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## Young or youthful: the Scout Movement and youth discourses

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The aim of this article is to explore the discourses surrounding the contemporary Swedish Scout Movement and young people. The method is based on discourse analysis. Newspaper articles about, and leaflets from, the movement from 2007 to 2009 were analyzed. The findings suggest that scouts are described as well-behaved, decent, sinful, “geeky,” young or youthful. The leaflets demonstrate that the organization wants to promote itself as youthful. It has trouble recruiting young people and tries to change its image by borrowing symbols from other youth cultures. Paradoxically, this approach leads to a conclusion that the Scout Movement’s youth are not seen as youthful by their own organization. They cannot signal youthfulness by themselves.

**Keywords:** youth; scouting; media; discourse

Le but de cet article est d’explorer les discours entourant le mouvement contemporain du scoutisme chez les jeunes suédois. L’article est basé sur l’analyse du discours. Des articles de journaux et des dépliants décrivant le mouvement entre 2007 à 2009 ont été analysés. Les résultats suggèrent que les scouts sont décrits comme des jeunes biens comportés, décent, et même comme « geek ». Malgré les défis associés au recrutement des jeunes gens, l’organisation continue de s’identifier comme un mouvement de jeunesse, même si le scoutisme n’est souvent pas considéré comme un mouvement de jeunesse parmi les jeunes Suédois.

**Mots-clés:** les jeunes; le scoutisme; les medias; les discours

An ordinary day in September, at five o’clock in the afternoon, I was walking in central Stockholm and caught sight of a young man dressed in a scout uniform. I told him that I am doing research about the Scout Movement<sup>1</sup> and I asked him if it was okay to take a photo. In response he asked me if I knew that it was a special day. I answered him that I knew it was a day when every scout was supposed to wear a scout uniform. Then we said goodbye to each other. (field notes, 2009, September 23)

Why did the young man have a scout uniform? What did he want to communicate? In this article, I will argue that the answer is about the young man himself, the movement he represents, but also about the image of young people.

A leaflet produced in 2008 explains that the Swedish Scout Movement is a “modern youth organization” (The Swedish Guide & Scout Council, 2008b). The webpage of

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Swedish scouts suggests that members can contribute to the organization by conveying “a positive and coherent image of the Scout Movement.” It emphasizes that young people should represent the movement in external communications (The Swedish Guide and Scout Council, “Platform for communication,” n.d.). The movement even organizes courses for young spokespersons from 16 to 25 years of age (The Swedish Guide and Scout Council, “Young spokespersons,” n.d.). This communication strategy can be viewed against the background that Swedish scouting is undergoing a modernization process and is working to attract new members. That is why members were encouraged to wear their scout uniforms in their everyday life on Wednesday the 23rd of September in 2009. Since then, it has been an annual event. This action was supposed to convey a message “that the movement has many members and that they can be found everywhere” (The Swedish Guide and Scout Council, 2009). The following day, around 30 comments were available on a Facebook group for Swedish scouting. One person wrote, “the scout uniform on, no comments so far in school!” (Fan av Scouterna, 2009).

Why does the movement have to brand itself as a youth organization, when the target group is children and young people between 8 and 25 years of age? Why does it have to encourage its members to demonstrate a positive and coherent image of the organization? Why does a young person expect to get comments, when wearing a scout uniform? The aim of this article is to explore the discourses surrounding the contemporary Swedish Scout Movement and young people. How is the movement described in Swedish media? What image of young people does the movement itself, and its members, want to communicate? What does this tell us about being a young scout?

### **Youth and youthfulness**

It is difficult to find appropriate terminology for describing young people. There are various expressions that have been used, such as youths, young people, young adults, youngsters, kids, adolescents and teenagers (Jones, 2009, p. 58). Some of these terms are interchangeable and some are not. Adolescence, for example, denotes the period between the onset of puberty and adulthood, whereas youth is associated with the period between leaving school and becoming an adult in socioeconomic terms. These two expressions are not interchangeable (Jones, 2009, p. 11). In a historical perspective, it is also difficult to determine the difference between childhood, youth and adulthood because the transitions between different phases of life can be seen as social constructions that vary historically as well as between nations and cultures (Jones, 2009; Wallace & Kovatcheva, 1998).

