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Changing Girlhoods - Changing Girl Guiding

Introduction

This article explores the history of girlhood as described through over a hundred years of Girl Guide¹ handbooks. As the largest youth organisation in the world, these handbooks tell an interesting story about what it means to be and to have been a girl. The Girl Guides begins as a grass-roots response to the Boy Scouts, which were founded in Britain by Lord Robert Baden-Powell in 1907. The Scouts were designed to provide boys with training in appropriate citizenship – service, discipline and out-door activities (Mills, 2011) – as a corrective to prevailing anxieties about the indolence of future leaders of empire (MacDonald, 1993).

Although devised exclusively for boys (in line with dominant gender politics that did not envision future female empiric leaders), the Scouts appealed to children of *both* sexes (Proctor, 2009). So, at the first Boy Scout rally in 1909, a group of girls calling themselves ‘Girl Scouts’ also attended; they are said to have been ‘attempting to claim for themselves a part in the scout movement’ (*ibid*: 1). In this, they were successful. As Wade (1971, p. 17) reflects, although Baden-Powell is acclaimed as the Founder of Girl Scouts, he himself always insisted that Guiding started itself. In many ways it did; perhaps it had to. As Proctor (2002: 21) notes, ‘girls themselves negotiated and shaped the movement that became Guiding long before male and female leaders worked out the official outlines’.

Nevertheless, the presence of girls in the movement was publicly and polemically debated; typically this was vis-a-vis the potential for useful service versus the potential for ‘unacceptable femininity’ (Mills, 2011). A gender confirming ‘solution’ was soon found in Baden-Powell’s announcement that girls would flourish better within their *own* movement,

run by women, and aimed at meeting the needs of girls. And so, in November 1909, he published the 'Scheme for Girl Guides'; a year later, his sister Agnes Baden-Powell adapted his book 'Scouting for Boys' specifically for girls.

Reportedly, Agnes Baden-Powell shared gender-conservative views and emphasised that the new organisation would not produce tomboys (Voeltz, 1992) and this was reflected in the change from the masculine title 'scouts' to a more feminine 'guides' (Smith, 2006). Anxieties about expression femininity were therefore formative in the incipient movement and have continued, albeit in different forms, across its history (Proctor, 2009; Swetnam, 2016) - a theme to which we will return. Initially, membership of the Guides did not keep pace with that for Scouts, but World War I saw rapid expansion of members, reaching 70,000 by end 1918 (Voeltz, 1992). The trend to expansion continued across the decades. By end 2014, there were 559,996 members in the UK (girlguiding.org 2015) and much like a silent, largely invisible distributed megacity, there are now 10 million girls and young women worldwide (WAGGGS 2017).

The fact that Guiding has been able to continue to attract generations of girls and young women is arguably because it has flexibly adapted and reflected changing gender norms and performances across time and place. If gender is an institution (Lorber, 1994), it is served by Guiding (Anderson and Behringer, 2010; Auster, 1985) and therefore Guiding offers a focussed lens through which to examine social change in girlhood. Yet, compared to Boy Scouts, the Girl Guides have received relatively little academic attention. When Guiding has been explored, studies have tended to focus on it as a particular kind of youth movement (Block and Proctor, 2009; Proctor, 1998, 2002; Miller, 2009), which is set in specific historical time-periods (eg. Kerr, 1954; Liddell, 1970; Gledhill 2013; Gillis, 1974; Wilkinson,

1969; Wilkinson, 1969), typically through the lens of British Imperialism (Warren 1986, 1987, 1990; Dedman, 1993; Rosenthal, 1986; Springhall, 1977). More recently, the gendered geopolitics of imperialism in Guiding have been explored (Mills 2009; Miller 2007; MacLeod, 1983; Mechling, 2001; Parsons, 2004; Proctor, 2009; Gagen, 2004), as has the role Guiding has played as a site of citizenship-training (Matless, 1995, 1997; Cupers, 2008; Wittemans, 2009) with a particular moral stance (Gagen, 2000; Kraftl, 2006).

