

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Youth, Transition and Agency**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the literature that discusses the nature of youth in modern society, the ideas concerning the transition to adulthood, and the role of agency in this process. This will support the analysis of the Stoneleigh Project placed within the social and historical contexts of young people.

At the centre of the Stoneleigh Project and of this research are young people. These young people are understood by the organisations that they are involved in as in need of support in the process of development beyond statutory provision. The Stoneleigh Group aimed to give these young people a voice with which to express their understandings of their lives. In giving them a voice the organisers believed they were helping them enhance their social capital and social networks, supporting them in the trajectory of their transitions from youth to adult, and perhaps encouraging them to become agents of change in their communities.

This raises a number of themes concerning young people that are relevant to the analysis of the Stoneleigh Project. This chapter will consider the ideas of youth, development and transition, a set of constructs that were at the heart of the world-view of the Stoneleigh Group. In addition, agency is a central educational value held by the Stoneleigh Group. I will review the ways in which social theories understand the task of constructing the self and the degree to which traditional enabling and constraining structures that supported this process have broken down.

These themes will be further analysed in Chapter 8 using Bernstein's theories of education. This will provide a context in which to discuss the way in which the Stoneleigh Project

engaged with these issues and how the narratives of the participants involved in the Project informed these problematic theoretical perspectives.

An earlier version of this analysis was used to inform some of the inquiries conducted by the research group participants during the participative inquiry.

### **Youth in Context**

The Stoneleigh Project worked with young people largely between the ages of 18 and 25. Whilst some of the Stoneleigh Group partners work with children as young as 12, all of them concentrate on young people post-16, a time described by the partners as 'youth'. They all consider themselves youth organisations involved in youth development. Rogers (1997b) claims that the modern idea of youth has developed and changed along with modern times which he dates back to the end of the eighteenth century and the emergence of humanistic forms of governance and of industrialisation. Among the many influences on young people that he identifies are improvements in living standards, social reforms such as education and health care, a liberalisation of the culture and its values, work and employment patterns, an emerging leisure society, consumerism and shifts from a collective to an individual locus of responsibility. These influences were, he believes, heavily mediated at different times for different groups, by gender, race, and class so that at all times during this two hundred year history the picture was one of diversity. Rogers claims that, as the gap between child/student and adult/parent/worker increased, and increased for more young people in society, a youth culture emerged within it. At the same time the idea of a transition through this period of youth and into adulthood grew.

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) describe how the changes in society over the last 20 years have affected young people. They claim that '...relationships with family and friends, experiences in education and the labour market, leisure and lifestyles and the ability to become independent young adults' (p. 1) have all altered significantly. They identify the two main causes of these effects as a restructuring of the labour market and of new social policies. Bynner, Ferri and Shepherd (1997) conducted a large-scale study of the lives of young people in 1990's Britain who were born in 1970. They confirm Furlong and Cartmel's summary describing what they refer to as an increasingly polarised experience

of youth. Drawing on Hutton (1995) they characterise it as a 30/30/40 situation, that is 30% of young people 'getting on', 30% of young people 'getting by' and 40% of young people 'getting nowhere'. Bynner *et al.* (1997) identify the significant changes in the labour market during the 1980's and continuing into the 90's. They claim that these resulted in less work and work of a different kind involving new knowledge and skills that many were unable to develop. They describe young people as unable to define themselves as producers. Instead they claim they have become defined by consumption. Education they suggest had become a complicated mixture of further and higher education and training schemes, the latter they suggest being stigmatised as ways to keep young people off the streets as much as to train them for work.

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) believe that, whilst structural factors such as class, gender and race still play influential parts, they are less likely to determine the outcome in a process much more open to influence by self construction even amongst those most disadvantaged.

This, Rogers (1997b), believes, has occurred despite various and conflicting government policies. Thatcherism, for example, did not yield:

... a robust individualism' nor even 'strengthened families', so much as the striving after other sites of security and sustenance.

There is ...evidence of a growing tribalism or collectivism about some of today's young people. Their worlds, multiple as ever, are increasingly constructed around 'getting a life' in which others are an essential ingredient.

