideration and that of our common country.” Far from separating them, the tensions of the two years of expedition strengthened the friendship between the two men.

Shackleton’s men, lost in the Antarctic, could not have survived without a mutual concern to lift each other’s spirits and keep nerves and depression at bay. One of the members of the crew wrote that Shackleton was popular among his men not because he could do anything particularly amazing, but because “he personally took care of the smallest detail that affected each of us”. More than a captain, he was a friend.

In December 1903, over 100,000 people turned out to cheer as the corvette Uruguay sailed into the harbour of Buenos Aires, under the command of the Argentine Lieutenant Julián Irizar. Regardless of the dangers involved, two months earlier the small wooden vessel had set out for the Antarctic to rescue the members of the scientific expedition of Professor Nordenskjöld. Having advanced further than anyone before them towards the South Pole, the scientific party had been forced to hibernate for 2 years on the Island of Cerro Nevado since, though they did not know it, the vessel in which they had travelled and which was to pick them up had been shipwrecked. Thanks to the solidarity of those who risked their own lives to rescue them, all the members of the expedition were saved.

**Just like the solidarity of the companions in adventure, the solidarity of our friends in daily life is a force that preserves us and enables us to grow in an environment of emotional intimacy and trust.**
BETWEEN 11 AND 15
PEERS ARE
ROLE MODELS

Although we build and develop our friendships during our day-to-day lives, they take on special importance at critical moments. Between the ages of 11 and 15, when physical changes are associated with feelings of insecurity, our peers play a fundamental emotional and social role. They are a crucial audience that helps us to affirm our own attractiveness and obtain sexual and affective acceptance.

Peers are also very important for developing the dimensions of the identity: interpersonal enrichment, values, recognition of skills, widening of options, sexual identity and social participation.

The importance of peers—and even more of those who become our friends—is accentuated during this period of life by the perceived limitations of the family, which until now has represented a stable and unquestionable frame of reference. The growing capacity to reflect and look analytically at one’s own way of thinking and that of others leads young people to question that frame of reference and seek other models outside the home, and the influence of peers therefore becomes much more powerful.

Unlike in the past, today the family is no longer in a position to provide its children with a social development process restricted to the family. For different reasons, the family gives children “independence at an ever younger age, without having provided them with the autonomy they need to use that independence responsibly” (Jacques Moreillon, Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement, 2nd Summit of Chairpersons, Dominican Republic, 1999).
And so the media and the street become an environment of interaction and recognition that is very influential for young people. Little by little, they have significantly more interaction with their peers than with adults, and feel most happy and relaxed with them.

The peer group plays an educational role

The informal group of friends or the neighbourhood gang is where each young person seeks assurance that he or she is not strange, that there are others who have the same worries, the same frustrations and the same dreams.

A kind of spontaneous complicity develops within the group of friends. Far from worrying us, we should value this as a source of creativity and personal growth.

On a September day in 1940, four boisterous and inseparable French boys –Marcel Ravidat, Georges Angelot, Jacques Marsal and Simon Coencas– were exploring the Perigord countryside as usual, with their dog Robot. When they were chasing hares and foxes among the heather and pine on the plateau of Montignac, Robot disappeared into a hole. After following their dog carefully and spending a couple of days in secret investigation, they found that this hole was in fact a gigantic cavern 30 metres deep by 10 wide, surrounded by adjoining caverns and potholes, the walls of which were completely covered in pre-historic animal paintings.
The young friends had discovered what is known today as the Grotto of Lascaux, one of the world's greatest Paleolithic treasures. They cautiously took their discovery to an old school teacher, who informed the Abbot Breuil, a man known for his pre-historic research. Throughout the early investigations, Marcel Ravidat and his friends shared the work of providing support, took turns to watch over the works of the Abbot Breuil to protect them from ill-intentioned curiosity and quickly established codes to help preserve the secrecy of the enterprise.

Each young person strengthens their identity through the similarities they find in the peer group. The peer group does not cultivate differences: these youngsters are drawn to each other because they are like each other. They embrace anything that will reinforce this shared identity, such as names, similar clothes, badges, secret hideouts, in-jokes and initiation rites.

**THE SCOUT PATROL “ORGANIZES” THE NATURAL PEER GROUP**

The genius of Baden-Powell lies in having understood the dynamics within the peer group, the attraction it holds for young people and the innumerable opportunities it offers for the solid development of autonomy.

The Founder noticed young people’s capacity for bonding in a group of peers during the Transvaal War, when he observed how they discharged their duties as messengers and look-outs during the 217 days of the siege of Mafeking. Later, when he opened the first Scout camp in August 1907, on Brownsea Island, the first thing he did was to organize the first 22 Scouts into 4 Patrols: Wolves, Bulls, Curlews, and Crows.

