

Chapter 2:

The Stoneleigh Group and the Stoneleigh Project

Introduction

This thesis focuses upon the work of a network of voluntary youth agencies called the Stoneleigh Group and an informal outdoor education project that they developed. The network set out to explore whether a retreat-based approach to the outdoors could help with the transition of young people into adulthood and, in particular, if it could support marginalised young people in becoming agents of social change.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the Stoneleigh Group. It existed for five years from 2000 to 2004. This chapter provides a brief history of the origins of the Stoneleigh Group and outlines the Stoneleigh Project that was its main activity. The way the Stoneleigh Group understood its own structure and the roles of the people within are also explained. The second part of the chapter expands in more detail on the Stoneleigh Project, especially the retreats, and summarises some of the key results from the evaluation reports of interest to this thesis.

Quotations verbatim from the evidence of participants are indented when appropriate. In all these cases the source of the evidence is identified with a code. The meaning of the code and the sources of evidence are identified and explained in Appendix 2. This will sometimes be summarised in the text to help the reader place the person in context without turning to the appendices. It is intended that this will maintain the necessary rigour without disrupting the flow of the reading.

The Stoneleigh Group

The Stoneleigh Group was founded by Endeavour Training, a voluntary youth organisation and the Rank Foundation, an educational charity, in 2000. Together they convened a consortium of organisations involved in youth development, referred to below as the

partners, in order to create the Stoneleigh Project. The name derived from the place where the Stoneleigh Group met in the facilities of the Arthur Rank Centre at Stoneleigh. Although the Stoneleigh Group is, on the one hand, a term used to describe the network of partner organisations, it had autonomy as a separate organisation making decisions and initiating actions on behalf of the work it was commissioned by the partners to undertake. As a result it is referred to in this thesis in the singular. The network is referred to as the Stoneleigh Group partners. The aim of the Stoneleigh Group was

... to develop a programme of spiritual development and volunteer youth work to support the development of marginalised young people as agents of social change.

[D-J02(1701)]

The Stoneleigh Group included the voluntary youth organisations the Arthur Rank Centre, Eden Community Outdoors, Endeavour Training, Focus, Mobex, The Prince's Trust, and Weston Spirit; the educational charities Brahma Kumaris, the Foundation for Outdoor Adventure, the Iona Community, and the Wrekin Trust; and Threshold, an educational consultancy organisation. The Stoneleigh Group was funded by Endeavour Scotland, The Leadership Trust and The Rank Foundation together with contributions from the member organisations. Appendix 4 summarises the origins, aims and practices of each of these organisations.

I am the proprietor of Threshold and was the Stoneleigh Project evaluator throughout the life of the Stoneleigh Group. This opportunity emerged after encountering the Stoneleigh Group during the planning for their first pilot retreat whilst I was working for the Iona Community to evaluate Camas, the retreat venue first used by the Stoneleigh Group.

In their early documents the Stoneleigh Group defined their core beliefs as:

Participants can, with help, become agents of change in themselves and their communities.

In order to achieve this each person must be internally motivated and have a sense of his or her values, purpose and direction.

[R-SG(1100)]

The Stoneleigh Group drew on the writing of John Garnett (1999), a former director of the Industrial Society, to make their case. He called for new approaches and ‘liberating leadership’ built on interconnected networks, mutual trust, values, integrity, shared beliefs and strong relationships, which allow for real progress in personal and organisational achievement. In particular the Group quoted this extract from Garnett’s paper:

British society as a whole, and many groups large and small within it, face rising alienation, cynicism and exclusion. Without a new, values-based approach to leadership, the risk of social disintegration is both real and urgent.

The roots of the latent crisis lie in our failure as individuals, in organisations and communities, to realise our potential. This is sometimes because people don’t recognise their own capabilities, sometimes because they are prevented from exploiting them. The result is a growing number of people who have lost their identity, purpose or framework for living. In addition, the response to global competitive pressures is a gradual decline into the realms of the unethical; in the absence of shared visions society is increasingly focusing on the short term and the narrow values of consumerism reign instead of values based on human dignity.

[John Garnett (1999) quoted in D-SG(1501)]

The Stoneleigh Group’s literature placed the Stoneleigh Project in the context of youth work by claiming that a central belief of theirs was the potential of young people to, *with help* (my emphasis), transform their personal and social circumstances and so make an important contribution to society. Phil, the founder of the Stoneleigh Group and also founder of Endeavour Training, wrote:

The objectives are to encourage an adventurous approach to the development of mind, body and spirit of young aspirant leaders, in particular by the introduction of dialogue between living values and everyday life; to encourage qualities such as love, peace, wisdom, strength and joy as the core for our inner selves.