In contrast, this paper takes a sociological approach and scans the entire history of Guiding specifically in relation to the changing constructions of childhood and indeed girlhood. Overall, we argue that, instead of a neat, linear shift 'from those kinds of girlhoods to these kinds of girlhoods', we see a much more 'stringy' story of change. What we mean by this is that there are multiple 'myofibrils' of change over the time period explored in the handbooks: strands of change; strands of continuity; strands that loop in and on themselves whilst still knitting similar and different patterns. We deliberately adopt the imagery of 'stringy strands of change' from the ordered yet flexible structure of skeletal muscles which are composed of many myofibrils, since these strands manifest in parallel to one another.

More precisely, based on the handbooks, we suggest that there are three main interrelated strands of change, which have co-occurred to both 'girls' and 'girlhood'. The first is that girls are seen to be increasingly *incompetent* and more vulnerable than they used to be. The second is that 'girls' are increasingly seen to be increasingly 'girls' in and of themselves. We conclude with the final strand, which is conversely one of continuity: girls and girlhood are seen to be timeless. This is not to say that we take 'girlhood' and 'childhood' to be homogenous categories. Instead, we assume them to emerge from, and are constituted within, the socio-cultural context in which they are situated (Currie, 2015; James *et al.* 1998; James

and James 2004; James and Prout 1997; Qvortrup 1994, 2005). However, we note that, alongside some visible changes, there is also relative stability in how girls are expected to be and what they can and might like to do and become. Each of these issues is discussed in turn and forms a distinct section of the discussion that follows.

It is worth noting that the vast majority of the paper is somewhat descriptive. We make no excuses for that and indeed present these strands of change rather deliberately in this way for three main reasons. Firstly, the descriptions of change are important in and of themselves since they invite each of us, young and old, to reflect on how we may be complicit in those changes. Secondly, we highlight that some strands of change seem to contradict others. Instead of seeking to 'iron out' those tensions, we lay out these 'strings' one-by-one to emphasise that the constructions of girlhood over time are both multiple and complex.

Finally, we are cautious about hooking into a particular analytical framework through which to explain the descriptions. This echoes aspects of Abbott's (2007) 'lyrical sociology' insofar as the aim is to communicate the description of changes, rather than to explain them. Thus, we do not go as far as suggesting causal explanations for these changes in girlhoods, nor do we suggest that Girl Guiding is itself a causal or catalytic site of these changes. However, we do raise potential questions about the relationship between our observed changes and wider social shifts over the past hundred years, as a way of beginning to tap into understanding the shifting ontological and epistemological nature of girlhood itself.

This descriptive approach to the changes may frustrate readers, but to the best of our knowledge, the changes are not simply explained away through a single causal narrative. For instance, we had wanted initially to map the observed changes onto the social studies of

childhood literature, but as we show, the findings do not neatly echo the changes told within that body of work. Similarly, we considered approaching Girl Guiding through the histories of feminism. And this can be done, but only to a point. The origins of guiding certainly corresponded with the first wave of feminism and gains were made for both when notions of gender were challenged by girls' and women's active, self-reliant war effort (Voeltz, 1992). With the rise of second-wave feminism in the 1960s, and Britain was undergoing profound social change more widely, youth membership of militaristic leader-driven uninformed groups began to fall (Gledhill, 2013). Gledhill reports that Guiding responded to these changes pro-actively by inviting and acting on the views of their members, and thus thoroughly thrived. This consumerist-based shift (a trend that has continued) resulted in 'modernised' and 'commodified' Guiding, that permitted gendered teenage popular culture (McRobbie and Garber, 1975) to permeate its boundaries by normalising members' concerns with, for example, fashion and cosmetics (Gledhill, 2013).