Youth describes both a person and a life phase (Jones, 2009). Teenagers who stand on the threshold to becoming youth are experts on being children. Their childhood has just passed and to present themselves as youth is to show that they are no longer children (König, 2008). It is common to make a division between adults as “beings” – complete and independent – and children as “becomings” – incomplete and dependent. Lee (2001) argues that this division is a product of historical development. Socialization and development, according to Lee, portray the sense of childhood as a journey toward a destination. The social scientific knowledge of childhood has been built on a sense of certainty about adulthood and its stability. Lee argues that this stable, complete, standard adulthood no longer can be presumed to exist and that we live in an age of uncertainty where the distinction between becoming and being has been eroded (Lee, 2001).

Youth often describes the transition from childhood to adulthood. Youth has been seen as “dangerous” or “a threat,” but it has also been seen as a phase when individuals are “vulnerable and in need of protection” (France, 2007, p. 23). One can, however, ask if this is the case for every young boy or girl. Are they all dangerous or vulnerable?

Among the trends apparent today, we see that puberty begins earlier than before, demands on education are increasing and children are more economically dependent on adults for a longer time. These trends have led to a prolonged period for youth (du Bois-Reymond, 2009). It is not obvious when the youth phase ends and adulthood begins. For example, a youthful body is regarded as an ideal for many, but it does not belong to the young alone any longer. The body can be manipulated by diet, exercise or plastic surgery (Wallace & Kovatcheva, 1998), all of which communicate the desire for the qualities of youthfulness that are desired among other age groups (Jones, 2009). One can therefore ask if every youthful person is, in fact, young.

“Youth” can be viewed as a problem, crisis or trouble that must be managed by parents. It can also be described as pleasure, fun and exoticism. These definitions sometimes relate to each other. Fun-loving, self-centred youth can, for example, be regarded as irresponsible and anti-social in an adult discourse (Campbell, 2004, pp. 2–3). In contrast, concern for others, respect for adults and a touch of innocence is a more neglected view of youth (Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 1998). One explanation might be that “being good” could have social consequences for young people. An individual could be counted as a “geek” among his or her peers (Sanders & Munford, 2008).

In summary, youth is usually defined as the transition between childhood and adulthood. Earlier research demonstrates different ideas about when, where and how someone is young or youthful. This article contributes to this discussion by exploring discourses surrounding the contemporary Swedish Scout Movement and young people. It seeks to investigate questions of being/becoming young in scouting as a leisure activity.

### The Scout Movement

The first youth organizations were not created by young people themselves. Rather, the organizations were adult-based organizations that were founded on the idea that the minds of young people were empty vessels that could be filled with ideological and sometimes extreme content, because their socialization and cognitive development were not yet complete. Youth organizations with religious and nationalistic content arose in Germany (the Wandervogel) and in Britain (the Scout Movement) at the end of the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century. Both organizations had outdoor activities on their agenda. More extreme organizations were also founded with a mission to fulfil the aim of totalitarian regimes. One method was to separate young people from the control of parents. *Hitler Jugend* is an example of such an organization (Jones, 2009, pp. 47–48).

The Scout Movement was founded by the British General Robert Baden-Powell in the beginning of the twentieth century. The growing German navy was seen as a threat to the British Empire, and at the same time, the British bourgeoisie felt threatened by socialism. In this context, organizations like the Scout Movement were founded to organize the working-class youth with an aim to gain control of the coming generation (Murdock & McCron, 1993). In July 1907, the first scout camp took place, and in May 1908, the complete version of the handbook called *Scouting for Boys* was published (Rosenthal, 1986). Initially, scouting was only for boys, but a separate organization for girls was also soon established (Proctor, 2005, 2009b).

