

## Organised Youth

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1. **Sophie Wittemans:** “Brownies’ stories and experiences: the subjecthood of the little girl in interwar Girl Guiding”

After having established Scouting for adolescents in 1907, Robert Baden-Powell announced in 1914 the creation of a Scouting section for young boys (7-11), the Cub Scouts. With Rudyard Kipling's permission, Baden-Powell used the former's *Jungle Book* as a symbolic frame for this section. In 1917, he published *The Wolf Cub* handbook for the Wolf Cub Scouts, which contains many references to the *Jungle Book*.

A little later, Baden-Powell created a section for young girls within the Girl Guide association, initially called “the Rosebuds” but eventually renamed “the Brownies”. His book, *Girl Guiding*, published in 1918, uses Juliana Horatia Ewing’s story *The Brownies* as a symbolic and pedagogical framework for the Brownies section. It contains a very strong message about the subjecthood of the little girl or Brownie.

However, unlike the *Jungle Book*, the *Brownies* story was not widely adopted by the emerging Girl Guide associations. Many of them felt the necessity to adapt the story or even to opt for a very different story and symbolic environment for their young girls.

We will present some cases of this change of story for the Brownies in France and in Belgium (based on Belgian and French primary Girl Guiding archival sources) and examine how and why this happened. We will also try to show the impact of the “story change” on Brownies’ experiences while attending meetings and camps.

2. **Jialin Christina Wu:** “Off to fairyland: carefree childhoods, indigenous girls and the Guide movement in colonial Malaya”

Upon its introduction in British Malaya in 1917, Girl Guiding opened up spaces for alternative expressions and forms of girlhood and womanhood for local girls and women. Indeed, as historians have noted, Guiding’s main activities – mostly pertaining to “Domestic Science” and “Mothercraft” – contributed towards the evolution of the understanding of “proper” girlhood and womanhood in the colony.

Much attention has thus been devoted towards the study of how women educators in Malaya used Guiding to “emancipate local girls within a ‘traditional’ framework by schooling them to be competent, healthy future wives and mothers”. In particular, recent literature on this topic has developed this line of argument by arguing that Guiding’s methodological (or “scientific”) emphasis on “Domestic Science” and “Mothercraft” led local girls and women to envision themselves as “new women” and “modern girls” – instead

of resigning themselves to “fate and destiny” as untrained and unprepared “frightened child brides” or girl servants (notably, as “mui tsais”).

This paper seeks to contribute towards this discussion and the growing new literature on indigenous girlhood in the context of empire in one main way: it argues for the need to shift current attention on how Guiding equipped or prepared girls as “scientific” mothers on the domestic front, towards newer perspectives on how the movement constructed and encouraged “fun” and carefree childhoods for girls. To forward this argument, this paper concentrates upon concrete examples of Guiding’s construction of “carefree childhoods” by examining its role in combating (1) child marriages and (2) the use of children in Communist “young devil squads” during the post-war period. By harnessing a wide range of primary documents, including iconographic sources, audio-visual material and oral accounts of former Malayan Guides, this paper further seeks to contribute towards discussions on new methodological trajectories on the research of children’s histories.

### 3. Katharine Cockin: ‘The figure of the child in the British women’s suffrage movement’

Anti-suffrage posters and postcards depicted neglected husbands, homes and children, even a distressed baby, with the misfortune to be the child of a suffragette. The visibility of the child in women’s suffrage events, cultural practices, visual and literary texts reinforced the claim for woman as the carer and advocate of the child with whom she is allied in the political movement for social reform. In this period child abuse had become the focus for political campaigns against the institutionalization of prostitution and sexual violence led by W. T. Stead and taken up by Christabel Pankhurst and the Women’s Freedom League’s court reporting. The enfranchisement of the woman therefore signals a transformation in the social status of both women and children and in so doing it challenges these systematic abuses.

The use of the child in the arguments for women’s suffrage was risky because the anti-suffragists emphasised the childlike status of women, dependent on their father or husband to vote on their behalf. The domain of the child could, however, yield a productive space from which to address the systematic infantilization of women and explore how this infantilization contributed to the undermining of women as political subjects. Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* was the inspiration for two plays, Laurence Housman’s *Alice in Ganderland* (The Woman’s Press, 1911) and Helen McLachlan’s *The Madhatter’s Teaparty* was published in the *Vote* (20 April 1912). This paper will explore the implications of the representations of the child and the childlike in these plays and a selection of other pro- and anti-women’s suffrage cultural texts.