

A “Social Frontier”: Boy Scouts, Progressive Education, and the Turner Thesis

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FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER’S “frontier thesis,” presented in 1893, described the frontier as the lifeblood of American ideals and warned that the frontier’s closing would mean the factors that once enabled America to prosper could no longer be relied on in the century ahead.¹ Turner’s thesis gave expression to uncertainties about the negative effects of America’s urbanization as the expanse of resource-rich land fueling its national success was disappearing. Boy scouting was shaped by a similar nostalgia for the vanishing frontier as well as a “crisis of masculinity” arising from the anxiety that frontier discipline would no longer rub off on the youth of an increasingly urbanized culture.² The scouting movement was inspired by a set of progressive reformers whose diagnoses of urban “degeneracy” and prescribed remedies were shaped through debate over Turner’s thesis and its meaning for post-frontier life. The Boy Scouts in their formative years attempted to establish a virtual, “reconstructed frontier” as a substitute for the lost geographic frontier.³ However, the evolution of Boy Scout character education between 1908 and 1940 mirrored changes in the frontier thesis itself, reflecting a rapid transformation of the frontier’s “rugged individualism” into a “corporate individualism” more aligned with the bureaucracies of managerial capitalism and the regulatory state.⁴ By 1920, scouts were already moving away from nostalgic re-enactment of settler life towards engaging the new “social frontier” of the 20th century.

The origins of scouting are traditionally identified with the “Three Uncles” of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and their forerunner organizations: Ernest Thompson Seton’s “Woodcraft Indians” founded in 1902, Daniel Carter Beard’s “Sons of Daniel Boone” in 1905, and Robert Baden-Powell’s “Scout Association” in 1908.⁵ This era, extending

through World War I, featured competing models of manhood, each offering a unique take on virile primitivism, anti-modern nostalgia, nativist patriotism, and martial preparation. However, the war had profound effects on scouting in Britain and America. The conflict exhausted Britain, threatening its empire while turning the public away from scouting's more militaristic aspects.⁶ Meanwhile, the war thrust America into greater international prominence, ending its isolationism and transforming it into a serious military and economic power.⁷ The period also marked the culmination of a "corporate reconstruction of American capitalism,"⁸ in which monopolies and large conglomerates displaced small businesses, focusing on uniformity, coordination, and expert control over the individualistic, competitive, and democratic values of smaller market-based industries. The BSA's wartime success in symbolizing the nation's old values while signaling its new direction proved to be a great recruiting boon. The United States by 1920 had more scouts than the rest of the world combined.⁹ With American dominance over scouting came a new emphasis on corporate values like obedience, efficiency, and scientific management.¹⁰

Like other organizations devoted to "boys' work," the Boy Scouts originated to combat urban "juvenile delinquency." Rooted in the same Social Gospel movement as older Boys' Clubs and YMCA groups, scouting shared a similar focus on camping and other "fresh air" activities, athleticism, physical hygiene, and patriotic duty.¹¹ As the frontier diminished, many children were affected by the grim conditions of urban poverty and often had no access to parks or schools.¹² Reformers also worried that the growing consumer society was leading the nation's youth astray and corrupting their moral character. BSA co-founder Ernest Thompson Seton described these deteriorating conditions in blunt terms: "money grubbing, machine politics, degrading sports, cigarettes, town life of the worst kind, false ideals, moral laxity, and lessening church power, in a word 'city rot' has worked evil in this nation."¹³ As a solution to moral decay, reformers proposed schools or foster care to oppose the negative effects of urbanization and redirect children's energy into positive contributions to their community. However, the seemingly beneficial nature of school was not without its own problems. Institutional schooling also undermined some of the importance of parents in child development. Children sequestered in schools received a traditional education without developing the physical vigor and practical skills that could be gained by working alongside their parents.¹⁴

The Boy Scouts were not alone in tackling such challenges, but their approach was unique in viewing these issues through the lens of the frontier thesis. Like Turner, the scouting movement tied its progressive remedies

for civilization's ills directly to the values of the frontier and the threat of its disappearance. Fundamentally, scouting proposed to preserve the spirit of democratic individualism by institutionalizing the themes, imagery, and practical disciplines of frontier life into a kind of adolescent role-playing game.¹⁵ In the beginning, the Boy Scouts' interest in frontier role play was both serious and literal, especially under the influence of Seton, its "Chief Scout."¹⁶ Seton's Woodcraft Indians offered a comprehensive character education curriculum built around nostalgic games of "playing Indian" popular after the end of the frontier Indian Wars.¹⁷ His experiential learning program elaborated similar Native American role play at the Chicago Laboratory School run by the famous philosopher and pedagogue, John Dewey. The resemblance between Seton's woodcraft program and the Dewey School's experimental education was not superficial. Seton's ideas were inspired by the "racial recapitulation" theory of psychologist G. Stanley Hall, father of the "child-study movement."¹⁸ In fact, Hall was a teacher and mentor of Dewey's.¹⁹ Hall also served as advisor to the BSA at its founding,²⁰ while Dewey sat on the board that developed the BSA's Cub Scouting program in 1928, implementing an Indian-themed program for younger boys patterned on Seton's vision.²¹

Seton's approach resonated with Robert Baden-Powell, the originator of the Boy Scouts in Britain and the leading co-founder of the worldwide scouting movement.²² Baden-Powell was a general in the British Army and had grown up in a world shaped by Britain's imperial frontier.²³ Like Seton, Baden-Powell thought children were growing too complacent with modern day amenities and would be unfit to defend their homeland, should the need arise, because they no longer had to work to survive on the frontier. After returning to Britain, he saw young boys on the streets, uneducated, unproductive, and susceptible to "degenerate" behavior, and he believed the root cause was a lack of hardy outdoor experiences.²⁴ Baden-Powell used his experience as a soldier, spy, and scout in British India and South Africa to create a scouting movement he felt would rejuvenate the Empire. He relied on the frontier as inspiration for everything from the khaki scout uniforms to the movement's central games and rituals. His 1908 book, *Scouting for Boys*, drew heavily on his own military experience in the Second Afghan and Boer Wars as well as Seton's woodcraft instruction.²⁵