Scouting expanded into an international youth movement that offered outdoor activities as a solution to social division that was caused by industrialization and urbanization. Scouting wanted to intercede on youth deviance and the declining health and physical fitness among youth by providing a sound possibility for youth rebellion. When the Scout Movement was established, sections for different ages and interests were created. Ideally, a

boy did not have to leave scouting until he was an adult, and instead, could become a scout leader (Parsons, 2004). The original Boy Scout program, however, attracted very few boys in America over 15 years of age (Jordan, 2009). Guiding and Girl Scouting in France and Britain also had difficulties keeping older teen girls (Proctor, 2009b). According to Proctor (2009b), the key question facing Guiding and Girl Scouting today is how to keep the same girls interested from age 5 to 18. As this article will demonstrate, the same thing might be said about both girls and boys participating in Swedish Scouting.

The Scout Movement inspired other youth organizations. The Fascists and the Nazis used the Scout Movement as a role model to develop youth organizations based on outdoor activities, character training and an explicit moral/ethical code (Proctor, 2005). Both the Scout Movement and the *Hitler Jugend* combined youth, nation and nature (Cupers, 2008).

Today, the Scout Movement is spread all over the world with one of the largest organizations being The Boy Scouts of America, with its 6 million members. There are only six countries where Scouting does not exist: Andorra, China, North Korea, Laos and Myanmar (Davies, Churly, & Bowden, 2006). Some countries, such as the United States, have separate Scouting for girls and boys, whereas in other countries, such as Sweden, Scouting is coeducational. There are two international scout organizations, one for girls (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts or WAGGGS) and one for both sexes (World Organization of the Scout Movement or WOSM). Together they have 38 million members (Proctor, 2009a, 2009b). One requirement to be a member of one of the two international scout organizations is that the national scout association has a scout law and a scout promise. Only one national organization is recognized in each country. Scouts Canada and the Association des Scouts du Canada are, for example, jointly recognized by WOSM as the National Scout organization of Canada (Davies et al., 2006).

In Sweden, there are five scout associations with different ideological and religious profiles and a partner association. It is the partner association that represents Sweden at the international level. The aim of the Swedish Scout Movement is to enable young people to develop into responsible global citizens, based on the values expressed in the scout law and the scout promise. The Swedish Scout Movement has 90,000 members (A. Åkesson, Director of Membership Development at the Swedish Guide and Scout Council, Sweden, personal communication, October 21, 2009). According to Sidebäck (1992), Swedish scouting has changed during the years from being bourgeoisie, military and nationalistic to being a nature and outdoor organization based on religion, but without any specific view of society and politics.

There are several reasons why research in this field is important. The Scout Movement is an educational, voluntary, non-profit and non-governmental organization that arranges leisure activities for children and young people, but it is understudied by scholars (Proctor, 2009a; Warren, 2009). Scouting is both global and adapted to different countries. Guiding and Scouting work simultaneously at local, national and international levels. Each of these levels can be investigated (Warren, 2009) and because of that, new knowledge about the movement can be interesting and contribute to new knowledge from each of these perspectives.

### Approach and method

The aim of this article is to explore discourses surrounding the Swedish Scout Movement and young people. The exploration concentrates on media and on the Swedish Scout Movement's own communication strategy. It seeks to investigate questions of being/becoming young within scouting as a leisure activity. The discourses that are

expressed are analyzed by paying particular attention to negotiations that occur between them. It also pays particular attention to the consequences that these discourses may have, the ways of being young that are made possible and the ways that are excluded.

“Discourses are frameworks of meaning produced in language” (Alldred & Burman, 2005, p. 178). Discourses, such as journalism and education, produce knowledge about what constitutes youth, “. . . about how we should interpret it and define it within our particular historical moment.” Discourses continually shift, change and alter. They exist as a part of a system of power relations in which negotiation takes place (Campbell, 2004, pp. 2–3).