By the 1970s, and with a greater concern for gender equality, a small number of girls were once again insisting on a place within the Scouts (Mills, 2011), and this time enjoyed some success, eventually culminating in a 1990 ruling from the UK body that local Scouts could optionally accept girls (though Mills reports some accommodations were made to allay anxieties about mixed-sex camping).² The Girl Guides Association (GGA) did not welcome the co-ed ruling, and has remained resolutely a female-only organisation. In this way, the GGA can be said to have resisted third-wave feminist notions of gender fluidity and continues to celebrate its female-only identity in ways that resonate more with second-wave goals. For example, the GGA site informs visitors that Guides offers a space where girls can 'be themselves'; it does not add 'away from boys' but the hetero-patriarchal implication is clear.³ In other ways, though, Guiding embraces aspects of the hybrid (Gillis and Munford,

2004) third-wave notions of ‘girl power’ and reproduces psychologised discourses of empowerment (Gill, 2016). For these reasons and more, as will be illustrated below, the empirical observations detailed below do not neatly echo the various punctuated ‘waves’ of feminism either.

This is not to say that the histories of childhood and feminism are unrelated to the changes in girlhood that we describe. Rather, we argue that, at least insofar as girlhood is represented through Girl Guide handbooks, the changing constructs of girlhood are a lot ‘messier’ than tends to be suggested in the existing childhood or feminist literatures. Indeed, we suggest that there are important, albeit subtle, nuances in how girls and girlhood are represented over time, which involve strands of continuity that are seemingly antagonistic to some of the changes that take place over the same period of time. Whilst social change rarely happens in crisp, discrete episodes, these three stringy strands of change both complement and disrupt some of the linear narratives of social change, illustrating the multiplex of changes that have *co-occurred together*.

The Study

Girl Guide handbooks were accessed from the National Archives, which were located in London at the time. This allowed access to *all* available handbooks published between 1910 and 2011, including multiple, abridged and reprint editions that had appeared in some years. Handbooks tend to be published annually, especially since the 1980s, but not always. In total, then, 87 handbooks were examined, one by one, at the Archive itself. We did this using qualitative content analysis, often colour-coding by hand. The process consisted of three main features: (i) focusing on recurring or different themes and/or images as way of building up a

broad thematic analysis of the content of the handbooks; (ii) paying attention to both the 'form and content' of the handbooks (Savage 2007); and (iii) treating the text 'traces' of girlhood within a particular social context and time rather than real descriptions of what girls actually were or are. We use the term 'traces' here as Byrne (1998:36) does for variables, which he describes as follows:

I use the word traces because it implies both incompleteness and that something dynamic is going on. Things are changing and leave marks of those changes. The dynamic systems which are our cases leave traces for us, which we can pick. We can, as it were, track them, and we can infer from the traces what it was that left them.

(Byrne 1998: 36)

We approached the handbooks as 'socially situated products' (Scott 1990: 34), thereby acknowledging, as Atkinson and Coffey 1996: 55) put it, that 'Documents do not stand alone'. The handbooks are of interest here not so much about 'what they reveal about the teller's interests, perspectives and presuppositions' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:160). Nor were we directly concerned with the trustworthiness of the documents as a representation of reality (see Burgess 1984), though, of course, this was considered. Rather, we relied upon the 'unstated meaning structures' of documents (Cicourel 1964) as potential sources of information. As Platt (1981: 53) nicely sums up, 'A document's meaning cannot be understood unless one knows what genre it belongs to, and what this implies for its interpretation.'

Guiding handbooks were and still are produced for the Guiding programme within the United Kingdom (although arguably also connected in complicated ways to Guiding's imperial origins (Alexander, 2012). Handbooks are also used by girls participating in British Guides in

Foreign Countries (BGIFC), so that those living abroad can join in with their ‘home’ Guiding rather than that of their host country, if one is available. This generally means that the handbooks are intended for an international English-speaking audience, although translations into other languages now exist. There are some local / national nuances in the handbooks worldwide, which would be interesting to explore further. However, here we deal only with the British ones, archived in the Girl Guide Association, and written for British Girl Guiding.

