

## Scouts In France

### **Thesis**

The scout organization in France was much different than the scout organization in the United States. One of the most significant differences between the countries scouting programs is the structure of the national organization in both countries and the coed ideals that exist in France.

### **History**

Father Jacque Sevin founded French scouting in 1920 after living in German occupied Belgium territory that was close to the French borders whilst teaching at a college. In 1954 through 1962, The Algerian war put a halt on Scouting in France and then after they tried to start the program again they had disputes on educational reform of scouting ideals. This eventually caused a separation into 5 main organizations each with their own scouting ideals and religious ideology. The five groups were: Eclaireuses et Eclaireurs de France which is interreligious, and has 35,000 members currently, Eclaireuses et Eclaireurs unionistes de France which is Protestant, and has 5,000 members currently, Eclaireuses et Eclaireurs israélites de France which is Jewish, Scouts et Guides de France which is Catholic, and has 70,000 members, currently, and Scouts Musulmans de France which is Muslim.

### **Organization of the Scouting Program In France**

In France, there are close to 250 different organizations of scouting however the five national organizations represent a majority of scouting groups and that make-up the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) and

the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) councils. The Scouting and Guides of France (SGDF) is the one I visited in France. However, there are multiple groups with different religious affiliations. I focused my research on the SGDF because where I was placed in France I only had the opportunity to research the SGDF.

SGDF is a catholic based branch of scouting as previously stated, however, it derived from two separate organizations, the Guides de France, and the Scouts de France. These two organization merged in 2004 to form what is known as the Scouts et Guides de France. Which is coed and holds scouting values similar to the ones held by Lord Baden Powell's program founded in 1908. In a Scout group representing the SGDF there are 6 main branches of scouting based primarily on age of the child. The 6 branches are Farfadets (Beavers) which are ages 6 to 8 years old, Louveteaux/Jeannettes (Cubs) which are ages 8 to 12 years old, Scouts/Guides which are ages 11 to 15 years old, Pionniers/Caravelles (Explorers) which are ages 14 to 17 years old, and Compagnons (Rovers) which are ages 17 to 21 years old. Each branch really is focuses on different aspects of scouting. For instance, the cubs focus more on teamwork and creativity, while the scouts focus more on the duties required to be a upstanding citizen in the community and also understanding religion to a deeper level. The explorers are where I spent the meeting for the most part. In the SGDF it has been voted on in the last couple years to have what would be called the "Project Initiative" which is focused primarily on the explorers.

The "Project Initiative" of the Scouts et Guides de France "offers young people

to become men and women that are happy, helpful, and work for justice and peace. This project is the home of the young and allows them to live together as a brotherhood or beyond borders. It revolves around six axes of advance that is the relationship to self, the body, the world, to others, and feelings of spirituality” (SGDF). This is the only ranking system in which the SGDF actually utilizes. They earn them by doing certain types of projects which they plan, organize, and execute with a small group, similar to a patrol, how often they switch groups varies by scout group. They also plan, for larger events, projects that tend to take a lot more work to build such as a zipline course or something. How they do this is, they break into smaller groups and brainstorm some ideas for the project. Then they get together with another group and talk about the advantages and disadvantages for some of the other group’s ideas. After the ordeal of narrowing each group’s ideas to 5 possibilities for projects, The whole group of explorers come together and they vote on a project to do at some large event such as a camporee or something. A camporee is a meeting of different groups to allow the continuous growth of culture.

### **Organization of the Scouting Program In The United States**

The United States uses a rank initiative to help keep kids interested in the program and by doing so, makes the ideal of teamwork not the focus of scouting in the United States. Although, teamwork is a crucial part of scouting around the world, even in the United States, the focus is on ranking up as an individual and reaching the prestigious rank of Eagle, and not as focused on teamwork between scouts. This idea of individual over the group is a common persona in the United

States, a capitalistic identified country, versus France a Socialistic identified country, which in scouting seems to value teamwork over the individual. One could argue that this difference in scouting between the United States and France is the most significant difference between the two scouting programs.

American scouts are separated by gender commonly in the United States. There is a similar program to the French scout program, through the national Boyscout organization called Venture Crew, which is a coed program and thus can be related to the SGDF. However these programs are not as common in most parts of the United States. In France there was a big educational reform that caused separation and before that it was similar to the way it was in America where there was one organization that represented scouting for the country.

The organization of the scout group is incredibly different. One would start cub scouting during their 1<sup>st</sup> grade year and continue till 5<sup>th</sup> grade and afterwards they search for a boy scout troop that they like and are in that group until they are 18 and after that you can become a scoutmaster or assistant scoutmaster. The Cub Scout groups are called a pack and the Boy Scout groups are called troops.

Cub scouts is led by parents and volunteers and the leader of the whole pack is named the Akela, and each year in scouting you rank up based on age the ranks respectively are: Tiger, Wolf, Bear, Webelos I, and Webelos II. The highest rank that can be achieved in Cub Scouts is "The Arrow of Light".

Boyscouts is a bit more complex. The troop is supposed to be primarily ran by the older boys and only have adult intervention if something dangerous or important happens. Otherwise, the boys solely run the troop. Elected leaders,

elected by their fellow scouts in the troop, run the troop. The main positions of power are the senior patrol leader who is in charge of the entire troop, the assistant senior patrol leader who aids in being in charge of the troop, patrol leaders who are in charge of their patrol which are usually made-up of about 6 people, and lastly assistant patrol leader who aides the patrol leader in taking charge of their patrol. There are other positions but the scoutmaster appoints these positions. They are minor positions however each rank requires a certain amount of time holding a leadership position in the troop to get ranked up. Thus people want these positions if they do not get one they cant continue to rank up for the next 6-month term. The ranks respectively are Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, Life, and Eagle.

### **Comparing French Scouts to American Scouts/ Conclusion**

As previously stated one could argue the most significant difference between French and American scouts is the Project versus Rank initiatives. Another possibility of being the most significant is being the coed versus non-coed in the organizations. The third and last major difference between the French and American scout programs is the Organization of the national programs and how In France there is nearly 250 different organizations consisting of 5 major organizations with different ideals and educational principles of scouting. Thus it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the lifestyle, ideals, principles, and organizational factors between the French and American Scouts