Two types of data are used in this study. One source of data consists of newspaper articles about the Scout Movement. A Swedish database called “Mediaarkivet” (Media Archive) is used. I have searched articles in the Swedish press from 2007 to 2009 with “scout” as search term and found 2032 articles during the years of interest. The articles were read carefully and thoroughly and then sorted to eliminate any article that was not about the Scout Movement. The remaining 1106 articles qualifying for analysis were then categorized with new categories created whenever an article did not fit into an existing category. The derived categories that are specifically related to young people are discussed in this article. The categories illustrate different ways of talking about young people who are scouts. Some of the articles portray young people and in others, young people speak for themselves.

The other type of data used in the study are leaflets that are produced by the Swedish Scout Movement that are used to recruit new members. “Redo för kommunikation” (Prepared to communicate) describes how members can contribute with a positive and coherent image of guides and scouts (The Swedish Guide & Scout Council, 2008b); “Redo för livet” (Prepared for life) describes the values of the movement (The Swedish Guide & Scout Council, 2008c); and “Redo för äventyr” (Prepared for adventure) describes the scout method (The Swedish Guide & Scout Council, 2008a). All leaflets are produced by the Swedish Guide and Scout Council, which is a federation between the five Swedish scout organizations. The leaflets were analyzed by considering both the pictures and words used to communicate these key messages.

This study is focused on the years 2007–2009. The Swedish Scout Movement was celebrating its first one hundred years during this period. It was also working to reorganize itself and recruit new members. In these two ways, the period was expected to provide examples where discourses about young people are expressed. The Scout Movement’s new communication strategies indicate changes not only in the movement but also in its view of youth. The old strategies were no longer believed to work in communicating the movement’s key messages. The way the movement is experienced by others, here represented by media, contributes another dimension: is the movement described as old fashioned, out of date and with no chance to survive? Is it not discussed at all? Or is it thought to be able to reorganize itself with a good chance to attract new generations of young people? In these aspects, the Scout Movement serves as an example where contemporary youth discourses are expressed.

## Results

Most of the articles examined were about Sweden, even though the Scout Movement is international. One article even portrays scouting as “the essence of being Swedish” (Svensson, 2007, July 19). During 2007, scouting celebrated its first one hundred years and stamps were issued, large camps were arranged and a new scout uniform was launched.

Evidence of the centenary celebrations is reflected in the highly visible profile of the scouting jubilee in the newspaper material examined. Parallel to the media descriptions of these extra activities, a category of articles concerned everyday activities that occurred regularly in each of the seasons. In February, there are invitations to try activities during the sport holiday (every school in Sweden has a 1 week holiday during winter when children and youth are encouraged to do winter sport activities). In April, there are invitations to the celebration of Walpurgis Night and in June, to Midsummer Night. In July and August, newspapers report about summer camps (in Sweden, schools are closed between the middle of June and until the middle of August). At the end of August, schools start again and scout groups advertise for new members. In November and December, the year ends with autumn and Christmas fairs. All 3 years examined in the study show the same pattern of articles over the seasons. In many ways, these activities are in no way spectacular. On the contrary, they seem to be ordinary and everyday activities, even though the articles on these activities often present them in news item style. At the same time, these seasonal activities are not part of scouts' everyday lives – they represent something other than their ordinary meetings.

In the following, I will describe four different, but interrelated images of young people that are expressed in the newspaper material and in the scout leaflets. The result is described as two controversies. Two aspects are of particular interest: articles that break the previously described ordinary pattern and how different discourses relate to each other.