This process will empower young people with a willingness to become role models to their peers for the new millennium.

It is also our intention that this embryonic initiative, which departs from standard practice, will grow and influence the wider voluntary youth sector, nurturing a more compassionate and mature type of leadership for the future.

[D-R01(0300)]

The Stoneleigh Group claimed this approach was counter to some of the other current constructions of young people. They stated that ‘at a time in our society when the period of youth has extended to 25 years and beyond, policy directs funding largely at young people as ‘student’, ‘labour’ or ‘problem’ [R-C05(1000)]. They believed such policies ran the risk of ignoring and under-resourcing the opportunities for young people to express their citizenship through personal development and social action. They believed youth work provides a handrail and a safety net for some young people especially those that they believed were vulnerable. They believed there is a need for the wider development of youth activities, volunteering, mentoring and other intergenerational opportunities as part of this process. They claimed ‘informal educators can play their part by supporting active engagement in the community and the environment in a way that helps young people to find their own directions in social, moral and spiritual terms’. [R-C05(1000), p. 2]

For five years the Stoneleigh Group raised funds to pilot and develop the Stoneleigh Project and evaluate and disseminate this practice. Some partners, as part of a National Youth Agency consultation taking place at the initiative of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), also used the outcomes of the Stoneleigh Project to advocate for the place of spiritual development in the youth work curriculum.

Some partners were primarily involved in providing the Stoneleigh Project. Others helped identify and then support young volunteers and adult mentors through the programme. Another group were more involved in dissemination and advocacy work. Over 160 volunteers and mentors from nine different organisations had been involved by the time the Stoneleigh Project finished and this research was concluded. Initially Endeavour Training and then the Wrekin Trust provided administrative services and the work of the Stoneleigh Group was directed by a small management team chaired by Andy, an independent person. As the project evaluator I was part of this management team.

The Stoneleigh Group Partners and their Work

The partners in the Stoneleigh Group fell into two sets. The voluntary youth work organisations together with Camas, the youth centre of the Iona Community, and Threshold were interested in the development of a new educational approach on behalf of their young people. The educational charities were interested in what could be learned from this pilot about the spiritual development of young people that could inform policies and practices in the wider world of youth work.

The Voluntary Youth Work Organisations

Appendix 4 shows that the voluntary organisations that were partners in the Stoneleigh Group had a wide range of backgrounds, aims, strategies, client groups, sizes and locations. However, they hold several things in common. Social entrepreneurs founded them all, although these people were rooted in different eras and traditions of youth work practice. They are all concerned with supporting marginalised young people to engage successfully with adult life. They all make use of outdoor programmes as part of their approaches to informal education and they are all interested in the concept of spiritual development as a part of the process of youth development.

The Educational Charities

The educational charities are also diverse in their aims. Some are set up primarily to provide funding to projects they consider to be worthwhile. Others are concerned with the promotion of particular educational and, in one case, political beliefs. As with the

voluntary youth organisations, they were all established by social entrepreneurs, though again with diverse backgrounds. They are also all interested in supporting the development of young people and in the role of spiritual development in this process.

The Structure of the Stoneleigh Group

The Stoneleigh Group was loosely and dynamically bounded with mutual and hierarchical relations with other groups of a formal and informal nature. Some links were strong, established and regular. Others were weak, unfamiliar and occasional. Most individuals and organisations were located in several of these overlapping groups.

The model of the Stoneleigh Group's structure (Appendix 5: The Four Umbrellas of the Stoneleigh Group and its Network) was developed by the management team in order to help it in its task of thinking about its work. This was done after the first pilot project in order to become clearer about what certain terms meant, understand how individuals and groups related to each other, and clarify formal roles within the Stoneleigh Project to help manage these roles and relations. The terminology used in this thesis is the same as that used by the members of the Stoneleigh Group.

As shown in Appendix 5 the management team perceived the structure of the Stoneleigh Group and its relations with other organisations as a series of four overlapping umbrellas. The umbrellas were thought of as hierarchical with each higher level overarching the one below and extending beyond to other organisations/umbrellas outside the Stoneleigh

Group. Relationships between individuals and organisations at each umbrella level were thought of as mutual.