Beyond camping and woodcraft, Baden-Powell also included activities with a militarist quality focused more on spying and scouting.²⁶ His formula proved to be wildly popular, and within a year, Baden-Powell's bestseller exploded into a global scouting movement. When it came to America in 1910 in the form of the BSA, Seton and Beard quickly folded their own groups into the new organization to survive.²⁷ Baden-Powell's

militaristic approach captured the magic of woodcraft and nature study, but avoided the increasingly unpopular anti-modern nostalgia of Seton's Indians and Beard's Pioneers. Furthermore, scouting was just as useful for training boys to work productively in bureaucratic office jobs as to fight honorably for their homeland.²⁸ Captains of industry lined up to sponsor Baden-Powell's more business-friendly model of modern masculinity.

Baden-Powell's symbolism of the "war scout" cross-fertilized the American and British experiences of frontier imperialism, producing a sort of hybrid vigor that captured the Western imagination while channeling its aggressive energies into "civilized" activity. Imperial leaders like Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson embraced scouting as eagerly as they had latched onto Turner's thesis decades before. Just as Roosevelt had elevated Turner's thesis into a national myth to justify his own imperial politics,²⁹ Roosevelt's early BSA endorsement helped merge the fledgling organization into his ethos of the "strenuous life" and the frontier myth of national destiny embodied in his personality cult. Wilson's commitment to the frontier thesis was deeper even than Roosevelt's, as was his personal connection to Turner. Turner was a friend, student, and roommate of Wilson's, and his thesis inspired the aims of Wilson's foreign policy. The President portrayed his administration's military interventionism in Turnerian terms as a mission to pacify the nation's new global frontier so that the world could be "made safe for democracy."³⁰ Roosevelt bestowed prestige upon the BSA, but Wilson offered it greater purpose and power. He secured a rare federal charter for the BSA in 1916, granting it semi-public legal status along with monopoly rights over all branding using the word "scout." In exchange, the BSA became an enthusiastic promoter of Wilson's democratic expansionism, collaborating with his controversial wartime propaganda organization, the Committee on Public Information, to sell European war at home and American peace abroad.

BSA effectiveness in evoking its frontier brand imagery obscured its steady embrace of bureaucratic values and increasingly single-minded pursuit of scientific analysis, corporate-style management, and efficient group cooperation. Seton's animal stories and native nature lore were quietly scrubbed and replaced by study topics written by expert committees and government scientists.³¹ Councils instituted a "credit system" of efficiency contests to track individual and troop performance across all sorts of measures, from uniform compliance and dues payments to school grades, community service and meeting attendance. Whereas British Scouts tended to see character as an internal, holistic quality enriched through play, BSA progress-tracking methods "broke character development into segmented tasks, which could be evaluated by set proficiency standards and analyzed quantitatively."³² The BSA's badge

obsession, often disparaged by its British counterparts, further illustrated its inclinations to Taylorist management principles and Fordist production techniques. The BSA's rank and badge advancement scheme was designed to inspire character development by setting external personal achievement goals. Notably, new merit badges reflected professional skills and modern science and industry more than frontier disciplines. Badges introduced in the 1920s and 1930s included journalism, mechanical drawing, public speaking, and salesmanship, to name a few.³³

With its state-of-the-art advertising, public relations, and organizational management practices, the BSA outpaced its British rival in youth recruitment and fundraising.³⁴ By any measure, the BSA's success was staggering. Between 1910 and 1930, one American boy out of every six was a registered scout at some point in his youth.³⁵ As the BSA executive board, led by James West,³⁶ achieved greater international visibility and recognition after 1920, Baden-Powell slowly began to lose control of global scouting. The BSA became the standard-bearer for scouting worldwide. However, Baden-Powell distrusted the BSA's bureaucratic direction and resented his marginalization within his own movement. Baden-Powell was especially alarmed at "West's fixation on bureaucratic control. As he saw it, the altruistic 'boy-men' in charge of scouting across the British Empire were more faithful to the idea of youth than West's army of 'hired men' could ever be. For Baden-Powell, American professionalism represented the artificiality of corporate culture..."³⁷

John Dewey articulated the differences characteristic of British and American scouting in terms of an "old individualism" of sole proprietors and solitary pioneers, versus a "new individualism" of corporate coordination and collective action. Turner himself noted that an "individualistic way of thinking...persists in the midst of a society that has passed away from the conditions that occasioned it...but with the passing of free lands a vast extension of the social tendency may be expected in America."³⁸ Dewey's version of the frontier thesis drew on Turner's neglected theme of the "social tendency," which he used to develop "a kind of inverted frontier thesis, invoking the western past to account for many of the negative effects of American civilization..."³⁹ Dewey agreed with Turner that the frontier was a crucible for forging a uniquely American character, but for Dewey, frontier habits were a source of American vice more than virtue. Dewey was especially critical of America's greed and "pecuniary culture."⁴⁰ The opportunism, competitiveness, and materialism that served pioneers well enough alone in the woods became antisocial evils for an urban nation lacking the frontier "safety valve of abundant resources"⁴¹ to lessen the destructive consequences of these tendencies. Dewey did not abandon the frontier

thesis but transformed it, turning it into a phase in the growth of humanity's capacities for making, breaking, and remaking habits: a function Dewey called "experimental intelligence."⁴²

Dewey took great interest in education and the frontier because of the role he believed both played in cultivating experimental intelligence. For Dewey, the frontier was a source of "problematic situations" that tested the fitness of European settlers' older cultural habits, forcing them to apply experimental intelligence to overcome new obstacles and improve themselves with habits better adjusted to life in a New World. With an end to the original frontier, experimental intelligence would have to arise out of the problematic situations of urban civilization, not backwoods isolation, spurred by the collective challenges facing an organized, interdependent society. Dewey believed that experiential education could reawaken in children the experimental intelligence needed to preserve society's democratic character by bringing into focus current problematic situations, replicating the functions but not the conditions of the old frontier.⁴³