Girls as increasingly incompetent and vulnerable *children*, not adults

A first strand, we suggest, involves an explicit acknowledgement that children need to experience ‘challenge’ and ‘adventure’ as *children*, rather than as ‘future adults’. In the more recent publications, especially the ones from 2003 onwards, there is a strong emphasis on children being qualitatively different from adults. This is especially seen in the simpler language, the larger font, the reduction of text, more images and bigger, simpler ones too, which are *not* found in the older handbooks. What exactly the contrast between the small black and white print of the older handbooks and modern handbooks in itself reflects about childhood is difficult to say. Nevertheless, the apparent move towards ‘packaging girlhood’ (Lamb and Brown 2007) as ‘pink’ seems to be symbolic of some wider changes concerned with female consumption and sexuality within contemporary society (Kearney 2010; Russell and Tyler 2002; Sparke 2005).

Thus, whilst the core principles and values of guiding have hardly changed over time, the activities through which these values are ‘performed’ (Goffman 1959) have. These changes raise ambiguities about how ‘girlhood’ has evolved and how girls’ ‘competency’ has altered. The notion of ‘competency’ is a recurring discussion in the educational and especially

childhood sociological literature (Christensen and James 2000; James et al 1998; Lee 2002), mainly because it is also associated, implicitly and explicitly, with various constructions of childhood and adulthood. Lee (2002) and others suggest, 'competency' has typically been associated with 'adults', and 'incompetency' with 'children'. Yet, as Lee (2002) has also argued persuasively, the notion of 'competency' does not depend on whether one is a child or an adult, but rather on the specific context an individual faces. In other words, it is not that children are 'incompetent' and adults are 'competent', but that both children and adults are more or less (in)competent depending on the actual context and tasks being accomplished within a specific time and space.

Whilst we agree with Lee's theorization of competency, we suggest that something more complex is at play: however girls have been constructed as children, at least insofar as the Guiding handbooks portray change, girls are much more *in*competent than they used to be. Contemporary representations of girlhood depict girls not only as more incompetent than adults, but *they are even more incompetent than their similarly aged female predecessors*.

We say this for three main reasons. Firstly, an obvious change in the handbooks over time is their size: they are bigger and thicker. In terms of the content, the font size increases so much that one might be forgiven to conclude that readers had increasingly become partially sighted. Additionally, a growing proportion of pages take up space for graphics (charts, pictures, etc.). The substance of the material conveyed to the reader includes 'extras' as lists of exercises or bullet-point summaries. All these seldom appear in the older texts, but are common in the newest ones.

We find a real break in the typical length of new texts, with noticeably longer ones starting to appear in the late 1980s. This may well be due to decreasing publishing costs or with the rise of the personal PC. An unintended consequence of the larger social changes at play nevertheless remains: girls are, over time, seen to need much, much bigger writing to read, simpler language, and sets of bulleted instructions that they can easily follow. In turn, implicitly at least, contemporary readers are rendered less able, less competent, less literate than their same aged predecessors.

Secondly, the activities involved in being a Girl Guide have changed considerably. For instance, tasks in the older publications include such things as: knowing and understanding Morse code and semaphore; being able to recognise eighteen common English trees; knowing in detail the legends of the patron saints of the United Kingdom; being able to tie and know the use of at least four knots; and how to cook full meals⁴ (Baden-Powell, 1912; Potts, 1944). Activities in the newer books include: baking snacks (not meals), emphasising the need for adult supervision (a point we will return to shortly); designing one's dream bedroom; finding ways to reuse rubbish, and; making simple jewellery. That is, some activities get 'deleted', some remain but are done differently or to a lesser extent, and other new things have been added.

Whilst interesting in themselves, the activities say something more important about girlhood and the expectations around girls' competencies. Not only are the activities different, but we suggest that many are also comparatively *easier*. It is possible that the ways in which we correlate an activity with the level of competency required to conduct it says more about our *own* (in)competencies than that of 'girls' per se. Yet any classification, however precise or imprecise it is considered to be, is always subject to an ongoing recursivity between the

object and naming and construction of the object, which are always historically contextual (Hacking 1999). In turn, our interpretations about the activities and the associated level of competency required to complete them are in themselves interesting, since they reflect the ways in which *we* - as researchers situated at a particular point in time - view the activities now.

