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A Foucauldian Approach to Founder's Influence in a Non-Profit Organization

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Abstract

Founder's influence has been largely understudied in non-profit organizations (NPOs) both in terms of research and the organization itself (Ogbonna and Harris, 2001, Stevens, 2003). From, a historical perspective, the work of Foucault provides a lens for viewing such organizations in that it creates a pathway for understanding their development. In this paper, the Foucauldian framework incorporates the concepts of archaeological and genealogical underpinnings within a power and knowledge framework to explain the formation of one NPO, the Australian Girl Guides and the influence of its architect and founder Robert Baden-Powell.

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ABSTRACT

Founder's influence has been largely understudied in non-profit organizations (NPOs) both in terms of research and the organization itself (Ogbonna and Harris, 2001, Stevens, 2003). From, a historical perspective, the work of Foucault provides a lens for viewing such organizations in that it creates a pathway for understanding their development. In this paper, the Foucauldian framework incorporates the concepts of archaeological and genealogical underpinnings within a power and knowledge framework to explain the formation of one NPO, the Australian Girl Guides and the influence of its architect and founder Robert Baden-Powell.

INTRODUCTION

Social, political and cultural influences are important norms within the operations of non-profit organizations (NPOs). A number of research studies have demonstrated this concept, for example, Irvine (2002) who, in her study of The Salvation Army discovered that "the idiosyncratic temperament, beliefs and mission of William Booth (its founder) were profound" and that "it was these factors that established the early culture of The Salvation Army" (Irvine, 2002, p.9). Other research in the area has also highlighted this phenomenon. Martin Sitkin and Boehm (1985, p.99) suggested that "a founder can create a culture, cast in founder's own image and reflecting the founder's own values, priorities, and vision of the future". They also contended that the influence of the founder, through personal attributes and philosophies, continues long after the founder leaves the organization. In addition, Harris and Ogbonna (1999, p.333) asserted that "it is uncommon to find an organization with a long history which has not been left with an indelible legacy by its founder(s)".

From a Foucauldian perspective, the founder's influence enriches the literature by highlighting the importance of an historical research paradigm from archaeological and genealogical underpinnings which also intertwine the concepts of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1984). This appears to be a largely under-studied area in the academic literature (Ogbonna and Harris, 2001) with the studies that do exist considering two major areas: the founder's influence on strategic management (Boeker, 1989; Harris and Ogbonna, 1999; Kelly et al, 2000; Athanassiou, 2002) and the founder's influence on organizational culture (Schein, 1983; 1991; Rowlinson and Procter; 1999) predominantly in the area of family businesses. Research in the area of founders influence on NPOs is even more sparse (Stevens, 2003). Yet, the size of the non-profit sector is significant. It is estimated in Australia there are more than 700,000 NPOs employing 660,000 people with annual revenues in excess of $70 billion (Ferguson, 2005, p. 47). In the United States (US) the sector is even more significant consisting of over 1.7 million NPOs with annual revenues in excess of $1.1 trillion and accounting for 8.3 percent of all wages and salaries paid in the US in 2004 (NCSS, 2006).

This paper seeks to address this gap in the non-profit literature by providing a Foucauldian historical reflection on a founder's influence on the culture of a particular NPO and its subsequent effect on organizational attitude to money management. Specifically, this study considers the influence of Robert Baden-Powell on the Australian Girl Guide Association (GGA). This paper starts with a brief examination of the Foucauldian theoretical framework, followed by the early life of Baden-Powell, then moves to the foundation of Scouts and concludes with the power and knowledge interplays within the early days of GGA in the Australian state of New South Wales, where it highlights that Baden-Powell's informal approach to money matters was reflected in the financial dealings and attitudes of the organization he founded. Furthermore, it is suggests that this is because the organization was "managed according to the founder's personality rather than in a way that provides reliable services" McNamara (1998, p.38). Thus the organization will often experience the same problems again and again, with plans not being implemented in an orderly manner, money continually running out and the organization struggling as it moves from one crisis to the next (McNamara, 2003). This is demonstrated by the exigency basis on which the early financial management practices of the GGA were operated (Abraham, 1999).

The next section presents the Foucauldian theoretical framework as an archaeology of founders and its relevance to the study, followed by a précis of the life of the founder, Robert Baden-Powell. The following two sections then provide a brief history of the formation of the Boy Scout Movement and the foundation and early

days of its sister movement, the Girl Guides. The final section provides an overview of these historical reflections.

AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF FOUNDERS

A Foucauldian framework contemplates the formation of GGA from an archeological and genealogical perspective, thus bringing out the richness of events within the power structure of the organization. A number of research studies have incorporated the use of the Foucauldian theoretical framework from an historical perspective; for example, within the mental institution of accounting reality (Smark and Deo, 2006), accounting history (Stewart, 1992), the accounting profession (Armstrong, 1994, Grey, 1994) and accounting systems (MacIntosh, 1990). Social factors are an important emphasis in Michel Foucault's writings which incorporate the essence of social behavior in areas such as psychology, criminology, mental illness and medicine. Furthermore, these human factors are intertwined through the process of "archaeology" which focuses on the perspective of unearthing a sequence of historical events (Foucault, 1977). This framework provides a closer focus on social historical events through the process of "genealogy" which, in Foucauldian terms, deals with dramatic changes within a particular historical framework (Foucault, 1972, 1984). Therefore, the Foucauldian lens used in this study captures the importance of the social and cultural factors that have shaped a particular organization such as the GGA.

FOUCAULDIAN REFLECTIONS ON THE FOUNDER AND THE FOUNDATION

A Foucauldian historical perspective begins with the genealogical fact that Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell was born in London, England on 22 February 1857. His father, a clergyman and a professor, died in 1860 leaving the family of ten children with a very limited income. The loss of his father at such an early age is consistent with the finding that there is "usually some kind of deprivation … in a (male) founder's childhood relationship with his father. The child learns to make up for this, to be more creative in fulfilling his needs, to be more self-reliant, and manipulative in trying to control the situation" (Thompson, 1985, in Stevens, 2003, p.15). It is a founder's mother that provides her children with opportunities to take independent action at an early age and to experience moderate risks, while at the same time giving timely feedback, thus exposing her children to conditions that develop achievement motivation (Zaleznik and Kets de Vries, 1975). The esteem with which Baden-Powell valued his mother, and her influence on the formation of the Guide movement is demonstrated in his article in the *Girl Guide Gazette* written just after her death in 1914 (Baden-Powell, 1914, p.7).

With no family money on which to depend, Baden-Powell's education was at the Charterhouse Boarding School on a scholarship from 1870. After leaving school, he performed well in the entrance examination for the army and received a commission into the 13th Hussars. On 6 December 1876 he sailed with his regiment on the *Seraphis* bound for Bombay, India. Over the next few years, Baden-Powell served in northern India, Afghanistan and then in South Africa, where he was ordered to undertake an accurate survey of the various routes through the Drakensburg mountain. He obtained the information he needed for this by disguising himself as an itinerant reporter and trekking over nine hundred kilometres. In 1884 he published his book *Reconnaissance and Scouting*. In 1886 Baden-Powell was ordered back to England with his regiment where he wrote *Cavalry Instruction*. During the period (1887–1895) he served in various commanding roles. In 1899 he was again posted to South Africa and instructed to raise and train two mounted regiments within a few months to defend Rhodesia and Bechunaland against the Boer settlers.

When Baden Powell returned to Britain from the South Africa in 1903, he discovered that his book *Aids to Scouting* was being used to train boys in both schools and church organizations, such as the Boys' Brigade. It had also been published as a serial in *The Boys' Own Paper*, a magazine popular with both boys and girls. Baden-Powell realised "that something was needed to enable boys to counteract the effects of modern life" (Furse, 1930, p.21) and so at a public meeting in the Birkenhead YMCA Hall on 24 January 1908, the Boy Scout movement was officially launched. The publisher, C.A. Pearson helped financially, first in the publication of the handbook *Scouting for Boys* (adapted from *Aids for Scouting*), and then by providing a one-room office to be used as a headquarters for the Boy Scouts. By the end of 1908 there were 60,000 Scouts enrolled, but probably more were in training but yet to be brought in touch with the new organization (Reynolds, 1943). But it was not only the boys who were reading *Scouting for Boys*.