Dewey's work revealed the profound transformations that had taken place in how Americans interpreted the significance of the frontier, and it also explained changes in how character education organizations like the BSA preserved and transmitted frontier values. At the same time, Dewey's writings tried to demonstrate the abiding democratic spirit and deep continuity between the old and new individualisms. In Dewey's view, "it is no longer a physical wilderness that has to be wrestled with. Our problems grow out of social conditions: they concern human relations rather than man's direct relationship to physical nature. The adventure of the individual...is an unsubdued *social frontier*."⁴⁴ There was no nostalgia in Dewey's views, and no doubt that America was entering a "socialist" age. The questions were only whether this socialism would be corporate or civic, whether its institutions would be organized to serve private interests or public ends, and whether America would be ruled by experts or citizens. These problematic situations of the social frontier would not be solved by the character formulas and old habits of tradition, but required collective experiment and active democratic participation to find new and improved ways of living together.

While the Boy Scouts failed to become the laboratory for radical democracy that Dewey might have wanted, the BSA was not just manufacturing mindless, corporate drones. Its moderate approach to character education weathered the ideological storms of the 1930s, avoiding many of the excesses of the fascist and communist youth movements.⁴⁵ It wrestled with its own competing democratic and technocratic impulses, but its aid to suffering communities in the Great Depression showed a genuine commitment to public service.⁴⁶ Just as

youth organizations like 4-H found success in modernizing America’s agricultural system and rural economy,⁴⁷ the BSA was most effective when remaining within its own middle-class socio-economic niche. In transforming a dispossessed but upwardly mobile urban citizenry into a modern “managerial class,” the BSA fulfilled its calling brilliantly, but ran astray whenever it tried to be all things to all people, or insisted that every American boy fit its mold.

Notes

1. John Mack Faragher, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 2.
2. See Jeffery P. Hantover, “The Boy Scouts and the Validation of Masculinity,” *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1978): 184-195; and J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).
3. Matthew Villeneuve, “Instrumental Indians: John Dewey and the Problem of the Frontier for Democracy in Indian Education, 1884-1959” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2021), 404.
4. Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1979), 128-139. See also Alfred D. Chandler, “The Emergence of Managerial Capitalism,” *The Business History Review*, vol. 58, no. 4 (Winter 1984), 473-503.
5. David I. Macleod, “Original Intent: Establishing the Creed and Control of Boy Scouting in the United States,” in *Scouting Frontiers: Youth and the Scout Movement’s First Century*, eds. Nelson R. Block and Tammy M. Proctor (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), 13.
6. Scott Johnston, “Looking Wide? Imperialism, Internationalism, and the Boy Scout Movement, 1918-1939” (Master’s thesis, University of Waterloo, 2012), 3-4.
7. Mischa Honeck, *Our Frontier Is the World: The Boy Scouts in the Age of American Ascendancy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 5-6.
8. Martin J. Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890-1916: The Market, the Law, and Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1.
9. Benjamin Rene Jordan, *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts of America: Citizenship, Race, and the Environment, 1910-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 40.
10. Jordan, *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts of America*, 11-12.
11. Jay Mechling, “Scouting,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, ed. Bron Taylor (New York: Continuum, 2005), 1505-1506. See also David MacLeod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, Y.M.C.A., and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).
12. Paula S. Fass, “How Americans Raise Their Children: Generational Relations from the Revolution to the Global World,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 159, No. 1 (March 2015): 85-94.

13. Ernest Thompson Seton, "The Boy Scouts in America," *Outlook* (July 23, 1910): 630.
14. David Nasaw, *Schooled to Order: A Social History of Public Schooling in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 10.
15. See Robert Baden-Powell. "Scouting is a Game, Not a Science" in *B-P's Outlook*. (Ottawa: National Council Boy Scouts of Canada, 1979), 135.
16. See H. Allen Anderson, *The Chief: Ernest Thompson Seton and the Changing West* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1986).
17. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 3.
18. Jacy L. Young, "G. Stanley Hall, Child Study, and the American Public," *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, vol. 177, no. 6 (2016): 195.
19. Ronald Kellum, "The Influence of Francis Wayland Parker's Pedagogy on the Pedagogy of John Dewey," *Journal of Thought*, vol. 18, no. 1 (Spring 1983), 80.
20. Jordan, *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts of America*, 60.
21. Ben Jordan, "Savages and the 'She Period': The Boy Scouts of America's Younger and Older Boy Problems" in *Scouting Frontiers: Youth and the Scout Movement's First Century*, eds. Nelson R. Block and Tammy M. Proctor (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), 169. See also Evelyn Dewey and John Dewey, *The Schools of Tomorrow* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1915), 90-92.
22. Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 139.
23. Harold Begbie, *The Story of Baden-Powell: The Wolf that Never Sleeps* (London: Grant Richards, 1900), 4-7.
24. Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present* (London: Basic Books, 1997), 204-213. See also Lauri Luoto, "Shaping alternative education for all: Baden-Powell's affiliation network of educational reformers, 1900-1939," *History of Education*, vol. 51, no. 4 (2022): 541-559.
25. See Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys: The Original 1908 Edition*, ed. Elleke Boehmer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
26. Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, 52-57. See also John Springhill. "Baden-Powell and the Scout Movement before 1920: Citizen Training or Soldiers of the Future?" *English Historical Review* 102 (1987): 934-42; Allen Warren, "Citizens of the Empire: Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guides and an Imperial Ideal, 1900-40" in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John Mackenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 232-253; and Anne Summers, "Scouts, Guides and VADs: A Note in reply to Allen Warren," *English Historical Review* 102, no. 405 (1987): 943-7.
27. Jordan, *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts*, 20-21.
28. See Martin Dedman, "Baden-Powell, Militarism and the Invisible Contributors to the Boy Scout Scheme, 1904- 1920" *Twentieth-century British History* 4, no.3 (1993): 201-203; Tammy Proctor, *On My Honour: Guides and Scouts in Interwar Britain* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002); and Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts and the Imperatives of Empire* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).
29. See Richard Slotkin, "Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier," in *American Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 5 (Winter 1981): 608-637.
30. Woodrow Wilson, "Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Germany (1917)," accessed March 3, 2023, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/address-to-congress-declaration-of-war-against-germany>.
31. Jordan, *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts*, 127.
32. Jordan, *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts*, 67.
33. Robert Terry, Jr., "Development and Evolution of Agriculturally Related Merit Badges Offered by the Boy Scouts of America," *Journal of Agricultural Education*,