Notwithstanding the issue about how competency is evaluated, it is not simply that the activities themselves have changed; the actual *form* that these activities take has altered as well. At the same time as some activities disappear and new ones are introduced, there are a number of activities that have continued to remain important to Guiding throughout the Girl Guide Movement. These are activities that may be typically associated with guiding and scouting, such as camping, tracking, orienteering and tying knots, although there are changes to how frequently they are referred in the handbooks. The highest number of references to these kinds of activities is found in the 1910 publication, the oldest in this study. In that handbook, the foundations of Girl Guiding were deliberately laid out to closely follow the programme devised a few years earlier for the Boy Scout Movement. These traditional activities are also referred to in later publications (1968, 2003a, 2003b), and they have remained important activities today.

Yet, there is an important contrast: overwhelmingly, the main difference between the older handbooks and the more recent ones is that there is an emphasis on the *safety* aspect of any activity being undertaken, which was absent in the older books. Issues of child safety and a focus on the protection of children are now enshrined in rules and regulations, and this applies to the adults too. The adult ‘guidance’ that they used to be seen to require in the older handbooks has been transformed into adult ‘supervision’ in the more recent handbooks. In

turn, children's 'competency' can be said to have changed along with their freedom to be and become autonomous individuals who are not always needy of adult supervision.

At the same time, by making health and safety training compulsory for all those involved in the 'supervision' of guiding activities, we argue that it is not just a matter of competency but also of a shifting notion of children's *vulnerability* and need for protection. As such, the safeguarding policies in the latest regulations note that: 'It is the policy of Girlguiding to make every effort to safeguard its members from physical, sexual and emotional harm while participating in guiding activities' (The Guiding Manual, 2015).

The assumption that children are in need of 'supervision', 'protection', because they are increasingly 'vulnerable' and 'at risk', is one that a number of authors have noted (see Zelizer 1994, Rosier 2009, Corsaro 2015). Conversely, Qvortrup (1991) has also raised the question about the extent to which adults' 'protection' of children masks a need to control them. There is a fine line between recognising children as being in need of adult supervision and protection, and the infantilization of children in general. It is a tricky balance to get right, especially over time when notions of what it means to be 'adult' or a 'parent' are also changing.

Some readers may quite rightly retort that it is of course important to protect children from physical, sexual and emotional harm; and we absolutely agree. Our point is that, as policies have changed over time, so too have the constructions of both childhood and adulthood; they have changed to such an extent that the relationship between adults and children has shifted too. Both previously and currently, adults are assumed to be needed, for example, to put a plaster on a children's finger in case the child accidentally cuts him or herself whilst preparing food. Nowadays, though, adult supervision is also assumed to be necessary to

protect children from ‘physical, sexual and emotional harm’. Furthermore, the adults are trained to be vigilant about children being ‘at risk’ *beyond* the Guiding setting. This places the onus on the adult to be there because children are seen as less competent but also more vulnerable.

This is not to conflate vulnerability with competency; they are different things. However, the fact that the handbooks show that adult supervision is more and more necessary over time does seem to imply that children ‘need’ greater supervision. Whether the greater supervision needed is because children are seen more vulnerable or less competent or need greater guidance is a moot point. Adults are still there to guide and steer the children, but the extent to which they are ‘protecting and supervising’ has changed both qualitatively and quantitatively. This is not unique to children or to Girlguiding. As Franckenberg et al. (2000: 593) note, ‘feelings or attributions of vulnerability appeared to shift, often relatively rapidly between those involved, as social situations developed in one setting, or as settings changed’. Based on the representations of girls in the handbooks, modern Girl Guides are therefore constructed as being more vulnerable and in need of far more protection than they used to be.

Girls (not boys) being, becoming?