The Four Umbrellas

One set of individuals formed the lowest of the umbrellas; the management team. They directed the Stoneleigh Project. An individual from each of Endeavour Training, Weston Spirit, the Wrekin Trust and two from Threshold, plus a chair for the team, invited to fill the role on an independent basis, made up the Stoneleigh Project management team. They met at least four times per year. In practice these core individuals were committed to, and took responsibility for, the Stoneleigh Group's concept and maintained the support of their organisations.

A larger group of individuals and their organisations formed the second umbrella level. They actively participated as users of the Stoneleigh Project by sending young people and mentors to retreats and supporting them in advance and on return. They were involved in the development of the programme and took a close interest in the results both for their participants and in respect of the advocacy work. These constituted the Stoneleigh Group who gathered biannually at a forum.

A larger group of representatives of other youth work organisations constituted the third umbrella level. They were interested in participating in the future or offered support or services. They were consulted by the Stoneleigh Group and invited to forum and conference events. Lastly, the top umbrella was composed of a wider network of people and organisations interested in but not active in the work or who the Stoneleigh Group sought to influence. They were invited to conferences and kept informed in other ways.

Formal Events

The Stoneleigh Group organised certain events as its main formal activities. Some were developed in order to inform and consult interested parties about the Stoneleigh Project. Some were devices for advocacy work beyond the Stoneleigh Group. The management team arranged biannual forums from 2000 to 2003 (see Table 1 below) in order to report

back to the full Stoneleigh Group on the Stoneleigh Project and the ongoing evaluation work, and to inform and consult the Group on future plans. A conference was convened at the conclusion of each phase of funding in 2002 and 2004. These were held in order to report to, receive feedback from, and seek to influence, a wider community of people and organisations.

Advocacy Networks

The Stoneleigh Group set out to create a space in which a new form of youth work practice could be developed *via* a pilot project. They were successful in setting up an additional means of communication to that of the established channels within youth work networks. This included a considerable number of voluntary youth work organisations as well as youth work agencies for the statutory and voluntary sectors, academics, civil servants, and government ministers. Key events in this work were the two invitation conferences held by the Stoneleigh Group in February 2002 and May 2004 as shown in Table 1 below.

The theme that formed the focus of this network was that of how spiritual development for young people could be provided. The development of this theme through this network is one of the focuses of this research and will be considered in Chapter 13. At this point it is worth noting that it was an explicit aspiration of the Stoneleigh Group to influence practice and policy concerning spiritual development as part of the youth work curriculum at organisational and institutional levels. This network was developed in order to achieve this. The Stoneleigh Group wanted this influence to take the form of a dialogue and the desired outcome was to support the active development of spirituality in the youth work curriculum together with the dissemination of examples of good practice.

Table 1: The Stoneleigh Project: Calendar of Events

Date	Event
May 2000	The Stoneleigh Group is formed.
Sept. 2000	The first group of participants are invited to the first retreat at Camas, Isle of Mull, as a pilot.
Dec. 2000	The first Camas follow-up weekend, Silesian Sisters, Cumbria.
2001	Major funding secures the first phase of the project.
2001	The first Stoneleigh Group forum in Coventry.
May 2001	The second group of participants go to Camas.
Sept. 2001	The second Camas follow-up weekend, Global Retreat Centre, Oxford.
Sept. 2001	The third group of participants go to Camas.
Dec. 2001	The third Camas follow-up weekend.
Feb. 2002	The first round of evaluation is completed and the first conference is held at Stoneleigh.
Mar. 2002	A second round of funding launches the second phase of the project.
Apr. 2002	Paper given to conference at Brathay Hall, Cumbria.
Jul. 2002	Paper given at ESRC Young People's conference, Keele University.
Sept. 2002	The fourth and last group of participants go to Camas.
Feb. 2003	The second Stoneleigh Group Forum at Stoneleigh.
Apr. 2003	A training camp is held at Cae Mabon, Gwynedd.
Oct. 2003	A group of participants go to Gillerthwaite, Cumbria.

Dec. 2003	Gillerthwaite follow up weekend at Gillerthwaite.
Mar. 2004	A group of participants go to Cae Mabon.
May 2004	The second phase of evaluation is complete, a report produced and the second conference is held at The Global Retreat Centre in Oxford.

Roles

Various functional roles within the Stoneleigh Group emerged during the pilots of the Stoneleigh Project. These roles and the labels that were used by the Stoneleigh Group to define them are shown in Table 2 below.