vol. 54, no. 2 (2013), 74. See also: “1920-1933 Square Boy Scout Merit Badges,” BSA Insignia, accessed March 6, 2023, <http://www.bsainsignia.com/1920-1933boy-scout-merit-badges.html>.

34. Phillips, “Selling America,” 9.
35. Jordan, *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts*, 40.
36. See William D. Murray, *The History of the Boy Scouts of America* (New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1937).
37. Honeck, *Our Frontier Is the World*, 95-96.
38. Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” *Herbert Yearbook* (1899), 41. Quoted in N. Ray Hiner, “Herbartians, History, and Moral Education,” *The School Review*, vol. 79, no. 4 (August 1971), 594.
39. John Mack Faragher, “The Frontier Trail: Rethinking Turner and Reimagining the American West,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 98, no. 1 (February 1993): 106.
40. John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1999), 9.
41. Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 96.
42. John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920), 96.
43. See Evelyn Dewey and John Dewey, *The Schools of To-morrow* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1915).
44. Dewey, *Individualism Old and New*, 45-46. Emphasis mine.
45. Honeck, *Our Frontier Is the World*, 168-205.
46. Honeck, *Our Frontier Is the World*, 183.
47. Sarah McColl, “The Complicated Growth of 4-H,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, July 26, 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/complicated-growth-4-h-180964191/>.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Baden-Powell, Robert. *B.-P.'s Outlook*. Ottawa: National Council Boy Scouts of Canada, 1979.

This book is a collection of Baden-Powell’s columns for the scouting magazine, *Outlook*. It is a valuable source of information on Baden-Powell’s views of scouting, as well as his understanding of world events.

———. *Scouting for Boys: The Original 1908 Edition*. Edited by Elleke Boehmer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Baden-Powell’s *Scouting for Boys* is the phenomenon that started it all. It is both an encyclopedia and instruction manual. Reading through it was a great way to get a sense of what it felt like to be a Boy Scout just over a century ago.

Boy's Life. Google Books. Accessed March 12, 2023. <https://books.google.com/books?id=2ThyM-8T1J4C&dq=Boy's+Life>.

This digital archive contains 102 volumes of the *Boys' Life* magazine, from 1911 to 2012, digitized by Google Books. My use of the archive consisted of scanning the covers to get an idea of the changing themes and interests in the period between 1911-1940 covered in my paper. For length reasons, I did not include these direct references to these materials in the final paper.

BSA Insignia. "1920-1933 Square Boy Scout Merit Badges." Accessed March 6, 2023. <http://www.bsainsignia.com/1920-1933boy-scout-merit-badges.html>.

I consulted this site to track when different badges were added to the BSA badge system. The site has a picture of each badge and notes when it was introduced or discontinued.

Dewey, Evelyn and John Dewey. *The Schools of To-morrow*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1915.

This book by John Dewey and his daughter is about why it is necessary that schools provide children with a comprehensive education so that they have the necessary information to be active members in society. One of the leading schools profiled is Seton's Little School in the Woods in Greenwich, Connecticut.

Dewey, John. "How Much Freedom in New Schools?" *The New Republic* (July 9, 1930).

This article, written in the prestigious magazine, *The New Republic*, provides some of the history of the progressive education movement from Dewey's perspective. He gives credit to Francis Wayland Parker as the "father of the progressive education movement." Parker was the principal at Dewey's laboratory school in Chicago.

———. *Individualism Old and New*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1999.

Dewey wrote several books discussing his views on the frontier thesis, but this is one of the major ones, where he compares the "old individualism" of the frontier with the "new individualism" of his own time: the social frontier.

———. *Reconstruction in Philosophy*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1920.

In this small but dense philosophical work, Dewey explains how "experimental intelligence" works, coming up with a theory of learning that influenced the "social reconstruction" approach to education.

James, William. *The Moral Equivalent of War and Other Essays*. Ed. John K. Roth. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

This book is a collection of James' political and social essays and is especially focused on his anti-imperialist views. James was a strong influence on Seton, who was also a pacifist and anti-imperialist. It was a good source for understanding James' views on pacifism and social reform, as well as his problems with popular frontier theorists like Theodore Roosevelt. Unfortunately, I did not have enough space to go into James' influence in the final draft of my paper.

———. *Talks to teachers on psychology: And to students on some of life's ideals*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1899.

This book compiles several lectures that William James delivered to college students—primarily women—preparing to become teachers. Ranging from 1895-1899, the lectures coincide with the growth of "normal schools" established to train teachers to serve America's expanding network of public schools. These talks are useful not only as an introduction to James' ideas in psychology (which are similar to his fellow pragmatist, John Dewey), but also as a guide for applying his psychology to issues in education.

———. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1985.

This book is one of James’ most famous works: a collection of his Gifford Lectures. Even though it is a psychology of religion, many of his ideas about habits and our capacities for free will and the ability to change our habits are contained in it. This is one of two works where James discusses the need to find a “moral equivalent of war,” which I discussed at greater length in a prior version of my essay.

Murray, William D. *The History of the Boy Scouts of America*. New York: Boy Scouts of America, 1937.