A second strand of change relates to girls not being boys and what it means for a girl to ‘grow up’. That is to say, there is a move from being ‘not boys’, where boys and girls are binary opposites, to girls having their own distinct needs and rights that may or may not be related to boys. Relatedly, whilst ‘girls becoming women’ remains a consistent theme, the kinds of women they are assumed to become varies over time. There is also sense that girls are seen to be beings in their own right *and* future becomings (Author B 2008), thereby disrupting the

mainstream history of childhood insofar as girlhood ends up as being about both the present and the future simultaneously.

From the outset, the Guiding Movement marked a significant step in acknowledging girls as beings in their own right, with their own specific needs and desires. Here, we see a history of Girl Guiding riddled with explicit and implicit assumptions of what is 'right' and 'appropriate' for girls. Importantly, the roots of the Girl Guide Movement actually stem directly from girls standing together as a 'non-boy' group. Like many objects of social knowledge, Girl Guiding emerged from that which it was not, rather than that which is. Thus, what we see over time is an onus on childhood activities, but ones that *increasingly actively demarcate girls from boys* - or rather more accurately, boys and non-boys, who happen to be girls.

The irony is uncanny. The term 'Girl Guides' (as opposed to Girl *Scouts*) was specifically chosen by Baden-Powell, who decided on the name after the corps of guides in India who were 'distinguished for their general handiness and resourcefulness under difficulties and their keenness and courage' (WAGGGS, 1992, p. 7). The 'most competent' Guides were precisely those involved in the Movement in its original form, which perhaps not coincidentally, was also when Guides were most 'symmetrically opposite' to Boy Scouts. Hence, when the construction of the Girl Guide was essentially the binary opposition (see Derrida 1979, 1981) of Boy Scouts, girls were *more* competent and *less* vulnerable than they later became, when they were recognised as girls in and of themselves with desires and needs of their own. Hence, in the early 1900s, the first Girl Guides were assumed to be able and willing to do *all* that the boys had been doing. This changed as Guiding took on its more feminised trajectory away from the Boy Scouts.

Although we do not explore the changes in masculinity and boyhood, we assume that these are not unrelated to changing constructions of girlhood. As Reay (2001, pp. 153-154) suggests, '[t]here is co-dependence between femininities and masculinities which means that neither can be fully understood in isolation of the other.' Hence, although Girl Guiding and Boy Scouts change together over time, the way they have interacted together is rather staggered. There are distinct periods of change that have as much to do with the wider social context as they do with the way particular aged boys and girls are perceived to be able to interact together at all.

Hence, the story of girlhood depicted in the handbooks is one of girls-*not*-being-boys, who 'therefore' also need to be taught these 'masculine' pursuits as well as the more 'feminine' ones of sewing and housework; and who ultimately become more and more 'girly' (and less like boys or have anything to do with boys), as time goes by. Thus, the teaching of 'boys' activities', such as emergency rescue and first aid, is justified in the older books by arguing that '[w]omen in the future will be called upon to take the place of men in very many different spheres of activity' (Baden-Powell, 1917, p. 13). That is, it is not merely that the girls are constructed as 'beings' in their own right, but their girlhood is one that is in a constant dialectic with what it also is to not-be-a-boy. By the 1940s onwards, activities that are explicitly described as girls' activities' prevail. They include such things as housework, cooking and childcare. These activities also appear in the most recent books, but to a much lesser extent.

At the same time, though, there was an onus on the future women the girls would become, echoing the old sociology of childhood paradigm whereby children were almost entirely seen as 'becomings' - as future adults (Qvortrup 1994). Guiding, after all, developed precisely

with a focus on young girls becoming tomorrow's women. This is present throughout all the handbooks, even if what it means to become a woman changes too. We might say that, in this strand, the very essence of 'being' a girl is inextricably linked to 'becoming an adult woman' - along with a host of stereotypical heteronormative assertions.