This diversity of roles taken by different people is unusual in the informal educational practice of the Stoneleigh Group partners. The typical roles would be a youth worker, perhaps attempting to fulfil several or many of these roles, with one or more young people. Volunteers and mentors would sometimes enrich this arrangement. This model describes what the partners thought to be an unusual cross-generational mix and a gradation of roles from youth to adult. With the exception of managers and administrators all these roles were present during the retreats, one of the focuses of this research.

The term ‘participant’ in this thesis refers to anyone in the Stoneleigh Group who was involved in the co-operative inquiry that formed a central aspect of the evaluative study.

Table 2: The Formal Roles of the Participants within the Stoneleigh Group

Label	Role
Management group member	The people chosen to represent the Stoneleigh Group as a management team organising the projects, co-ordinating the evaluation, arranging other events, mailings and fund raising.
Administrator	Marketing, recruiting and co-ordinating the retreats and follow-up weekends.
Facilitators	The people who co-facilitate the retreats and follow-up weekends.
Volunteer hosts	The people who form the adult community hosting the young people and mentors on the retreats.
Mentors	The adults who act as the supporting bridge for the participants between the partner organisation and the retreats. Ideally these people attend the retreat.
Young people	The young people who have been invited for leadership development. They may be employees, volunteers or clients in the partner organisations.
Participants	All the above who were involved in the participative inquiry.
Evaluators	I, and on occasion others, who co-ordinated and undertook the evaluation of the Project.

Adapted from Management Report, Stoneleigh Group, 2003 [R-C05(6403)].

The Young People

The Stoneleigh Project was developed for marginalised young people who were potential leaders and volunteers within the network of voluntary organisations forming the Stoneleigh Group. It was felt that such people had a talent and enthusiasm for helping others, for making a contribution in various activities, had already displayed interest, aptitude and commitment in these areas, and had basic skills in youth work and personal development training.

The Stoneleigh Group sought out these young people within their organisations and set out to prepare them as peer educators, role models and community leaders capable of working in support of other young people. Their intention was to empower them by encouraging them to cultivate a greater sense of identity, self-worth and an ability to help others.

The Stoneleigh Project

The Stoneleigh Project consisted of a preparation phase arranged between the young people and their mentors and held within the voluntary youth organisation. This was followed by a retreat and follow up weekend and a mentored project back in the voluntary organisation. Young people, mentors, volunteer hosts, facilitators and evaluators attended the retreats. As the calendar of events shown in Table 1 above indicates, one cohort participated in the pilot Stoneleigh Project in 2000. Two more cohorts undertook the programme in 2001 and another in 2002. The last two cohorts completed their programmes in 2003 and 2004.

The first phase of funding in 2000 allowed the Stoneleigh Group to develop the Stoneleigh Project in collaboration with Camas, a residential retreat on the island of Mull and part of the Iona Community. Camas was chosen because of its reputation for spiritual development with young people, its claims to work in an egalitarian style, and its concerns with social justice. Being at Camas involves joining a group of young adult volunteers already in residence for the summer as an intentional reflective community. The Stoneleigh Group wished to explore this approach as a central part of its curriculum. The second phase of funding allowed the Stoneleigh Group to develop the retreats at other locations. These were populated entirely by Stoneleigh Group members.

As indicated above, the full programme of the Stoneleigh Project was intended to last for months or years and was meant to involve a mentored, volunteer role as well as community-based activities and residential retreats. The essential elements, as they were identified by those involved in the Stoneleigh Group after the first round of piloting, are listed in this extract below from the evaluation report.

The recipe can be summarised as made up of the following ingredients:

Selection: Choosing the volunteers that will benefit from the retreat and mentoring and choosing the mentors/elders to work with them. Volunteers lacking in confidence and direction but looking for a way to move forward had benefited most from the project in the way the Stoneleigh Group intended. Younger or more vulnerable participants had also benefited but not in the intended way. Mentors worked best when they were chosen by the volunteer and when they had a personal interest in the project.

Mentoring: The process of support before, during, and after the retreat had been varied and variously successful. When the mentor is chosen by the volunteer and the process is well established in a mutual sense of trust and respect then the best outcomes for the longest duration were obtained.

Remote and simple retreat: These elements allowed the people on retreat to encounter a more natural sense of themselves. There was time and dramatic surroundings to stimulate reflection. It offered a different way of being and space from which to reflect on the culture in which people were normally so embedded it was hard to gain perspective.