(p. 16: original emphasis)

Bynner *et al.* (1997) agree with Furlong and Cartmel (1997) about structural factors being only part of the situation experienced by young people today. They identify the other influences as personal circumstances made more complicated by a diversifying culture, varied regional developments and social policy. 'Getting on' or 'getting by', they claim, depended much more on family and to some degree community resources rather than state

support but that access to these was increasingly fragile for many. At the same time they suggest that social policy placed an increasing responsibility on a young person to work out a pathway to adulthood and less on the state, the family or the community. Indeed, they point out that the Welfare State had to a large extent been transformed by the withdrawal of unemployment and other benefits leaving those without work or education very little with which to support their development and so further excluding them from finding work or joining in with the consumer society. Funding for young people was increasingly targeted and aimed at 'problems'. They comment that one consequence of these trends was an increased internalisation of a sense of failure leading to high levels of anxiety, depression and despair amongst some in the marginalised groups. They conclude

If the 1970 cohort was moving into a 'post modern world', where all the old boundaries and certainties were breaking down then this was something really being exploited only by those who had the human and social capital to succeed under the new conditions – and would probably have done well under any circumstances. Marginalisation of others, locked into poor quality work, unemployment, poverty and disadvantage pointed more to the need for survival in the modern world, rather than the transformation of society that the new and radical values were supposed to bring. These young people really were *getting nowhere* and nowhere is becoming a much harder place to be.

(p. 128: original emphasis)

Mizen (2004) also points out that, as a result of government policies through the 90's, the task of navigating a pathway to adulthood has become far more costly and precarious. He argues that ageist policies have reversed the earlier policy model of the inclusion of young people in social and political life to one of exclusion, separation from other social groups such as families and older generations and division between sub-groups of the young. In doing so he supports Bynner *et al's* (1997) notions of the policy driven structural causes of 'polarisation, social exclusion and individualisation' (p. 5). As well as highlighting the cost of growing up, Mizen (2004) comments on the cost of failure in the employment market claiming that the

Levels of youth unemployment ... reveal the failure of the turn to education and training as the monetarists' prime 'solution' to the change in the demand for youth labour. Longer periods of education, the relentless pursuit of qualifications, the intensification of schooling and examination, and the generalisation of training to ever-greater numbers of young people, on their own have failed to create the jobs and prosperity that a generation of young people have been promised.

(p. 183-184).

According to Bynner *et al.* (1997) these comments would apply more accurately to the 30% 'getting by' and particularly the 40% 'going nowhere' rather than the 30% 'getting on' for whom this provision has fulfilled its promise. Mizen concludes by suggesting that the solution to the 'problems' of the young would be to invest in the families and communities that provide the social networks and create the employment opportunities and so reverse the trends towards individualisation and polarisation.

Henderson, Holland, Mcgrellis, Sharpe and Thomson (2007) studied a group of 100 young people in transition to adulthood between 1996 and 2006. Confirming that many of the trends of the 90's continued they identify social mobility as an increasingly important concept in a successful youth transition. Evans (2002) found that young people perceived qualifications as the single most important social capital in finding a pathway to adulthood. Henderson *et al.* (2007) highlight the importance of the personal context of a young person suggesting that gaining competence and then that competence being recognised by others were central elements in gaining work in its broadest sense. This, they claim, highlights the importance of social networks and the role of social mobility, both in terms of changes for a young person in their social networks and, sometimes, in their geographical setting, on finding identity and transition to adulthood. They suggest that young people are unlikely to act like 'cosmopolitans' without economic support from the family or the state. Additionally they highlight the importance of emotional resilience in coping with the increased responsibility and complexity of becoming adult. However, like Bynner *et al.* (1997) they point out that reproduction of an adult role is not simply a matter of education and resources. In their view class, gender, regional and policy factors were still significant influences on the trajectory of a young person.