### *Well-behaved?*

A category of the articles portrays scouts as well-behaved, helpful and decent. One article, for example, reported about an 11-year-old boy who saved his mother's life when a nut stuck in her throat. He placed himself behind her back and pushed her stomach, which he had learned during scout meetings (Edblom, 2008, March 13). Another example was an article that reported an interview with a man who had arranged Christmas fairs for the last 8 years and said that he "wants to invest in young people that play football, are engaged in church or are active as scouts." He says that he knows that "they will become decent people and that he himself has experiences of this since he has been a scout leader" (Thomasson, 2008, November 28). A third example reported on a 14-year-old boy and his mother, who were interviewed about computer games. Oscar said that he is tired of negative media images of computer gaming. He told about how, years ago, he started to hang out with the wrong people and it was computer gaming that saved his life. Today he "does his job in school, is an active scout, meets friends in the weekends and has ambitions" (Aronsson, 2008, April 16). Oscar's membership in the Scout Movement is almost treated as a guarantee for that his life is different today compared to earlier.

Not all the articles deal specifically with scouts. Scout meetings and "be prepared" are sometimes used as metaphors to describe other things; in other words, scouts and scouting are referenced in a way that reveals popular perceptions about them. One article reported that a music club has a summer camp and that it is the best in the world. "It is the complete opposite to a scout camp; here you can have alcohol without supervision" (Reinholdtson Belfrage, Ljung, & Ljunggren, 2007, July 18). Another journalist wrote about a hockey match. "There was no violence in the arena and it was peaceful as a scout meeting" (Härd, 2007, January 19). In a column about the Internet, a third article compared the Internet with the scouts: "There is always someone prepared to help and someone who needs help" (Stenström, 2007, January 13). These metaphors also give an image of scouts as well-behaved, helpful and decent.

The most obvious example of “the well-behaved look,” however, was in a column about being young, coming to town and having to advertise for an apartment. According to the columnist, you have no choice, but to write perky advertisements:

I am very well-behaved, nice and non-smoking, have no animals, no troubles, do not complain, love being at home, am silent and have good references (PS I have also been a scout) (Wallin, 2008, December 29).

“The well-behaved look” is something that the movement uses in its own recruiting leaflets. They choose to compare themselves with sports when they write: “We have no players’ bench,” “We have a place for everyone in the team,” and “We are good friends with each other” (The Swedish Guide & Scout Council, 2008c). These slogans are illustrated with an empty bench and children who are playing football.

The image of scouts as well-behaved and decent is, however, questioned and commented upon in other articles. One category of articles focused on alcohol and sex in scouting. In the summer of 2007, one article reported that a scout camp was running out of disinfectant alcohol for the toilets: “Now leaders have been told to keep an extra eye on the 20,000 scouts so that they don’t get drunk on the caustic and purging liquid” (TT, 2007, July 20). Another article reported that lots of people are falling in love with rumours that the “toilets are used for more than toilet visits” (Habul, 2007b, July 21). The same journalist reported that thousands of condoms have been distributed. A 16-year-old girl and her 18-year-old boyfriend were interviewed and they comment that there is a prejudice that scouts are geeky and chaste. They themselves think that scouts are the same as everyone else and that perhaps the only difference is that they are a little more sober (Habul, 2007a, July 21).

In summary, this “controversy” demonstrates two opposite ideas of young people who are scouts: (1) “the well-behaved scout” and (2) the scout “who is not as well-behaved as he/she seems to be.”

### *Uncool or youthful*

Another category of articles presents scouts as being boring. One article about the national football team said that the team is “stable, boring, but always prepared as scouts out walking in the woods” (Lindstrand, 2008, September 9). A second example reported on an interview with a Swedish professor of ethnology on the topic of the celebration of the national day. The professor says that it has been “geeky” and a lot of “marching with Home Guards, scout parades, and the Society of Home Districts” (Andersson, 2008, June 5). In a third article, the journalist noted that Dolly Parton has become a member of the local scout company in her home town. The journalist writes that he never considered joining, but is more likely to do so now, because Dolly has joined, and now he knows more people than just the Swedish king who are older than 12 years of age and still members of the movement (Göteborgsposten, 2007, June 19). In my interpretation, this article is a way of celebrating Dolly Parton, but also of making fun of the Swedish king (who is an active scout, both nationally and internationally) and the Scout Movement. In summary, this category describes scouting as boring, uncool and non-attractive for everyone except for the youngest.

