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Battle of the Sexes — What Are Little Boys Made Of?

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“It is nowadays very difficult for a boy to grow up with masculine honor in this society. For one thing, he is standing at the tail-end of a veritable whirlwind of anti-male sentiment that has been sweeping through the country for decades; although the force of this sentiment has somewhat let up, it has left in its wake a vast collection of moral and spiritual debris for any boy to pick his way through.” Those are the words of Midge Decter, first published several years ago. In “[What Are Little Boys Made Of?](#),” Decter argues that our society is opposed to the very nature of boyhood: *Somewhere on the way to and from the 1960’s, something happened in America to suppress this natural condition of boys: some loss of energy, some shying away from their instinctive restlessness and competitiveness, and, with it, a fading of whatever happened to be the standards of gallantry. It is not easy to say what brought this about—our mores of child-rearing certainly had a lot, if not everything, to do with it. In the end what really matters is that the process of damping their natures—which would prove so fateful, to them and to the rest of us, during the years of the Vietnam war—was applauded by the keepers of the national ethos: the intellectuals, the educators, the clergy, and the press.*

This article will make every reader think. Midge Decter is a provocative writer, and this article is certain to provoke. Christian parents will not accept every assumption or argument in the article. Nevertheless, Decter is making a serious argument that is seriously needed. Her article, first published in the December 1998 edition of *Commentary*, is now available at the Web site of the [Catholic Educator’s Resource Center](#). It’s not every day that I recommend an article by a Jewish author posted on a Catholic Web site. This one deserves the recommendation.

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