Evans and Heinz (1995) and Henderson *et al.* (2007) also raise an important but neglected concept of ‘downward mobility’ pointing out that, whilst there are young people with resources and good networks upwardly socially mobile on merit there are also young people downwardly mobile on lack of merit or simply lack of opportunity brought about by a lack of resources and networks. Goffman (1962) claims that education is an effective mechanism for ‘cooling out’ those for whom upward mobility is not possible or for whom downward mobility is their reality. He suggests that, whilst education raises aspirations for all, it also provides socially agreed and supposedly objective hurdles to ensure that individual aspirations are reduced in keeping with the actual opportunities for upward mobility that are available.

This mobility, upwards and downwards, Henderson *et al.* suggest enhances the trends towards ‘individualisation’ and ‘detraditionalisation’. They concur with Beck (1992) that the task of ‘dealing with insecurity and reflexivity’ (p. 98) brought about by these conditions has produced a new inequality as young people learn to be variously proficient at managing their biographies.

### **The Vulnerability of Youth**

The Stoneleigh Group partners understand youth transition to be a time of risk as well as opportunity. This is reflected in their statements of purpose (see Appendix 4). For example Eden Community Outdoors state that the ‘(c)ommunity does not know how to support young people...’ (Appendix 4). The period of youth is also understood by them to be partially lacking in forms of institutional support and increasingly negotiated by young people for and between themselves. Weston Spirit claim there is a ‘lack of opportunity and poverty of aspiration’ (Appendix 4) and the Prince’s Trust believe ‘the difficulties many young people face are complex and interconnected’ (Appendix 4). For all of the partners, youth work is a means to support those that are marginalised or vulnerable during this time, for example Endeavour Training state they work for ‘young people especially hard to reach groups, those “at risk” of exclusion, and those already on the edges of society’ (Appendix 4: original emphasis). Although several potentially enriching aspects of culture are identified as a result of this new stage in life these are not explicitly seen by the Stoneleigh Group partners as a gain for young people or society. Rather young people are

understood as marking time. However, despite this rich youth culture, as Hall, Coffey and Williamson (1999) point out, 'some young people may be able to take advantage of this extension of youth, others may find it a frustrating time during which their sense of themselves and of their place in society seems indeterminate and unresolved' (p. 502-503). There is no doubt that, for some young people, this is a difficult time with serious negative consequences as understood by them as well as by their communities.

Beck (1992) developed the idea of the risk society. In his view current society can be defined by the nature of the risks it faces and the impact of these on people. Risks in life, he claims, are large scale, often global and beyond the control or influence of the citizen or the state. Bois-Reymond and Blasco claim that 'youth ... is a life condition that is marked by unpredictability, vulnerability and reversibility' (Bois-Reymond and Blasco, 2003, p. 20). Hall *et al.* (1999) apply Beck's ideas of a risk society to youth transition concluding that '... a process that was more or less straightforward has become increasingly protracted and complex.' They argue that

in part, this complexity reflects a freeing up of established patterns of transition. There is a sense in which youth transitions are now more open-ended and fluid. The notion of 'individualism' is of relevance here ... signifying a decline in the coherence and certainty of once established patterns of reproduction, and a corresponding increase in individuals' capacity for self-determination.

(p. 502: original emphasis)

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) explain these changes as breakdowns in some aspects of the old order such as, critically, social networks and constraints. They believe that every day young people have to negotiate the new hazards of late modernity seeing its impact as a significant new challenge.

Jeffs and Smith (2002) see three trends in society at the centre of a new challenge to young people and youth work; firstly globalisation, and then, like Furlong and Cartmel (1997) and Hall *et al.* (1999), the risk society and individualisation. They highlight Beck's idea of

'rootless new cosmopolitans' (Jeffs and Smith, 2002) and Bauman's notion of fragmentation leading 'to matters relating to meaning, identity and ethics being removed from the public domain and recast as the responsibility of the individual' (Jeffs and Smith, 2002). Such ideas support Henderson *et al's* (2007) recognition of the importance of social mobility. However, as well as indicating the importance of mobility, and the problems with developing the resources to be mobile, Beck and Bauman imply that becoming socially mobile has its own associated risks and problems for young people.