Community: Experiencing others living in a community of mutual respect provided the safe space, support, and expectation that the purpose of the retreat could be addressed. It also provided a clear example of how people might relate to each other and to the environment creating rich opportunities for ethical inquiry. The intergenerational membership, diversity of roles, and volunteer ethic all contributed to the quality of this aspect of the experience.

Mutuality: The style of living in the communities was egalitarian. This was found to be the most critical success factor. It helped establish a sense of trust, respect and mutuality. The twin tasks of working out how to live together (preparing meals, collecting firewood, cleaning, gardening) and co-creating a programme that addressed the purpose of the retreats (from the landscape around and the skills and

enthusiasms of the community members) made for a dynamic that effectively supported the project's purpose every time.

Follow up: The ways in which volunteers have accessed support after the retreats has been diverse partly from choice and partly from circumstance. The most consistently valued and used form of support has been the follow up weekends. Other approaches have included staying in touch with the mentors, joining in the programme of a different partner organisation, taking extension opportunities through the network within and beyond the group, and returning to the programme in a new role.

Politically engaged: A retreat on its own would be restorative or developmental but would not, perhaps, make such a consistent or direct impact on the roles the volunteers took in their communities. The context of the voluntary organisation and the mentor created and supported the expectation that the volunteers would act on their reflections. This might take the form of new projects or addressing unresolved personal problems or ambitions. Equally it could take the form of existing work entered into with different values and intentions.

[R-C05(6303)]

Whilst the residential retreats were consistently well attended the evaluation [R-C05(1000)] of this phase concluded that the length and quality of mentoring and volunteering after a retreat varied between individuals and organisations. The second phase of piloting set out to build on this early experience by attempting to develop the community based mentoring element and by experimenting with the retreat experience at venues other than Camas and run entirely by Stoneleigh Group people. It was this second phase of piloting that allowed me to continue to research the Stoneleigh Project and especially to explore the questions raised in this thesis by introducing a longitudinal study of the trajectories of some of the young people involved.

Spirituality, Leadership and a Curriculum of Values

In the early days of the development of the Stoneleigh Project values were thought of as the core curriculum and spirituality as an organising and promotional theme. For the Stoneleigh Project, this approach was initially determined by the need to reach young people who distrusted education, adults, and institutions. The intention was to give the young people a say in the curriculum of the programme and offer an experience that listened to the young people and their views of the world and role modelled a mutual style of relationships between adults. The Stoneleigh Group partners thought that this would be a good way to engage young people with the Stoneleigh Project.

Leadership as an outcome for the programme was a central vision. However, it was initially rejected as a curriculum for the retreats. Although outdoor approaches to informal education for young people have traditionally claimed a student centred approach, and this may be a fair description in relation to formal education or vocational training, Colin, the director of the main funding body, and Phil, the director of one of the youth agencies, were critical of accepted outdoor leadership training as an approach. Perhaps implicit in this criticism is the view that earlier forms of outdoor youth work, such as those discussed in Chapter 5, held value-laden, social engineering agendas. Colin was seeking a more liberal approach. He thought that such a style might provide a way to encourage young people to develop, believe in, and apply their own values rather than adopt those of a society whose values he saw as in need of transformation.

The idea of a retreat as a means to support a spiritual approach to youth development started with an influential experience that inspired Colin. This is discussed further in Chapter 9. He thought it would be an effective way to explore the values of young people. Colin, the major conceptual thinker in the early days of the Stoneleigh Group, thought young people were ‘a source of critical reflection on society and ... a major opportunity for the development of new values’ [N-C01(0299)]. He claimed his motivation for working with the Project was his own belief that ‘the idealism of young people in touch with their core values is a force for good in the world’ [N-C01(0299)]. He believed that, if these ideals were supported, they would flourish and the young people holding them would become agents of change in a world desperately in need of a restoration or even

transformation of values. In his view this constituted the need for a form of spiritual development. He thought this was because they were alienated from conventional religion that, in his view, was too authoritarian to appeal to the young people of today.