Girls are essentially portrayed as future wives and mothers: in the early days of Guiding, a Guide's main priority in life was 'obtaining a husband' (Baden-Powell, 1917) and 'to get girls to learn how to be women – self-helpful, happy, prosperous, and capable of keeping good homes and of bringing up good children' (Baden-Powell and Baden-Powell, 1912, p.vii). Robert Baden-Powell was very clear about what he thought Girl Guides needed to be about and the kinds of things members needed to do. He even argued that Girl Guides were actually more important than Boy Scouts, because if girls learned the 'right' skills when young, they could later guide their husbands and children when in adulthood (Wade, 1971; see also Pilcher, 2007).

Paradoxically, then, although the girls who joined the Scout movement because they wanted to do what the boys were doing, girlhood via Guiding quickly became first and foremost considered to be about 'becoming a woman'. And becoming a woman in the 1917 publication explains that guiding is about 'helping the rising generation of girls to fit themselves for their life in the future' (Baden-Powell, 1917, p.8) and aiming to 'make efficient women citizens, good housekeepers and mothers' (p.22). Over fifty years later, the 1968 handbook (Brimelow, 1968) still hosts the second highest number of references to these kinds of suggestions. In some ways, this is understandable since the contemporary culture of girlhood is intimately connected to that of womanhood (see Marshall 2000; McRobbie 2004).

Conversely, there is also a recognition that the kind of woman a girl becomes is influenced by the kind of girl she is being today (see McRobbie 2004).

Later in the 1970s, the focus moves away from housework (as there had been the development of 'labour saving devices') and onto more 'light-hearted' 'homely' activities, such as 'being a model hostess', making the most of objects and being artistic within one's home. The role of the future woman as a 'home-maker' is still apparent, even if what girls are taught to achieve this differs. For example, although girls continue to learn cooking and caring skills, the recipes change significantly from ones for main courses to ones for 'little easy snacks'.

Being a Girl Guide means having to negotiate these various dimensions of being a girl who is also becoming a woman, and indeed being a particular kind of girl becoming a particular kind of woman within a particular cultural context (eg. Currie et al. 2006; Harris 2004; Reay 2001). As Harris (2000, p.20) notes, 'Growing up "right" has always been a highly managed process for girls in order for particular forms of gender relations to be maintained.' Yet, from the early 1900s through to the 1980s, we see a gradual shift from children as 'becomings' to children as 'beings' (see James *et al.* 1998; James and Prout 1997, Qvortrup 1994). Uprichard sums this up as follows:

Briefly, the 'being' child is seen as a social actor in his or her own right, who is actively constructing his or her own 'childhood', and who has views and experiences about being a child; the 'becoming' child is seen as an 'adult in the making', who is lacking universal skills and features of the 'adult' that they will become.

(Uprichard, 2008: 304)

Thereafter, the empirical data suggests a relationship between 'being' to 'becoming' that is a lot more nuanced than that portrayed in the theoretical histories of childhood. Instead of girls merely 'becoming' women, in the last decade especially, we increasingly see girls as always and constantly both *being and becoming*.

Throughout its existence, Girl Guiding has provided 'non-formal education where girls and young women develop leadership and life skills through self-development, challenge and adventure' (WAGGGS 2016). Its core values still place a great deal of importance on the kind of woman a girl becomes, but the temporal balance between the present child and the future adult has shifted. A key mission statement of the current World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts is 'to enable girls and young women to develop their fullest potential as responsible citizens of the world' (WAGGGS, 2016) – as present and future citizens, not simply future adult citizens. The onus is on the temporality of 'being' a child in the present who is always becoming an 'adult' with a shift from the 'becoming' child to the 'being and becoming' child (Author B). That is to say, there are new activities for making children's beauty face-masks and jewellery in the more recent handbooks but there also remains an emphasis that Guiding 'prepares' children for the future. This is a subtle and important shift.

