



Growing Girls

The Natural Origins of Girls' Organizations in America

by Susan A Miller

DESCRIPTION

In the early years of the twentieth century, Americans began to recognize adolescence as a developmental phase distinct from both childhood and adulthood. This awareness, however, came fraught with anxiety about the debilitating effects of modern life on adolescents of both sexes. For boys, competitive sports as well as "primitive" outdoor activities offered by fledgling organizations such as the Boy Scouts would enable them to combat the effeminacy of an overly civilized society. But for girls, the remedy wasn't quite so clear.

Surprisingly, the "girl problem"—a crisis caused by the transition from a sheltered, family-centered Victorian childhood to modern adolescence where self-control and a strong democratic spirit were required of reliable citizens—was also solved by way of traditionally masculine, adventurous, outdoor activities, as practiced by the Girl Scouts, the Camp Fire Girls, and many other similar organizations.

Susan A. Miller explores these girls' organizations that sprung up in the first half of the twentieth century from a socio-historical perspective, showing how the notions of uniform identity, civic duty, "primitive domesticity," and fitness shaped the formation of the modern girl.

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