On 4 September 1909 the first Scout rally and conference was held at Crystal Palace in South London with the object of showing the public the aims of the Scout Movement and how it had progressed since the first

Scout camp on Brownsea Island in July 1907 (de Beaumont, 1944, p.45). To this rally came 11,600 boys from all over Britain. Baden-Powell was amazed at the response declaring it "a bit of a bombshell" (Swinburne, 1978, p.11). By the end of that year membership had risen to about 100,000. At no time was Baden-Powell in a "comfortable" financial position. His family was poor, he was educated on scholarships, he abstained from expensive habits and he obtained extra funds by writing books and breaking horses. In the same way, finances were never central in the establishment of the Boy Scout Movement. Baden-Powell was able to run camps, because the sites were borrowed and the equipment given. He went on speaking tours because he was financially supported by the publisher, Pearson. *Scouting for Boys* was written because Baden-Powell was provided with a house in which to write it. *Scouting for Boys*, together with many other books and pamphlets on Scouting and Guiding, were published because of the financial support of other people.

FOUCAULDIAN REFLECTIONS ON THE GUIDE MOVEMENT

The British Context

Another key event in the Foucauldian genealogy is typified by bringing to light the fact that when Boy Scouts came from all over Britain to meet their Founder at the Scout Rally at the Crystal Palace in September 1909, they were joined by a small group of Girl Scouts, who were "uninvited, unexpected and unwanted" (Coleman, 1980, p.5). Baden-Powell knew of the existence of such girls because many had written to him. However, despite his position of power (Foucault, 1977), he had given them no encouragement due to his fear of offending the sensibilities of Edwardian parents by turning their girls into tomboys, and also because of the resentment of the boys and his fear of the Scout Movement being open for ridicule if girls were engaged in Scout activities. Thus, the attendance of these girls at the Rally caused him considerable surprise and left him somewhat daunted. However, after considerable discussion with the relevant bodies, he acquired additional knowledge (Foucault, 1972) which together with his personal and positional power (Foucault, 1984) allowed him to establish a new movement for these girls.

The naming of the new female movement is again viewed through the Foucauldian lens as a significant event which brings out structures of power at the very formation of this new organization (Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1984). The suggested name "Girl Guides" met with opposition from those girls who had already registered themselves as Scouts. However, many girls who had not been Scouts joined the new movement by registering on a special list of interested girls, kept at Scout Headquarters, and most of the others were gradually absorbed. From the beginning Baden-Powell recognised the desirability of the girls being organized separately, so that the public could not condemn them as tomboys nor ridicule the movement (Furse, 1930, pp.21-22). His sister, Agnes Baden-Powell became the first President of the Guide movement and remained so until 1920. Her wide interests in life made her an excellent choice for she was "a naturalist, botanist and astronomer" who "was also interested in many of the new inventions such as motor cars and hot air balloons" (Thompson, 1990, p. 4).

The first two Guide publications, *Pamphlet A* and *Pamphlet B*, which appeared around 1909 (Furse, 1930, p.22) and told of the aims and methods of the new Movement, can be viewed through a Foucauldian lens as instruments of power. Pamphlet A explained how the Guides should be organized at a local level and Pamphlet B provided information about training. Pamphlet B also included correspondence between a mother in India and her daughter at boarding school in England who had opposing view of Scouting. From a Foucauldian perspective, this highlights the existence of power interplays in the early days of the organization. It showed the mother's objections to her daughter being involved, but it also raised her daughter's objections to giving it up.

The importance of a genealogical stance from with the Foucauldian paradigm is highlighted by the growth in membership, whereby it soon became evident that the Girl Guides were operating independently of the Boy Scout administration and that it would be necessary to provide some sort of Headquarters control. Furthermore, within a historical social setting, the influence of human social behavior (Foucault, 1972, 1984) is demonstrated by the next action of the founder when he requested that a Committee be formed by six women who were already interested and who saw a future for Guiding. This small group of pioneers had "no easy task, and they met with every kind of opposition, both from men and women" (Maynard, 1920, p.250). A small office and an equipment depot were established in May 1910 at the end of a narrow passage at 116 Victoria Street, London, with Baden-Powell lending £100 as capital. A secretary was engaged to register Guides, write letters, listen to callers and sell equipment,, and within a year there were 8000 girls registered as Girl Guides. Agnes Baden-Powell began to adapt *Scouting for Boys* specifically to suit girls and in 1912 *How Girls can Help Build up the Empire*, was published under the joint authorship of Agnes and Robert Baden-Powell. A fire caused by the fusion of an electric light burnt down original Headquarters and forced the Association to move to

larger premises at 76 Victoria Street where they then had sufficient room to enable them to open a shop to sell Guide equipment. This venture "made us hold our breath, for the Guide Movement had no money; it was only, thanks to energy and devotion of the London officers, who got up Rallies, Displays and Sales, that even the current office expenses and salaries were paid" (Maynard, 1920, p.274). In the early days the Committee was pleased if the shop realised £10 in a month. However the shop very quickly became the main support of Guiding, rather than the cause of bankruptcy as feared by some.