Within this context Jeffs and Smith (2002) believe that groups and youth sub-cultures are breaking down. They see the group as 'no longer the central focus for the individual but rather one of a series of foci or sites within which the individual can live out a selected, temporal role or identity ...' (Jeffs and Smith, 2002). If this is so then projects such as the Stoneleigh Project could be understood as providing such a temporal community that can be visited and revisited specifically to address these issues of meaning, identity, and ethics. Alternatively, it may be understood as an attempt to locate these matters back into the public domain with a collective, cross-generational responsibility.

As Mizzen (2004) points out, state policies have tended to marginalise a group of young people and then construct them as problematic. Policies aimed at tackling these problems are directed at the public institutions of work, education and training. However, as Bynner *et al.* (1997) and Henderson *et al.* (2007) show, many of the resources on which young people draw in order to address the problems of transition to adulthood are situated in the social world of peer groups and communities, and the private world of families and of moral development, identity construction and personal well being. In a context in which young people are understood to be responsible for their own development social capital and the social networks in which to invest are critical, especially to those 'getting by' or dealing with the impacts of 'getting nowhere'.

Young (1999) suggests that, rather than defining youth as a time of transition, it could be characterised as the point in life at which a person acquires a critical awareness of themselves and the world they are in. With this awareness, she claims, comes the task of reflexively constructing an identity that is virtuous, that is congruent with the values the

young person adopts. This, Young believes, is a process that continues throughout life. It is, she claims, its initiation that can be used to define the idea of youth as a beginning rather than a transition. At this time, it is possible to explore identity through education, work, civil life and recreation as well as consumption.

Hall *et al.* (1999) also widen the notion of youth transition by referring to what they term a wider and more generous definition of citizenship. In their view current policy has moved towards an understanding of citizenship as 'active' and 'normative'. This, they claim, involves the themes of 'belongingness, independence and equality, responsibility and participation, and shared existence and identity'. They go on to state that 'in present-day political exhortations about the importance of good citizenship it is invariably this normative sense of citizenship that is being shaped and (re)defined...' (p. 504). Concern for the transition of young people to adulthood has, in Hall *et al.*'s view, been extended to include concerns that young people take an active responsibility within civil society as well as concerns that they are able to gain access to the 'rights' that go with adulthood.

Colley, Hoskins, Parveva and Boetzelen (2007) also define the social inclusion of young people in society as concerning participation in civil society as well as employment. However, they comment that it remains unclear how much governments or European institutions think they should be directly involved in supporting civil life.

The definition of citizenship that is used in social policy to audit young peoples' participation is, Smith, Lister, Middleton and Cox (2005) claim, a narrow one that relates only to young people's involvement in education and employment. In their view young people hold to two concepts of citizenship. The first, which relates to this narrower definition, is that of 'respectable economic independence' (p. 432). For example they report that young people agreed that being unemployed made people somehow 'second class citizens'. The second and broader concept was of the 'socially constructive citizen' (p. 346) by which they understand a range of actions from 'obeying the law' to 'helping others and having a positive impact' (p. 346). In the view of Smith *et al.* the narrower definition leads to an enhanced citizenship. Their research concluded that only a small number of marginalised young people did not understand themselves as citizens. They add

that young people think of citizenship as a fluid and dynamic process in which they actively construct their identities as citizens. Young people, they conclude, regard this as a life long project during which they judge themselves to be more or less citizens contingent on their situations. In Smith *et al's* view, this would indicate that, rather than providing education for citizenship, more recognition should be made of the acts of citizenship, as broadly defined, in which young people are engaged.

Yates and Payne (2006) also suggest that labels based on employment or educational status and applied by social policy to young people can be counter-productive. They highlight the concept of 'NEET's' (not in education, employment or training), as a focus for intervention. In their view this label hides a diverse range of situations and experiences from more targeted and effective intervention.

Nevertheless, Mizen (2004) and Henderson *et al.* (2007) recognise that those marginalised from work by current structural factors and social policy are also marginalised from social relations and civil society and so, potentially, from citizenship of any kind. This suggests a spectrum of a perception of engagement with social action from none through passive obedience to active engagement with social change. Ellis (2004) suggests that young people experience three main barriers to acting as agents of positive social change. She identifies these as 'it's not my problem', 'it's not my responsibility' and 'a sense of helplessness' (p. 89). She recommends that the appropriate response to this would be education that results in 'empowering them to act for positive change by working with them to build group consciousness that will be advantageous to the goals of positive social change for all' (p. 100).