This book is sort of an early “official” history of the Boy Scouts, telling the story of how the Boy Scouts gained traction in America, morphed into the BSA, and established their relationship with the Boy Scouts in Britain. Its writer, William Murray, was active in BSA leadership during the early development of the Boy Scouts and was an eye witness to many of the formative events and decisions of its first three decades.

Parker, Francis. “The Child.” *Proceedings and Addresses of the National Education Association*, 1889.

This article records a speech given by Francis Parker in front of the National Education Association, describing the importance of children “playing Indian” and the benefits role play provides for childhood development and education. The connections to Hall’s theory of “racial recapitulation” are clear in the speech.

Roosevelt, Theodore. *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses*. New York: The Century Co., 1900.

Roosevelt’s famous speech, “The Strenuous Life,” presents Roosevelt’s popular version of Turner’s frontier thesis. Roosevelt’s adoption and adaptation of the thesis makes its racial presuppositions more explicit, providing a clear example of how the thesis was used to support racism, imperialism, and military build-up.

Scouting. University of North Texas Digital Projects Unit. <https://texashistory.unt.edu/>. (March 1917- May 1919).

This archive contains the digitized catalog of BSA’s official magazine, *Scouting*, which is a publication aimed at adult scout leaders. The magazines from 1917-1919 contain many of the photographs and feature stories developed by the Committee on Public Information to promote the Boy Scouts as “dispatch bearers” in Wilson’s public information effort and war bond campaign. The Boy Scouts sold 4.6 million Liberty Bond subscriptions, worth over \$5 billion in today’s dollars (according to historian Benjamin Jordan).

Seton, Ernest Thompson. *The Birch-Bark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians*. 5th ed. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1906.

Seton’s manual and news letter for Scouts and Scout-Leaders who participated in his organization “Woodcraft Indians,” it covers everything from how to run the Woodcraft Indians as a leader to how to participate and earn badges as well as any news amongst the organization.

———. “The Boy Scouts in America,” *Outlook* (July 23, 1910): 630-635.

This is an article in a magazine covering the first years of the Boy Scouts in America, written by one of the founders of the movement, Ernest Thompson Seton.

Seton, Ernest Thompson, et al. *The Official Handbook for Boys*. Irving, Texas: Boy Scouts of America, 1911.

Even though I did not directly use this primary source in my paper, it was a useful background for understanding the earliest days of the Boy Scouts of America. The executive board made several changes to later versions of the handbook, minimizing Seton's (but especially Baden-Powell's) original contributions, so it was important to be able to access the original vision of the Boy Scouts.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. Coppell, Texas: Okitoks Press, 2017.

This volume collects most of Turner's essays on the frontier, including his influential study, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." Since Turner's frontier thesis is one of the central topics of my paper, it was essential reading.

Troop 97 BSA. "BSA Handbooks." Accessed April 20, 2023. <https://www.troop97.net/handbooks.htm>.

This is an informative archival resource maintained by BSA Troop 97, based in Fort Collins, Colorado. The online archive records the history of 14 editions of the Boy Scout Handbook, with pictures of cover art as well as a table of contents of each edition. The site also provides a history and commentary on changes made from edition to edition. This was an especially helpful resource for understanding the major revisions made in the early years during the leadership struggles of the BSA.

Wilson, Woodrow. "Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Germany (1917)." Accessed March 3, 2023, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/address-to-congress-declaration-of-war-against-germany>.

This site is operated by the National Archives and contains a copy of Wilson's speech to Congress, requesting a declaration of war with Germany. It is often quoted, more often misquoted, so I wanted to make sure I had the full quotation about making the world safe for democracy.

Secondary Sources

Anderson, H. Allen. *The Chief: Ernest Thompson Seton and the Changing West*. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1986.

This is a thoroughly researched book about Ernest Thompson Seton's relationship with Native Americans and the incorporation of their spiritual rituals and activities into scouting and woodcraft.

Armitage, Kevin C. "The Child Is Born a Naturalist: Nature Study, Woodcraft Indians, and the Theory of Recapitulation." *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* vol. 6, no. 1 (January 2007): 43-70.

This academic essay discusses child psychology and its relationship to scouting through the lens of "racial recapitulation" theory. This is the idea that a child's personality and maturity follow that of human evolution. Recapitulation theory states that children are born savage and brutalistic cavemen who evolve later as they mature into adulthood.

Begbie, Harold. *The Story of Baden-Powell: The Wolf that never Sleeps*. London: Grant Richards, 1900.

An extensive biography of Robert Baden-Powell, this book covers his experience in Africa and the Second Boer War as well as his relationships with the indigenous tribes of Africa. This book was largely responsible for Baden-Powell’s frontier image as the war scout “hero of Mafeking.”

Block, Nelson R. and Tammy M. Proctor, *Scouting Frontiers: Youth and the Scout Movement’s First Century*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009.

This book broadly covers the scouting movement in its entirety, from its beginnings to the early 21st century, and discusses its influence on other youth movements around the world. I used several essays from the book, both to narrow down my topic and as references.

Boy Scouts of America. “Presidents of the United States and the Boy Scouts.” History of the BSA Fact Sheet. Accessed February 24, 2023. https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/210-531_WB.pdf.

This is a fact sheet that contains information about the relationship between US presidents and the Boy Scouts, including quotations. I used this secondary resource to learn more about Woodrow Wilson and the federal charter he granted the Boy Scouts of America.

Brogan, Hugh. *Mowgli’s Sons: Kipling and Baden-Powell’s Scouts*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1987.

I read this book to better understand the relationship, and friendship between Rudyard Kipling and Robert Baden-Powell, as well as better analyze *Scouting for Boys*, the manual used to teach Boy Scouts. Several of the war games, stories, and activities featured in the book reference, allude to, or incorporate Kipling’s work. Kipling was a mutual friend of Baden-Powell and Seton and was influential in them joining forces.

Chandler, Alfred D. “The Emergence of Managerial Capitalism.” *The Business History Review* vol. 58, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 473-503.

Chandler was a leading business management theorist at Harvard Business School. This article summarizes his views on why corporations and other large businesses like trusts arose to avoid competition and internalize economic markets.