Colin believed that there is a breakdown in the process by which young people develop and act on their values systems. This he associated with a breakdown in some of the institutions of society, particularly education and religion. Whilst bemoaning the former for the way it excluded and let down young people in their development as citizens he seemed more comfortable with the reduction in the role of religion. He felt that the role of the Church in supporting values development directly or indirectly was diminishing and that it should diminish. He thought of it as still imparting traditional values rather than supporting the transformation he sought. He suggested that, 'in today's plural world, it is more a matter of young people developing their own values directly from experience rather than from a process of cultural transfer' [N-C01(0299)]. Colin was focussed on helping the development of, and supporting the application of, the values held by young people, rather than them acquiring them unquestioningly through institutions such as the Church. He thought that established institutions were not well adapted to respond to the moral changes taking place in society. He saw the values that he believed were held by many young people as an important way to address his and their concerns about the society they lived in and their opportunities within it.

Colin found an ally in Phil, a director of one of the voluntary youth organisations with which the Rank Foundation already had links. They both believed that having the chance to develop core values helped build identity and purpose. This, they both claimed, was spiritual development. They believed that 'purpose' would or should contain an element of transformation. In their early thinking the notion of transformation embraced several ideas. To begin with the Stoneleigh Group understood it as the process of addressing, through one's own efforts, personal issues such as an unhealthy self-concept, lack of confidence, weak family and social networks, or poor educational outcomes. Colin also understood transformation to be about finding new purposeful and fulfilling pathways forward. Lastly he thought it should also concern the young people in the work of transforming social issues in the wider community.

Colin and Phil decided to use the term 'leadership' to describe agency that resulted in social change and they thought the site of this process of transformation would be work, both voluntary and paid. In some cases, then, they thought it was the individual who was transformed for and through work. In other situations they thought that, as well as the individual, it was the nature and meaning of the work and through this the wider values of society that were also transformed.

The early partners recruited by Phil to the Stoneleigh Group were all interested in the development of values in young people. Phil, in an early briefing paper for organisations interested in joining the Stoneleigh Group wrote:

The objectives are to encourage an adventurous approach to the development of mind, body and spirit of young aspirant leaders, in particular by the introduction of dialogue concerning living values to everyday life. To encourage qualities such as love, peace, wisdom, strength and joy as the core for our inner selves.

The outer expressions of these qualities as spiritual values are;

Care

compassion

tolerance

respect

honesty

humility

co-operation

a sense of reverence

and a sense of destiny.

This process will empower young people with a willingness to become role models to their peers for the new millennium.

[CD-SG(0400)]

The Retreats

Part of this thesis is focussed on aspects of the retreat programme and its effect on the young people involved. The first four retreats were held at Camas on Mull between 2000 and 2002 (see Table 1 above). A further two retreats were held in 2003 and 2004, one at Cae Mabon in North Wales and one at Gillerthwaite in Cumbria. The community of people living at Camas for the summer hosted the Mull retreats. Communities put together from the members of the Stoneleigh Group partners hosted the other retreats.

The retreats provided the opportunity for participants to join these small communities, living simply in a remote location for six to ten days. The benefits of simplicity and remoteness were highlighted. Those who went on retreat were the young people and the adult elders or mentors from the voluntary organisations together with a specialist facilitator who was engaged to direct the week.

In its briefing paper to potential members the Stoneleigh Group defined the aims of the retreats as twofold:

To allow participants to discover more about themselves, their values, their ambitions and their future courses of actions and

To prepare young people as peer educators, role models and community leaders.

[M-SG(0900)]

The literature sent to the participants described the aims differently by stating that the retreats provide an opportunity to ask the questions ‘Who am I? What do I believe in? Where am I going?’ [R-SG(1100)].

The Evaluation Study

The Stoneleigh Group set out to evaluate the Stoneleigh Project as part of the central task of the pilot. The results of the study were intended to inform the unfolding practice and

then to support the advocacy work. The brief to the evaluator asked for three outcomes. The first, which was the focus of the first phase of funding, was to provide a rich description of the pedagogic practices and content of the programme. The second asked the evaluator to explore this in greater depth and to carry out a study of the effect of the programme on the young people. During the second phase of the Project the evaluator was also asked for a report on the impact of the programme in relation to the main aim of the Stoneleigh Group, that is 'to create agents of social change'.

The first round of evaluation was focussed on the content and processes of the Stoneleigh Project, and in particular the retreats, so that they could be developed and replicated in locations other than Camas. The key elements of the retreats were described by the first evaluation reports from Camas as:

Remoteness: So far we have been visiting a remote location on the west coast of Mull called Camas. Previous groups have told us this is an important aspect of the residential. Camas is not only on an island reached by a ferry, it involves a two mile walk from the road head to reach a row of cottages hidden in a bay by surrounding hills and with a view out to sea. No other buildings are in sight and casual visitors rare. The coastline and low hills provide endless opportunities for group or solo wanderings. It is important that the host centre's systems and skills allow for this. It is our intention to find other locations that provide this same feeling of isolation.