A Scout Patrol is a group of young people like any other, but it has a particular meaning for their lives and is guided by Scout values. Even a gang of young people thrown together by shared racial or economic discrimination, for whom the present is a dead-end street and who are at risk of evolving into a delinquent gang, differs from a Scout Patrol basically insofar as the latter lives by the Scout Law. The sociological elements that underpin their identity as a group are practically the same.

There is no need to repress the force of the natural peer group. Rather it should be acknowledged and guided to help them build their personality. Scouting’s entire small group system is based on this conviction, but it is particularly relevant during this stage of adolescence. The way a Scout Patrol works will be analysed in detail in our next chapter.
THE SYMBOLIC FRAMEWORK IN ACTION

KEEPING THE SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE ALIVE

The unparalleled success of Scouting among young people, just as much today as in the beginning, is attributable to the fact that it beckons them towards activities that are closely related to these three essential urges: exploration, territory and peer group. A Scout Unit may not be all that rigorous in applying all the elements of the Scout Method, as we will see in detail in chapter 4, but if it keeps the response to these three urges alive, the interest of the young people will never fade.

The symbolic idea of “exploring new territories with a group of friends” should always be present in group life. To make sure this is the case, the leaders should revise the concepts of this symbolic framework continually, and compare them with the day to day reality of the Unit. This exercise will be very useful for keeping the spirit of adventure alive.
Evoking the hero and transferring the symbol

The list of ideas is endless and the activities will vary depending on the environment, the initiative of the young people and the resources available. What is important is to bring the young people into contact with a real hero or heroine: an explorer or an investigator whose work benefited humankind. Not a warrior or colonist involved in dark causes, or who pursued power or an ideology. The means chosen should also be attractive – it is important to avoid making the approach too intellectual. As well as receiving information, the young people have to be able to “do things” that help them to assimilate what they have learned.

To make these activities attractive and capture the young people’s interest, the leaders need to have enough information to be able to supply ideas, suggest examples and really inspire the activity. This Handbook offers many testimonies of explorers and investigators and many other examples are to be found in the young people’s Logs for the different progress stages. However, research in specialized texts will never go amiss.

In the Unit and in the Patrols there are a number of activities to evoke different episodes of the life and adventures of men and women who were explorers and researchers:

- Lively tales on camp nights
- Exhibitions
- Mounting video documentaries
- Campfire dramas and sketches
- Short stories to provide an inspiring background for a lengthy game
- Visits to historical sites and museums
- Interviews with people who can supply information about events and characters
- Discussions in the Unit with special guests
- Forums and debates based on documentaries or texts
- Reading material suggested to the young people on an individual basis
- Research activities by Patrol
- Theme evenings, in which everything is related to a story or a character, including the venue, setting, clothing and food.
- Mounting experiments, models or useful objects that use the discoveries of famous scientists
- “Inventors” fairs to stimulate the young people’s creativity
**Constant evocation** leads naturally to **symbolic transfer**, as we assimilate the value that is exemplified by the conduct of the hero and reflect upon the impact that this value may have on our own life and behaviour. The symbol thus plays its educational role, pushing us to become something that we identify with. In other words, the **signifier** leads to the **signified**.

The Leaders should try to encourage this shift with a minimum of interference. The young people’s process of identification with the hero’s testimony should come about as an **experience**, which is unique to each person and cannot be manipulated. The adult’s role is one of an educator, in other words to **reveal** what the young people might not see otherwise, then assess their personal behaviour and reflect it back at them like a **mirror**. We will return to the subject of personal progress in chapter 11.

**STORY-TELLING IS WEAVING MAGIC**

The symbolic framework supposes that the Scout Leaders have the virtue of being “good story-tellers”, a gift that is not always valued as it should be. If an educator has this skill, little value is placed on it; if not, he or she is not expected to acquire it.

Gabriela Mistral, a primary school teacher and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1945, said that “to tell a story is to cast a spell, which opens up a world of magic”. In an article published in the French town of Avignon, in February 1929, she wrote that everything can be learned through the “beautiful architecture of a story”, causing the young people to feel “the same enchantment as a fable”.

That means that recounting the testimonies of the explorers does not consist of merely listing facts or boring the young people with dates, places and names. “Good story-telling” recreates an atmosphere. The characters in it walk, gesture and act before the eyes of the young people and, as the Chilean poetess put it, “enter their souls to reach the core where they keep all their other familiar and loved ones”.

You do not have to be an artist, poet, professional story-teller or comedian to tell something well. The strength of the telling lies in really feeling what you are saying, so that the tale wells up inside you and “comes from within”.