That scouting is boring or geeky is something that is questioned by the members of the movement itself. In a letter to the editor, one scout writes that you should have no doubts about becoming a member. It is not geeky as some people think. You are not in the woods, collecting leaves and reading maps. You do other stuff and got to know a lot of people. The



writer also recommends joining scouting if you feel lonely in school and promises that you will get new friends. He or she finishes the letter by encouraging readers to bring everyone they know to the nearest scout group (93:an, 2007, August 14).

In “Prepared to communicate,” which is a communication policy document, the scouts write that they want to position themselves as a modern youth organization “that makes young people prepared for life by fun, meaningful and experiencing leisure activities.” They stress that young people should represent the movement and describe that many people think that scouting is only about “tying knots in the woods.” They ask their members which part of scouting they want to communicate and encourage them to consider what they want to show if they meet a journalist. What motive should be photographed? They emphasize that it is young people who should represent scouting and be seen in the pictures (The Swedish Guide & Scout Council, 2008b, p. 18). There is also a section of the leaflet arguing that pictures have a high believability and that they can mediate the core of the activity; in other words, pictures can be used to challenge people’s perceptions about scouts. When choosing pictures, some keywords to guide their selection, according to the leaflet, are diversity, modern, youth, enjoyment and activity (The Swedish Guide & Scout Council, 2008b).

This strategy is used in “Prepared for life,” the leaflet that describes the values of scouting. The leaflet contains a photo of a boy who does a skate trick in a glade. The text explains that: “We have nature as our living room.” Another photo is of a girl dressed in a hood sweater. She has a bat in her hand. The text explains that “Scouts believe in themselves” and that they “want more youth gangs” (The Swedish Guide & Scout Council, 2008c). This last photo might need some explanation. The aim of using “we want more youth gangs” as an expression is to symbolize the scout method, in which working in small teams plays a central part. In Sweden, they are named “patrols”. The aim of using this expression in combination with the photo of the girl is to signal youthfulness and that scouts are not as well-behaved as they seem to be.

In summary, this second “controversy” also demonstrates two different ideas of young people who are scouts: (1) “the uncool scout” and (2) “the youthful scout”.

## Discussion

The aim of this article is to explore the discourses surrounding the contemporary Swedish Scout Movement and young people. The concluding discussion summarizes and analyzes the discourses that were found. What do the newspaper articles and leaflets tell us about being a young scout?

### *“The well-behaved look”*

There are articles that describe scouts as well-behaved, helpful and decent, but there are also articles that describe scouts as boring and uncool. The newspaper articles and the leaflets demonstrate that the scouts feel comfortable in their own context, but are misunderstood and/or misperceived by others. In this respect, it is not so odd that the Scout Movement has a strategy to show a positive and coherent image of the movement, arranges courses for young spokespersons and encourages its members to wear the scout uniform in everyday life for one special day. These are efforts that acknowledge that they need to work on their image in other contexts than their own. Nor is it strange that an individual scout expects to get a few comments when wearing a scout uniform in school, even if that expectation at this specific time is not fulfilled.

This study indicates that “the well-behaved look” is used as a way to promote the movement. The quality is exposed by comparing scouting with sports: “We have no players’ bench.” The study also indicates that the well-behaved look can be troublesome. It can be experienced as boring, a little bit naïve and untrue. The look is challenged by articles about scouts who drinks or have sex.

### *Youthfulness as a way of promoting scouts and guides*

Youthfulness is something with which others who are no longer “young” themselves want to be associated (Jones, 2009). The Scout Movement organizes children, young people and adults (the later ones as leaders), but wishes to promote itself as a youthful organization. Young people are encouraged to represent the movement in external communications. This can be seen against a background that the movement is undergoing a modernization process and is working to recruit new members. By presenting an image of youthfulness, it represents a strategy presumed to attract new members. The strategy with accenting youthfulness also can be viewed against the background of the surrounding society’s “misconception” of the movement. In the newspaper material, the Scout Movement appears as boring, uncool and non-attractive to everyone except the youngest.