Simplicity: Another feature of Camas that is valued by the visitors is the simple living. Growing and preparing food, composting toilets, water from a spring, wood fires, candlelight, live music, story telling, simple activities and daily meetings of everyone to plan the day all offer simple lessons in a quality of life that depends on interdependence. At the same time it offers the space for busy lives to find peace and solitude, moments that are amongst the most highly valued by the visitors.

Community: An unusual feature of these residentials has been the presence of a volunteer community of eight to ten people living the simple life for an extended period. The nearest equivalent we can think of is a retreat to a monastery or nunnery.

This group have been young adults from all over the world together for up to six months. They help the group by:

- helping them settle in and develop a routine;
- role modelling how to make the most of collective, simple living and time for reflection;
- providing examples of people who are a little further down the path;
- living out the values of volunteering;
- providing a wealth of local knowledge;
- offering any number of opportunities for conversation, play and entertainment.

This community is led by professional staff who administer the facility, supervise the resident community and provide technical skills for exploring the hills and seas. Other residents and visitors can provide these skills too. Re-creating the community in other settings is one of the challenges of the group during this year.

The content: The residential is often described as having no programme. This is not quite how it is. A daily routine emerges from the tasks of living together in this remote spot. The meetings provide a structure for organising each day and the three aims of the programme provide a focus for making choices. What is reported as important is that:

- the plan for each day is negotiated;
- involvement in any formal activities other than the chores is optional.

Groups seem to enjoy exploring the setting and engaging in the new activities it can offer before using more time later in the week for conversations, creative activities and reflection. Sometimes sharing personal histories and insights or creating individual or group ceremonies have been significant aspects of the end of the week.....

The follow up weekend: About three months after the residential a follow up weekend has been organised for volunteers, mentors and the facilitator. The venue has been a simple residential setting often with a retreat connection. These have been

well attended considering the distances and logistics involved. They have been an opportunity to relive the residential and make some sense of it now in everyday life. The weekend seems to provide a chance for insight and commitment from which strength and action have followed. Participants prefer to keep these events to their own group.

This is the point at which the programme finishes any formal relationship with the volunteers and elders. However, many stay in touch with their elders, the facilitator or the programme, returning as elders in future years. We also hope that the volunteers and elders will continue their relationships formally by continuing the mentoring link or feeding this into the organisation's supervision or appraisal schemes.

[R-S02(0700)]

This list gives a strong sense of what was valued but only an inkling of why it was of value and for what it was of value; a list of ingredients without the recipe. The more generalised 'recipe' for the Stoneleigh Project as a whole (quoted above) does give some indicators but these are only partially related to the retreats. Nevertheless, the topics all describe qualities of power in relationships. Some, such as 'selection and mentoring' involve the exercise of power by significant adults in the member organisations. Others, such as 'mutuality', seek to describe the politics of relations on the retreats. Yet more, such as 'politically engaged', describe the aspiration for the young people to express themselves politically after the retreat phase. The participants in the study wanted to move from the notion of ingredients without a recipe to one of understanding the processes involved by examining the participants' experience of the way power worked during the retreats.

The second phase of evaluation set out to explore in more detail what the curriculum and pedagogy of the retreats was thought to be and in what way they were understood to have influenced the transitions of the young people into adulthood. As part of this phase the participants' interpretations of spiritual experience were reviewed and in the report grouped into four curriculum areas:

Mastery: This word was preferred by the project participants to the idea of leadership. To them it meant any creative expression. It might be an embodied skill or art or it could be language based. It might be directed at the self or be offered on behalf of others. It might involve practical, social, recreational or leadership skills.

Spirituality: This included any topics discussing life force or the idea of an ‘Other’ beyond humanity. I included material about people’s relationships with the ‘Other’ and the influence they believed it had on them.

Moral development: Under this topic I included anything that explored the personal ethics of the individual, how these were expressed, how people handled the ethics of others and what people thought of the morals of their communities or the wider society.

Philosophical inquiry: This heading covers any topics related to the nature of reality, how to think, thinking critically, self-awareness and reflexivity. Of the first three this theme had the greatest overlap with spirituality as I defined it.