In 1918 Baden-Powell's new book, *Girl Guiding*, replaced *How Girls Can Help to Build Up the Empire*, and was written for the girls themselves. Thus, the Girl Guide Movement grew from its small beginnings at the Crystal Palace Rally in London, England in 1909 to over 250,000 members, throughout the world by 1920. As far as its finances were concerned, "the Guide Movement was no charity, financed by the rich and backed by Royalty, but a lot of girls who proved their value, *till* the Government sent them out to Paris to help in the Great War as trusted messengers; *till*, in 1920, the Princess Mary consented to become their President" (Maynard, 1920, p.274).

Guiding spread quickly to Australia, despite the distance from Britain. Indeed "the first countries besides England which write of starting Girl Scouting as early as 1910 are Australia, Suomi-Finland and South Africa" (Furse 1930, p.24). Agnes Baden-Powell established a means of communication with these girls as early as August 1910 and wrote to Guides throughout the world: "our friends and dear ones, near and far - this country, or Canada, or Australia, New Zealand, or South Africa" (Baden-Powell, A., 1910d, p.40).

The Australian Context
The next significant genealogical event exposing the importance within the social historical setting is unique way in which Guiding started in Australia. It arose as a result of individual girls reading *Scouting for Boys* as early as 1908 and putting the principles into practice even though it was not until May 1910 that the official Girl Guides Association was formed in Britain. In 1908, when *Scouting for Boys* arrived in Australia, the total population of Australia was only about four and a half million and historically, was only seven years further on from being the six separate colonies they were before federation on 1 January 1901. Most interstate travel was by sea, or rail which linked the three eastern mainland states. Motor cars were unreliable for long distances and even mail from one side of the continent to the other took over a week to arrive. Some time was to pass before groups of early Guides learnt that there were others elsewhere in this large country. When Baden-Powell took his first world tour as Chief Scout in 1912, he visited Sydney. He recorded in his diary on 21 May that "I inspected Girl Aids under Mrs. Dixson, who gave me a flag for the Girl Guides of Britain". With the onset of World War I in August 1914, the Girl Aids gradually phased.

The next report of guiding activities arose in 1917 when Elsie Lee moved to a rented house in the country town of Tamworth in New South Wales owned by a family which had included two teenage boys, who had left a number of books on some shelves in a store room. One of these books was *Scouting for Boys*. Elsie considered that "the book was too good to keep to myself" (Lee, 1973, p.1) and so she gathered together five or six friends as her patrol, and developing their activities and uniform from the suggestions in the book, they "scouted" in the hills behind Tamworth. This continued until Elsie went to boarding school in 1918. Then, in 1919, her family moved to Japan where she was able to become a member of the 1st Tokyo Guides led by one of teachers at the English Mission School. However, it was not until August 1920 that the Girl Guide Movement became official in New South Wales. The formal establishment of the organization demonstrates how power structures are intertwined in a sequence of events in a historical setting (Foucault 1984). In 1920, Dame Margaret Davidson, the wife of Sir Walter Davidson, the Governor of New South Wales, called a special meeting of prominent Sydney women with the object of interesting them in starting the Guide Movement in New South Wales. These women decided that guiding was not necessary because Australian girls already had sufficient opportunity to be out of doors (Swinburne, 1978, p.51). However this meeting and the subsequent lack of interest in Guiding was reported in the press. The report was read by a young woman, Nella Levy, who had joined the Girl Guides in 1908 while at boarding school in England and also attended the Crystal Palace Rally in 1909. "The Lev", as she was affectionately known, had "a firm belief in the principles of guiding, was young, keen, a dynamic personality, had a great sense of humour and fun, but was also a disciplinarian" (Coleman, 1980, p.5). She wrote to the newspaper protesting that Guides *were* necessary in Australia. As a result, Dame Margaret invited her to tea at Government House and told her that "Queen Mary would like to see Girl Guides in New South Wales, and I want you to start it" (Merivale, 1970, in GNSW, archival file). Nelly Levy responded enthusiastically to this invitation and thus became the first organizing commissioner for Guides in New South Wales. She travelled widely, recruiting volunteers, enrolling Guides and encouraging the formation of Guide Companies. The first enrolment of 26 Guiders (Guide leaders) was held on 23 September