Cronon, William, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin. “Becoming West: Toward a New Meaning for Western History.” *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Western Past*. Edited by William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin. New York: W.W. Norton, 1991.

This book examines work from prominent American western historians like Frederick Jackson Turner and analyzes the idea of a stalwart western pioneer, reimagining what the frontier was like for frontiersmen. This is one of the most influential texts of New Western History, challenging Turner’s original thesis.

Dedman, Martin. “Baden-Powell, Militarism and the Invisible Contributors to the Boy Scout Scheme, 1904-1920.” *Twentieth-century British History* 4, no.3 (1993): 201-203.

This article attempts to present a more nuanced and complex view of contemporary assessments of early Boy Scout history. The author acknowledges the militaristic elements that were present from the beginnings of the movement, but also places the movement in a broader historical context and argues that militarism was not the primary characteristic.

Deloria, Philip. *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

This book analyzes the common phenomenon of non-native people dressing up in Native American garb and “playing Indian.” Deloria examines all the fascinating reasons white people acted out Indian roles. This was especially important to understand, given the importance of playing Indian for the early Boy Scouts.

Ewen, Stuart. *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1976.

This book dives deep into, and critiques capitalism and consumer culture throughout America as well as the advertising industry’s use of it to influence the masses. It gave me a good introduction into the history of advertising and public relations and helped me understand its impact on the Boy Scouts.

Fallace, Thomas. “The savage origins of child-centered pedagogy, 1871–1913.” *American Educational Research Journal* 52: 1 (2015): 73-103.

In this article by Thomas Fallace, he argues that child-focused education like scouting and outdoor education was created directly out of the theory of racial recapitulation.

Faragher, John Mack. “The Frontier Trail: Rethinking Turner and Reimagining the American West.” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 98, no. 1 (February 1993): 106-117.

This is a book review in which the author reviews five books published in the early 1990s that cover Turner’s frontier thesis. It was a good way to get a broad overview of how several different historians engaged with this famous thesis a hundred years later.

———. *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

This is essentially a republishing of Fredrick Jackson Turner’s writings on the frontier thesis with commentary from modern historians about the role it plays in today’s environment.

Fass, Paula S. “How Americans Raise Their Children: Generational Relations from the Revolution to the Global World.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* Vol. 159, No. 1 (March 2015): 85-94.

This article examines the differences between European and American child-rearing attitudes in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and demonstrates the less reserved, authoritarian approach followed by many American parents in certain social classes.

Gross, Andrew S. “William James and Frederick Jackson Turner: Nature, Corporate Expansion, and the Consumption of Space.” *Polish Journal for American Studies*, vol. 3 (2009): 99-106.

This article was interesting and a little depressing. It talks about the way the early 19th-century connections between identity/selfhood and place/environment were completely disrupted by the emergence of the industrial economy and its technologies. You could no longer understand who you were in relation to your environment. It was helpful in understanding the cultural anxieties that were part of Turner’s thesis, and which also gave rise to the scouting movement and education reforms.

Hantover, Jeffery P. “The Boy Scouts and the Validation of Masculinity.” *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1978): 184-195.

This is an earlier analysis by a gender historian of the rise of the Boy Scouts from the viewpoint of a “crisis of masculinity.”

Hiner, N. Ray. “Herbartians, History, and Moral Education.” *The School Review*, vol. 79, no. 4 (August 1971): 590-601.

One of the important things I learned from this article is that Turner was very influential in the education community, especially among a group of pedagogues known as the “Herbartians.” The article also notes that Turner revised his original article for the version going into the *Herbartian Journal*, focusing on some additional matters of interest for that group.

Honeck, Mischa. *Our Frontier Is the World: The Boy Scouts in the Age of American Ascendancy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018.

Mischa Honeck’s book explains how the Boy Scouts gave way to American global expansion in the twentieth century. It also explains the international history of the Boy Scouts and how the BSA was treated as a facet of the empire from the Progressive Era up to the 1960s. Along with Benjamin Jordan’s study, this book was a major source of facts and ideas for my paper.

Jeal, Tim. *The Boy-Man: The Life of Lord Baden-Powell*. New York: William Morrow, 1990.

An authoritative modern biography of Robert Baden-Powell that reviews the man, his actions, and organizations through a psycho-sexual approach and attributes to Baden-Powell a latent homosexuality, claiming that he was intensely fearful of sex.

Johnston, Scott. “Looking Wide? Imperialism, Internationalism, and the Boy Scout Movement, 1918-1939.” Master’s thesis, University of Waterloo, 2012.

This MA thesis by a Canadian author relies on archival research to demonstrate that, even in the early days of the movement, Boy Scouts had too many different ideological motivations ever to be a singular, unified movement. Its origins in imperialism made the professions of international brotherhood hard to believe.

Jordan, Benjamin Rene. *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts of America: Citizenship, Race and the Environment, 1910-1930*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Jordan examines how in its founding and early rise, the BSA integrated traditional Victorian manhood with modern, corporate-industrial values and skills. The BSA “Americanized” the original British scouting program, shifting away from rugged individualism or militaristic primitivism toward a focus on productive employment in offices and factories, stressing scientific cooperation and a pragmatic approach to the responsibilities of citizenship. This book was a major secondary resource for me.

Judd, Denis. *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present*. London: Basic Books, 1997.

This book surveys the history of Britain’s imperial period. It devotes a chapter on Baden-Powell and the Boy Scouts. I used it for context on the British Empire as well as an overview of Baden-Powell and the scouting movement in Britain.

Kellum, Ronald. “The Influence of Francis Wayland Parker’s Pedagogy on the Pedagogy of John Dewey.” *Journal of Thought* vol. 18, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 77-91.

This article was important mainly to understand the connections between Parker, as the “father of progressive education,” and Hall and Dewey. It gave me the evidence I needed to be confident in talking about their links to Seton.

Levy, Harold P. *Building a Popular Movement: A Case Study of the Public Relations of the Boy Scouts of America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1944.