[R-S02(2301)]

Within each of these areas of the retreat curriculum the evaluation indicated that participants thought that the centrally important process was that the tacit knowledge of the young people was valued. This, it was suggested, was achieved because the adult participants worked explicitly to support the young people in giving voice to this knowledge. The participants claimed that ways of knowing and ways of thinking about what is known were becoming more central than what to know as curriculum aims in the minds of the staff.

From this phase of the evaluation a number of beliefs concerning power emerged. These were reported as:

The potential of the learner to be autonomous.

The capacity of the project to support this autonomy.

The power of outdoor interventions to transform perceived personal and social limitations and constraints.

The capacity of the residential experience to create lasting relationships.

The capacity of these relationships between peers and between adults and young people to support the agency of the individual.

The capacity of the community or group and these relationships to support moral development.

The power of the individual as a potential agent of personal and social change.

[R-S02(2301)]

The beliefs suggest that the participants felt that emphasising autonomy placed a high value on the individuals' tacit knowledge and that this gave rise to a sense of power.

The role of the retreat community in making explicit personal or tacit knowledge, and in giving it meaning and value, is particularly emphasised by the evaluation as a critical element in developing the values of a person. The participants thought that the processes of expressing experiences to the community, and the community's engagement with these ideas, gave a previously silenced voice room to be heard and acknowledged. The belief was that this represented a shift in conventional power relations. Beliefs and values that, it was claimed, were previously socially and culturally derived were influenced more substantially by experience.

The second phase of evaluation also explored the claims made by participants that the retreats had helped them in their transitions to adulthood in various ways. In many cases the participants attributed the steps that they took next to the experiences they had had on the retreats. This included claims of empowerment leading them to confront personal and social issues in their families and communities as well as seeking out new adult working roles. However, this phase of the evaluation was limited to considering the changes in the trajectory of the young people as they moved away from situations of marginalisation. It did not consider the degree to which this could be understood as 'transformative' or whether the young people were also acting as 'agents of social change'.

Conclusion

The evaluation study provided substantial evidence of the curriculum and pedagogic practices of the retreats and their perceived benefits for the young people involved. The power relations between the participants emerged as an important theme in what was understood by them to be significant in relation to the effectiveness of the programme. Likewise the values lived by the host community at Camas were also identified as important. It was claimed that these had an impact on the young people and that this had an effect on their lives after the programme. 'It changed my life' was the claim made by one young person on the second retreat. However, it remained unclear what it was that had changed his life, in what way his life had changed, and whether these changes were congruent with the aims of the Stoneleigh Group to develop a programme that supported the creation of agents of social change.

This research sets out to address these questions. I wanted to explore what knowledge and values were developed by the retreats and how the lives of the young people were affected afterwards. In particular I was interested in how power was valued and how this interacted with the way in which different participants interpreted experiences, potentially giving voice to some views and silencing others. As the research developed the voices emerging within the programmes were also re-interpreted by members of the Stoneleigh Group in support of its advocacy work. This created a second pedagogic site in which the partners in the Stoneleigh Group interacted with each other as well as the individuals and organisations in the higher umbrellas of the wider world of youth work. Power was also a central theme of this development.

Therefore, for this research, I set out to look critically at how the Stoneleigh Project can be understood in relation to the way in which power operates within education. In particular I was interested in whether the programme supported young people in the reproduction or transformation of the social order and how. In order to do this I planned to draw on the evidence from the evaluative studies at Camas and with the Stoneleigh Group along with additional evidence from the Stoneleigh Project and, especially, from the advocacy work of the Stoneleigh Group. My purpose was to consider in what way, if at all, an educational project of this kind can contribute to social change and the young people involved can be

supported in acting as agents of that change. This led me to explore both the potential within the Stoneleigh Project for this kind of educational work and the attempts by the Stoneleigh Group to establish this kind of practice within the wider field of youth work.

In order to consider the politics of power and knowledge within informal education the research took a critical ethnographic perspective on the evidence. This was placed within a sociological framework of youth in society and especially youth work and its role in helping young people find an identity in the adult world that may be transforming of the young person or even the communities to which they belong. Chapter 3 explores youth development in the outdoors in more detail so that the beliefs and practices of the partners and the Stoneleigh Project they developed can be understood within the context of the historical and cultural influences upon the field. Chapter 4 discusses ideas concerning youth in society in order to provide a context for the ambitions of the Stoneleigh Group. Youth work has a long history of which many of the partners in the Stoneleigh Group have been a part. This context is considered in Chapter 5.