1921 at Government House in Sydney. These women had come from both cities and country towns to be enrolled by Dame Margaret Davidson. The following year another 70 Guiders were enrolled at the Sydney Showground, which also marked the first State Rally. The Annual Report for 1923 records that the "The Girl Guide Movement started in N.S.W. at an Inaugural Meeting held at Government House in August, 1920" (GNSW AR, 1923, p.3), however no written record of that meeting has survived.

The first recorded meeting of the NSW Girl Guides was an Executive Committee meeting held at Government House three months later on 28 October 1920 with Dame Margaret Davidson, State Commissioner, in the Chair and attended by seven other ladies. The meeting passed four resolutions, two of which had significant financial implications: they agreed to advertise in daily newspapers and also send registration fees to London before they had any income (GGEM, 28 Oct 1920). The next meetings were held at weekly intervals and the need for financial support and ability to pay expenses arose early. The minutes of 2 December 1920 record the women who had been appointed as vice presidents would be requested to pay subscriptions, with these subscriptions being the first monies to be received by the fledging Association. At the same meeting, before any income was collected, it was agreed to lease an office "at a rental of 25/- per week including lighting' and one of the committee members, Lady Kelso King, agreed to undertake a collection to raise £52 towards the rent. At the following meeting, Lady Kelso King also guaranteed to collect all working expenses for the first year. The first meeting in 1921 was held on 16 March with subsequent meetings being held at fortnightly intervals. Thus, the GGA started with no financial backing, and little discussion about obtaining it. Their first minute book was a discarded notebook and their first meeting places were the homes of various committee members. The Committee generated expenses prior to discussing income. However, these expenses were necessary to sustain the mission, and throughout its history, the Executive Committee has always looked to mission first and finances only as a necessary buttress to support that mission (Abraham, 1999).

CONCLUSIONS

By using the Foucauldian theoretical framework, this paper highlights the importance of history within a social, political and cultural non-profit setting. It applies the Foucauldian concepts of archaeology and genealogy within a power and knowledge interplay. The paper considers the foundation of the GGA from its earliest conception together with the way in which its focus was influenced by the personality and experiences of its founder. Without such a consideration of the history of the organization, any attempt to understand its financial practices is severely limited. The official formation of the GGA was preceded by many years of informal Guiding, with groups of girls all over the country joining together to implement the precepts of *Scouting for Boys*. Formally, the GGA began as an organization with a mission to consolidate and spread the concept of Guiding as it has been expressed by its parent organization in England.

As an NPO, there was a tendency for it to emphasise participatory democracy, dispersions of power and consensus management (O'Connell, 1988). This is consistent with the Foucauldian lens which seeks to expose genealogical events within a historical social context. Given that the members of the first GGA Committee, had goals that were altruistic, qualitative, intangible and non-monetary (Gerard, 1983; Kramer, 1981), they would often tend to overlook more 'objective' accounting practices that could be perceived as more appropriate to a 'business' organization. Thus the need for financial management was applied on an exigent, often haphazard basis. This reflects the unexpected foundation and involuntary growth of Guiding itself (Baden-Powell, R., 1933, in Orans, 1998, p.7). Indeed, the traditions and culture inherited from the founder and the founding organization permeated the Australian organization (Andrews 1925)

Similarly, financial practices which may be expected to have been established prior to the foundation of a modern day organization were not in evidence in the GGA. Rather, its organizational culture and history meant that these issues often arose independently and were dealt with in isolation. Thus, the organizational accounting evolved as a product of social, economical and cultural perspectives. This paper contributes to the literature on founders' influence by providing a Foucauldian historical reflection of a founder's influence on the culture of a particular NPO and its subsequent effect on organizational attitude to money management.

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