To achieve this, the story-teller must have a wealth of intimacy, thoughts and experiences. In other words they must have something to communicate to others. This comes from observing, listening to others, reading, experiencing things and living intensely. The story-teller can pick out the different hues of green in a landscape, because he or she looks beyond the superficial appearance of things. The story-teller also has to weave words with charm and fluency, because young people are very sensitive to gracefulness.
We can draw some good advice from the texts of Gabriela Mistral and the experience of good story-tellers:

The tale should be direct and not get sidetracked. A good story “streaks like an arrow to its centre and fatigues not the eye of child nor man”.

A tale has life if it is simple in style. It is enough that the magical or extraordinary fact is in itself “well charged with creative electricity”. Unwieldy adjectives or pedantic or tedious expressions do not hold interest. The attractiveness should burst out “honest and clean from the very heart of the tale”. Like a good gymnast, a good story has no fat of superfluous detail, just “lean muscle”.

If the tale is to be communicated “without embellishments nor spices”, the teller must be “simple and even humble”, so that the young people no longer see the teller and become immersed in the events that are unfolding.

The teller must be able to choose the right time. He or she must also learn to transform apparently lost time into an opportunity for a good story. A rainy day, a night in camp with no light or a gap in the programme of activities can be made into an unexpected and agreeable evening.

The description should reduce as much of the story as possible to images, leaving “only that which cannot be translated into images” standing alone.

The language used should be relevant to the young people’s environment and evoke day-to-day situations for them.

The teller must train his or her voice to “draw some sweetness from it”, because the listener “is thankful for the gift of a pleasant voice that drapes itself like silk around the subject”.

Story-telling is more than saying the words. The non-verbal language communicates much more than the verbal. So –without indulging in excess of course– the teller must make his or her face, hands, gestures and looks contribute to the beauty of the tale, because young people like to see “the teller with an animated and lively face”.

Gabriela Mistral concludes her article speaking as an educator, commenting that “I would not confer a teaching qualification upon anyone who did not tell stories with agility, freshness and even a degree of fascination”.

With all the more reason, we might say the same of a Scout Leader.
THE PATROL AS AN INFORMAL GROUP

- The Scout Method gives prominence to the informal dimension of the Patrol
- Young people join the Patrol voluntarily
- Voluntary membership determines the way that young people join
- The Patrol is a permanent and well-bonded group
- Not fewer than 5 members and not more than 8
- Patrols may be horizontal or vertical, depending on age
- The Patrol members need to have similar interests
- Activities and tasks must be appropriate
- The Patrol has its own identity
- The internal structure is flexible
- The Patrol has a single formal structure: the Patrol Council
- The status that young people assign to each other defines internal roles and tasks
- The young people’s implicit rules create the internal culture of the Patrol
- Peer group rules coincide with the Scout Law
- The Patrol Leader is elected and plays an important role
- The Patrol has symbols of belonging
- The Patrol is a place to enjoy being with friends

THE PATROL AS A LEARNING COMMUNITY

- Behavioural change that encompasses the “whole” person and learning together
- Patrols learn by doing
- Learning in the Patrol enables a response at the right time
- In the Patrol young people learn as a team through a sequence of activities
- Young people learn to learn
- The Scout Method creates a “learning field” in the Patrol
- The Patrol encourages the young people to become involved in the local community
- The Patrol is also interested in the wider community
- The Patrol can be single-sex or mixed
- Criteria for a policy on mixed Patrols
- The Patrol works on the basis of the Scout Method and interaction between the Patrols takes place in the Unit
The Patrol System is the central axis of the Method in the Scout Section, 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 more we protect the group’s informal objective the better its formal objective can be achieved.

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.
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.
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)
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.

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.

PATROLS MAY BE VERTICAL OR HORIZONTAL, DEPENDING ON AGE

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”.

66
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.

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.

**ACTIVITIES AND TASKS MUST BE APPROPRIATE**

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 PATROL HAS ITS OWN IDENTITY**

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 INTERNAL STRUCTURE IS FLEXIBLE**
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.
- **Assistant Patrol Leader**, who deputies for the Patrol Leader and also represents the Patrol at the Unit Council.
- **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.
- **Treasurer**, who administers the Patrol’s financial resources.
- **Quartermaster**, who looks after the Patrol’s materials and distributes the work of maintaining them among the other members.
- **Cook**, who ensures that the Patrol continually improves the quality and variety of its meals.
- **Nurse**, who keeps the Patrol’s first aid kit and makes sure that everyone knows the main rules of safety and first aid.
- **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.
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 an 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.
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.
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.

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

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.

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”.

77
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 role of mutual tutors, helping each other with personal development, giving encouragement for their achievements, reinforcing their self-image and proposing changes.

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

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 planning 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”.

[81]
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:
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.

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.

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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.
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.