This study examined the BSA's use of nonprofit PR work in urban settings to recruit members and advertisements. The study showed how successful the BSA was in its public relations campaigns and served as a model for other organizations.

Luoto, Lauri. "Shaping alternative education for all: Baden-Powell's affiliation network of educational reformers, 1900-1939." *History of Education* vol. 51, no. 4 (2022): 541-559.

This is an outstanding source for understanding Baden-Powell's and the Boy Scouts' relationship to the different educational reform movements going on in Britain and America. It was especially helpful because Baden-Powell had a reputation for not acknowledging his influences (or citing his sources).

MacDonald, Robert H. *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement 1890-1918*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

This book looks at the origins of the Boy Scouts in how the British imagined the frontier, especially through its stereotypical hero, the war scout. The idea of the frontier was still potent and romantic to many Edwardians, and it came to symbolize an attractive solution to a set of increasingly complex problems at home. MacDonald argues that war was on the horizon; to make sure the future combatants were virile and strong, according to Baden-Powell, seemed the only way to keep the peace.

MacLeod, David. *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, Y.M.C.A., and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983.

This book looks at the way the emerging middle class in the late 19th and early 20th centuries helped drive the growth and popularity of the Boy Scouts in part because of the social anxieties about masculine character and development, for which scouting was meant to be a cure.

Maddox, Lucy. *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.

This book examines the role Charles Eastman played in shaping the Boy Scouts. He was a physician, and social reformer and was the first Native American to be certified in western medicine. His perspective and experience was very influential on Seton. He is not covered in this essay, but the book provided excellent context on early scouting.

Mangan, J.A. and James Walvin, eds. *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987.

This book collects six essays about the emergence of "muscular Christianity" and other similar paradigms that linked physical athleticism and achievements with a moral version of what it means to be a true man in the US and the UK in the 19th century.

McColl, Sarah. "The Complicated Growth of 4-H." *Smithsonian Magazine*, July 26, 2017. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/complicated-growth-4-h-180964191/>.

This is a magazine article that discusses the government-funded "4-H club" and its history from the early 20th century and its approach to gendered options for men and women (as well as its incorporation of African Americans throughout WWII) and how it spread its anti-communist and pro-agricultural message nationally.

Mechling, Jay. "Scouting." *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*. Edited by Bron Taylor. New York: Continuum, 2005: 1505-1506..

This is an encyclopedia entry that discusses the scouting movement and scouting as a practice and how it is intertwined with nature and religion. It contains an excellent summary of the cultural origins of scouting.

Nasaw, David. *Schooled to Order: A Social History of Public Schooling in the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

This book goes over the history of education in America, not just examining education from its use in schooling, but also the social and cultural elements surrounding it and how the topic of education has evolved in America.

Parsons, Timothy. *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004.

This book covers the scouting movement in Colonial Africa and its use in subjugating native people as well as its origins in the Second Boer War. It provides an interesting contrast to Baden-Powell’s “Scouting For Boys.”

Penn, Alan. *Targeting Schools: Drill, Militarism and Imperialism*. London: Woburn Press, 1999.

This book examines the relationship between militaristic values and Britain’s imperialist policies and identity between the 1870s and World War I, and it demonstrates the importance of military drills in school for supporting and inculcating this culture in students.

Phillips, John. “Selling America: The Boy Scouts of America in the Progressive Era, 1910-1921. Master’s thesis, University of Maine, 2001.

This MA thesis looks specifically at the commercial elements of Boy Scouting, and the way that its leaders utilized new advertising and PR techniques to drive its popularity. The author argues that after its earliest days had passed, the movement was commercialized to its core.

Proctor, Tammy. *On My Honour: Guides and Scouts in Interwar Britain*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002.

This history of the Scouting movement between WWI and WWII is especially interesting because it relies on primary sources from participants themselves and not only the leaders. The author uses oral histories, newsletters edited by actual scouts, diary entries, and letters to give a more complete picture of the impact of scouting on its participants.

Rosenthal, Michael. *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell’s Boy Scouts and the Imperatives of Empire*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

This book is an analysis of the Boy Scouts during the later days of the British Empire and the impacts of the Scouting Movement during that time. It focuses on gender issues as well as the effects of industrialization. The book is a key secondary resource, as it was one of the first Boy Scout histories to argue that the BSA needs an independently written history outside the BSA’s own official narrative.

Ross, Dorothy. *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

This book on Hall and his work is one of the key secondary sources about Hall’s theory of “racial recapitulation,” his pioneering studies of the psychology of adolescence,

and his influence on educational ideas at the turn of the century. Due to word limitations, I was not able to go into as much detail as I would have liked about Hall's major contributions to the founding of the BSA or his connections to the frontier thesis.

Shi, David E. "Ernest Thompson Seton and the Boy Scouts: A Moral Equivalent of War?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (1985): 379-391.

This article explores the relationship between Seton and William James. It considers not just Seton's use of James' theory of instincts, but also their shared pacifism, anti-imperialism, and interest in nature.

Sklar, Martin. *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890-1916: The Market, the Law, and Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

This book looks at economic changes during the Progressive Era through the lens of Marxism. Its idea is that capitalism is fundamentally changing due to new forces that are not consistent with capitalist principles.

Slotkin, Richard. "Nostalgia and Progress: Theodore Roosevelt's Myth of the Frontier." *American Quarterly* 33:5 (Winter 1981): 608-637.

This article discusses Theodore Roosevelt's relationship with Turner and his frontier thesis, as well as his own opinions surrounding the frontier and its importance to American character.

Smith, Neil. *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*. Oakland, Calif.: University of California Press, 2004.

This book chronicles the life and career of eminent 20th-century geographer, Isaiah Bowman, who served as a key advisor to Woodrow Wilson, and was the president of Johns Hopkins and part of Franklin Roosevelt's state department, where he became the "father of the United Nations." He was also a major patron of the Boy Scouts and was instrumental in securing Boy Scout participation in a highly publicized expedition to explore Antarctica. This book traces the roots of American globalization and its exploitation of nature to the ideas Bowman and his colleagues held regarding the frontier thesis and America's role in the world.