The Scout Movement appears to be an organization that primarily serves younger children. That is why it might become important for young people, no longer children themselves, to describe the Scout Movement as uncool. In order to attract youth, it in turn becomes important for the Scout Movement to define itself as a youth movement and to propagate for that it is non-geeky to be a young scout. This apparent contradiction, or the different ways to talk about the Scout Movement, as uncool or non-geeky, addressed to children or addressed to youth, is very apparent in the empirical material.

It is among young people that the Scout Movement has the greatest trouble with its image. In order to change its image among young people and to challenge people’s ideas about the movement, the Scout Movement’s strategy is to use pictures. The selection of pictures is made with youth as a keyword (The Swedish Guide & Scout Council, 2008b). The leaflet’s skateboard, hood and bat are intended therefore to signal youth and youthfulness (The Swedish Guide & Scout Council, 2008c).

The Scout Movement has a problem attracting young people. The young people who are members of the movement have a problem with other people’s prejudices. By using attributes of other youth cultures, the movement tries to change its image. The paradox is that this leads to a conclusion that the Scout Movement’s young members are not counted as youthful by their own organization. They are not thought to be able to signal youthfulness by themselves. They are young, but not youthful. This says something not only about the Scout Movement but also about a dominating youth discourse.

Earlier youth research demonstrates that a romanticizing youth discourse is common. It is also common with the other polarity: to talk about youth as problem (Campbell, 2004). In comparison, concern for others, respect for adults and a touch of innocence is a more neglected view of youth (Valentine et al., 1998). One explanation might be that being good could have social consequences for young people. You could be counted as a geek among peers (Sanders & Munford, 2008). The alternatives to being counted as youthful are thus few and the repertoire to choose from is limited. Are there no other alternatives than the two polarities? Do you have to be dangerous to be counted as youthful? How about the well-behaved, the ordinary or the boring youth? How about combining being fun, cool *and* a scout?

Are scouts youthful? In my interpretation, the scout through his/her membership is risking not being counted as youthful. To be in a protected milieu and being well-behaved,

helpful and decent deviate from a dominating youth discourse. From the risk of not being counted as youthful, scouts have a need to show that they are not different compared with other young people. They are even encouraged to demonstrate that they are not uncool. To dress in a scout uniform in everyday life, like the man whom I met in the street, is therefore not only about challenging people's ideas about the Scout Movement. In my interpretation, it is also about moving positions and making the space for young people larger. It is about challenging a dominating youth discourse. That is why the young man's walk in town is not only about himself and the movement he represents, but also about the image of young people.

The Scout Movement's ambition to position itself as a youth organization also indicates something about childhood, which is almost silenced to promote and accentuate youthfulness. It is not as cool to be a child as to be a young person. Children and childhood are not used to change the image of the movement or to recruit new members. Being "childish" does not have the same potential as being "youthful" for repositioning the Scout Movement. The problem for the Scout Movement thus illustrates the challenge with organizing activities for children and young people under the same roof and the associated challenge of keeping the same girls and boys interested from their childhood into their youth.

### Conclusion

To conclude, the empirical material appears to demonstrate that "youthful" and "well-behaved" seem to be opposing ideas with respect to the Scout Movement. In particular, it demonstrates that the combination of being fun, cool and a scout is difficult to handle for young people who are members of the Scout Movement. They have to balance between their own and others' ideas of being young – and a scout. To participate in a leisure activity aimed at enabling young people to develop in meaningful ways seems to run against the core idea of being youthful. This is a great challenge for all different kinds of organized leisure activities, but also for young people wanting to take part in them. The Scout Movement and other leisure activities, therefore, have to work with their image in order to remain attractive to young people. They have to help their members to be able to be both young and youthful.

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### Note

1. The Swedish Scout Movement is coeducational. In Swedish, "Scout" is a word used for both sexes. I will use it in the same way throughout this article.

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