Education and social networks help young people to engage with civil society as well as employment. Whilst Bynner *et al* (1997), Jeffs and Smith (2002) and Mizen (2004) argue that formal education has increasingly abandoned its role in preparing young people for citizenship, it remains a substantial aspect of the school curriculum and an aim of many youth work projects. Henderson *et al.* (2007) report that, despite concerns for the alienation of young people from political and social life, this, for their study group, was so only for those 'going nowhere' and, to some degree for those 'getting by'. In these cases

they report a lack of respect for politicians, a disinclination to vote based on claims that the views of young people are not represented or that voting does not make a difference, and a lack of engagement with civil society politically or socially. These findings are similar to those of a Prince's Trust study that interviewed a large, UK wide cohort of young adults that could be described as representative of those 'going nowhere' (Prince's Trust, 2004). Evans (2002) came to the same conclusions from her study of young people from Derby. She adds that it is also worth noting that young people in work understood this as a means to gain an income rather than as a social network or a meaningful contribution to society.

Henderson *et al.* (2007) also remark that those without the resources to find work and with no other means of support are unable to attain other benchmarks of adulthood in the private domain such as independent living, a long term relationship or, in some cases, parenthood. The latter is more complex as they also report a higher incidence of young parents amongst those without educational achievements or stable work.

Interestingly, for the inter-generational project of the Stoneleigh Group, Jeffs and Smith (2002) describe the consequences of 'individuals placing themselves at the centre of their plans and reflexively forg(ing) their own biographies' (p. 52) as the possibility that 'youth' is no longer determined by age. They think that, as experience is uncoupled from age and locality, so the experience that is described as 'youth' is dispersed across ages. One unexpected outcome of the Stoneleigh Project was the personal benefits described by the adult mentors and host community mentors reported in Chapter 12; outcomes often similar to and as far reaching as those reported by participants.

### **Youth Transitions**

The authors above all concur that one significant construction of youth is as a time of transition to adulthood. It is seen by the state and by society as a time to find a public identity founded on educational achievements and employment (Blasco *et al.*, 2003). The milestones in this transition remain conventionally those of acquiring meaningful work and, in the private domains of life, entering a stable relationship and having your own home. However, as Bynner *et al.* (1997), Bynner *et al.* (2002), Furlong and Cartmel (1997) and Henderson *et al.* (2007) describe the pathways to these symbols of adulthood are

considerably more varied than 50 years ago, take substantially longer and, for many, are not achieved.

Bois-Reymond and Blasco (2003) characterise modern youth transitions as yo-yo transitions, young people oscillating between temporary and part time work and education and training. In some cases they suggest transition is even reversed as young people return to earlier stages in education or employment.

The Stoneleigh Group described themselves as supporting marginalised young people in transition from youth to adult. In a statement in their paper introducing the Stoneleigh Project the Stoneleigh Group described the needs of young people as they saw them.

Making the transition from youth to adult has always been difficult. Some of the milestones - to worker, parent and home maker, for example - have been delayed. Others have been marginalised. Those that remain are often entered into without the intergenerational guidance they require to be effective. During this time young people need to explore and experiment, reject the norms of society and the oppression of adults and seek out spaces and roles in which they can express their individual talents and beliefs.

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Like the Stoneleigh Group, Roche and Tucker (1997) describe youth transition as a move from dependence to relative independence characterised by three key transitions. These they think are from education to work, a housing transition from the family home, and a relationship transition from parents and carers as the central significant others to friends, partners and children taking this place.

The partners in the Stoneleigh Group who work directly with young people also identify some or all of these transitions in their own statements of purpose (see Appendix 4). The emphasis in these statements places a particular focus on the transition to work, for

example Eden Community Outdoors state that their programme ‘reconnects the community with the energy of young people and the value of meaningful work’. This leaves home making and building relationships to more nebulous statements such as Mobex’s belief that their programme helps ‘explore personal and social issues’. The Stoneleigh Project is therefore, in some respects, an extension of the work of its members.

