

"Good, Upright Young Citizens"?

Lived Experiences of Boy Scouts and
Girl Guides in Australia



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ABSTRACT

The Boy Scout and Girl Guide movement in Australia has received very limited scholarly attention, despite its status as a prominent youth organisation since the early twentieth century. This thesis juxtaposes the oral history testimonies of twenty-two current and past Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in Australia with the official model of Scouting and Guiding devised by the founder, Sir Robert Baden-Powell. The research engages with broad social themes, including gender, class, and primacy of the outdoors. Close analysis is provided of one of the most debated elements of the movement: the use of middle-class adolescents' leisure time to build good future citizens or soldiers. The thesis provides an account of the religious and cultural context of the contemporary movement in Australia, particularly its 'white' Christian origins. Findings indicate the ambiguous and contested nature of Baden-Powell's 'official model', and reveal the intricate, manifold experiences of participants in the movement. Those who took part in the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides have been significantly influenced by their involvement, and the movement has played a memorable role in their lives.

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