Springhall, John. "Baden-Powell and the Scout Movement before 1920: Citizen Training of Soldiers of the Future?" *English Historical Review* 102 (1987): 934-42.

This article by John Springhill debates whether the Boy Scouts were created out of Baden-Powell's desire for a militaristic proving ground of masculinity or out of a genuine want to better educate young boys to help them become righteous citizens.

Summers, Anne. "Scouts, Guides and VADs: A Note in reply to Allen Warren." *English Historical Review* 102, no. 405 (1987): 943-7.

The article suggests that popular militarism was so widespread in Edwardian Britain that the Scouts had little choice but to be linked with it. It is a part of the wider debate about the role of militarism in early British scouting.

Terry, Robert, Jr. "Development and Evolution of Agriculturally Related Merit Badges Offered by the Boy Scouts of America." *Journal of Agricultural Education* vol. 54, no. 2 (2013): 70-84.

This is an essay that goes over the Boy Scout merit badges and how they became more agricultural throughout the early 1900s as a way to accommodate rural children joining the organization.

Villeneuve, Matthew. “Instrumental Indians: John Dewey and the Problem of the Frontier for Democracy in Indian Education, 1884-1959.” PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2021.

A dissertation that explains how Dewey’s experiential pedagogy benefited from Dewey’s learnings from Native Americans, but ironically, that pedagogy never benefited oppressed indigenous children as it should have, in part because they were still considered “savages” by most of the educators of that era.

Warren, Allen. “Citizens of the Empire: Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guides and an Imperial Ideal, 1900-40.” *Imperialism and Popular Culture*. Edited by John Mackenzie. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986, 232-253.

This article notes that scouting was a multi-faceted movement with multiple goals, and that Baden-Powell was concerned with internal and external threats to Britain which extended far beyond military dangers. It argues that Baden-Powell’s obsession with social and individual health as an antidote to the degeneracy of modern urban life led him to idealize the frontier as a zone where manliness could be best developed.

———. “Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900-1920.” *English Historical Review* 101, no. 399 (1986): 376-7.

Against the claim that Baden-Powell was a militarist, Warren argues that he was just obsessed with training in quasi-military scouting for its alleged character benefits, and that it was others who linked this more directly to preparing boys for service in war.

Webb, Walter Prescott. *The Great Frontier*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1979.

Walter Prescott Webb’s study is an incredibly important extension of the frontier thesis. He agrees with Turner’s ideas that the frontier was essential, but broadens it to the rest of the world, summing it up in his book as the “Boom Hypothesis.” What Turner said about America, Webb claimed for the global “West” as a whole: the frontier made possible the development of such crucial institutions of the modern era as individualism, capitalism, freedom, and democracy.

Williams, Morgan K. “John Dewey in the 21st Century.” *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education* vol. 9, no. 1 (2017): 91-102.

This essay reviews Dewey’s pedagogical principles and his efforts to push for experiential, socially contextualized learning. It contrasts these principles with the more rigid classroom learning in America today, with testing as a central focus, and explores some of the pedagogical movements that exist which *do* fulfill Dewey’s vision for education.

Young, Jacy L. “G. Stanley Hall, Child Study, and the American Public.” *The Journal of Genetic Psychology* vol. 177, no. 6 (2016): 195-216.

This essay uses a list of the speaking engagements and interviews of prominent (and sometimes controversial) child psychologist G. Stanley Hall to create a map of his influence when he was at the height of his fame at the turn of the 20th century, and argues for his importance (positive and negative) in the world of early education and child psychology in the United States.

Process Paper

When I saw this year's prompt, *Frontiers in History*, my mind jumped to the many topics I could examine. A frontier means many different things and can be something concrete like an actual border wall or something abstract that has cultural significance. So, what really is a frontier?

I decided on the youth scouting movement and its connection not just to the American frontier, but to multiple frontiers across the world: what historian Walter Prescott Webb in his expanded version of Frederick Jackson Turner's famous "frontier thesis" called the "Great Frontier." I wanted to see how this thesis and the early scouting movement were intertwined. I was excited to tackle an era of history I did not know well. My essay discusses how the idea of a frontier shapes a nation's culture, and what happens to that culture when the actual frontier closes. Looking at the emergence of the scouting movement and the focus on experiential education as responses to the closing of the American frontier gave me a fresh perspective on how profound the idea of the frontier was in our national culture and for other cultures around the world.

I began my research by identifying my topic and reviewing bibliographies attached to encyclopedia articles to identify sources that could offer background. I tracked down sources and read for several weeks. I also went to local libraries and found books on the frontier thesis along with essays and articles about its impact on education reformers like John Dewey and their relationships to the scouting movement. I assembled an outline to help me focus my argument since there were still so many directions I could take; it felt a little overwhelming at that stage.

Finally, I drafted my thesis and the rest of my essay while adding in quotations that provided support. Great judging feedback helped me make further improvements to the essay.

My historical argument is that scouting attempted to create a virtual, "reconstructed frontier" to substitute for the old physical frontier as the proving ground for instilling boys with a self-reliant, democratic character, while also training them in the emerging ideals of a "new individualism" that was more corporate in nature. While scouting was profoundly shaped by the closing of the American frontier, it also was a complex movement that was influenced by progressive education reformers and champions of traditional masculine values alike.

This topic is historically significant because it helps explain how the abstraction of the frontier can drive actual movements in society, like scouting. It also demonstrates how our ideas of modern education came partly from the fears about the impact of the frontier's closure, and how those early education reforms sometimes overlapped with more traditional motivations for scouting. Some of the same worries at the time—urbanization, lack of good schooling, social decay, and the supposed dangers of effeminacy—are still being debated even now. I found this topic is incredibly pertinent to some of the same problems that are part of today's political and cultural conversations.