Conclusion

Amidst the above changes, there is also that which does not alter: our third and final strand of change is one of continuity. For example, whatever the activities, whatever the representations of girls and girlhood, one of the main aims of guiding was – and still is – that children *enjoy* themselves. There is a consensus about what this might generally involve, which is frozen in time, as Wade captures here:

There are things about Baden-Powell's Movement, whether for boys or girls, that are timeless and changeless – and they are the real things. [...] On the whole, young people remain much the same, basically, as they have always been. (Wade, 1971, p. 17)

The notion that childhood 'remains the same' resonates with Qvortrup's (2004) and James and James' (2004) discussion on 'childhood' as singular and permanent, referring to a structural social category whereby individual children have a number of characteristics in common (Qvortrup, 1994, p. 5). In contrast, what we have described throughout the paper is a notion of childhoods as plural – thereby acknowledging that the 'temporal location in generational history means that its character, nonetheless changes over time' (James and James, 2004, p. 20). In other words, both childhood and girlhood are both enduring and changeable, but of course what stays the same and what changes is itself subject to potential transformation.

As such, changes in girlhood can only be understood through an appreciation of wider social structural changes. The ways in which these representations have been affected by how Girl Guiding has changed within the wider cultural changes as well, including the rise of feminism and the 1960s counter-culture, is of interest here as well. Of particular significance are two huge shifts, which according to Harris (2004, p.6) play an important part in understanding the shifting constructions of girls and young women:

First, changed economic and work conditions bined [sic] with the goals achieved by feminism have created new possibilities for young women. Successful campaigns for the expansion of girls' education and employment have coincided with a restructured global economy and a class/gender system that now relies heavily on young women's labor. Second, new ideologies about individual responsibility and choices also

dovetail with some broad feminist notions about opportunities for young women, making them the most likely candidates for performing a new kind of self-made subjectivity.

(Harris 2004, p.6)

Throughout the paper, we have hinted at hypothetical causal explanations to understand the changing depictions of girlhood reflected in the handbooks. But the shifting nature of girlhood is a very difficult story to unpack at the level of cause and meaning and it is not something that we have wanted to do lightly.

This cautionary note regarding the causal analytical framework used to interpret the observed changes is not merely an ethical one. It is also an epistemological one. Although we are using archival material to explore the changing notions of girlhood over time, we are not insinuating that these observations reflect the voices of the girls or woman involved in Girl Guiding. This is a point that Alexander (2012) and others such as Spivak have made well. Hence, although we use archival material as a way of exploring social change, we do not assume that this speaks for the girls (and women). On the contrary, the documents only help to hint at change. Ideally, we would like to present these findings to young girls and older women and invite them to reflexively challenge the data and write in their own explanations about the changes, thereby re-turning to the beginning of the history of Girl Guiding itself.

That said, we have nevertheless begun to articulate some of the stringy strands of change that need to be understood together as co-occurrences over time. This is therefore a paper that signals the beginning of a much needed larger project on the changing constructions of childhood more generally. Furthermore, we have acknowledges the possibility of a more

complex stringy story of change, where girls experience multiple kind of girlhoods, and ideally live to become women, however ‘girlhood’ and ‘womanhood’ are being and becoming re-constructed. In effect, the Girl Guide Movement was used here as a way into exploring some of these issues.

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1. The capitalisation of the term reflects the institutionalisation of the girl guiding itself, as well as the formalisation of the movement.
 2. The optionality of the 1990 ruling was overturned in 2010, making the Scouts a mixed-sex organization.
 3. Defending the girl-only policy in 2011, Claire Cohen, a spokesman for Girlguiding UK was reported as saying, ‘We strongly believe that in today's world there remains a vital role for such a space, where girls can be themselves during a formative time in their lives without the pressures of having boys around’ (Daily Mail: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1356075/Teenage-boy-wanted-join-Girl-Guides-accuses-organisation-sexual-discrimination-turned-away.html#ixzz4Ja2yfWJF>).
 4. Indeed, the third author remembers achieving her cookery badge in the 1970s by cooking a three-course meal and presenting it to ‘judges’ – an elderly couple and strangers to her – in their own home.

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