Rogers (1997b) claims that, despite the conventional benchmarks, the nature of this transition has changed radically in the contexts and with the risks outlined above. For example Payne (1998) states that young people leaving education at 16 are three times more likely to be without a job six months later in 1996 than they were only eight years earlier. This is in spite of an ‘increasingly small’ number of school leavers at this age. Elias, McKnight, Pan and Pierre (2002) confirm that this is still the case five years later.

Payne (2000) offers statistics for young people in transition after compulsory schooling and who are not in education, employment or training; a situation she considers to be especially risky. It is this ‘getting nowhere’ group that the Stoneleigh Group partners understood as marginalised. 6 percent of young people were likely to be in this situation for 6 months or more. She found it affected females more than males and that the degree of ‘risk’ involved (defined as the probability of not exiting the situation) was affected by class, gender, ethnicity and location. Payne is writing from a policy perspective and is seeking to identify risks in a way that are amenable to institutional intervention. She sees them as external to the world of the young person and therefore capable of being influenced. She is trying to identify a ‘most at risk’ population of young people and propose strategies that can be implemented to reduce the risks this group face.

The Stoneleigh Group partners also understood the modern world of a young person as riskier than in the past and understood these risks to be largely external to the world of the young person. For them, low achievement in education and problematic family backgrounds were major predictors of problems finding work. Finding vocational training or work is the major target for the young people on their programmes. Their approach is to support and resource the young person in ‘getting a life’ (p. 16), as Rogers (1997a) put it, or ‘becom(ing) the key actors in their own transitions’ as Walther and McNeish (2003)

describe it, by restoring self-belief and social networks together with educational, and sometimes work, opportunities. Becoming involved with young people of school age who are underachieving at school or are excluded from it is one response to a feeling of the partners in the Stoneleigh Group that it is the educational system that is not meeting the needs of some young people. The belief was that an informal educational approach would act as a handrail long enough to restore the young person to vocational training post-16 numerate and literate. Alternatively the aspiration may be lower key with claims being made that their programmes help young people avoid the social ills of gangs, drugs and alcoholism.

The partners are also critical of the work available to young people seeing the ‘knowledge society of late modernity’ as offering too few meaningful work opportunities for those not intellectually gifted or socially typical. For example The Arthur Rank Centre was founded with the aim of providing young people of a practical bent with training in order to gain work in agriculture and horticulture. On the other hand The Prince’s Trust helps train and finance young people to set up their own businesses seeing marginalised young people as a creative resource. For the target group of the Stoneleigh Project this support for the transition to work involves creating volunteer work opportunities within the youth work of the partner organisations.

Helve and Bynner (2007) offer a more positive interpretation of the modern experience of youth transition in Europe.

Young people’s networks and trust-based relationships are not only a manifestation of growing up as a ‘sub-culture response’ to the oppressive structures and instruments of coercion of the adult world, but a vital means of demonstrating how society can shape up to the new. In seeking to weaken, if not to sever, the strong ties to family that are the hallmark of childhood, adolescents find their own modes and strategies for relating to each other and the wider world, which in many respects matches modern realities better than those of adults.

(p. 9)

Whilst Helve and Bynner (2007) go on to refer to the capability of young people to build relations through the internet and mobile phones their view still chimes with the funding director Colin's belief, albeit in his case developed in the context of values rather than technologies, in the importance of supporting young people for example 'in the world of work (in which) young people should not be seen as simply some kind of problem but as one of the major means of re-invigoration' (p. 10).

During the 90s research began to highlight that the issue of youth transition was extending beyond 18 to affect the 18-25 year old population. Furlong and Cartmel (1997) describe this change. They claim that after the Second World War youth transition was still managed collectively, supported and constructed by the community, and with a trajectory from school to work largely defined by class, gender and race. It was a pathway often completed, for the majority by 16 years of age. Today they believe this transition is considerably more individualised and fragmented and is often not completed until 25 or later (Bynner et al., 2002; Blasco et al., 2003; IARD, 2001). Arnett (2006) proposes the term 'emerging adulthood' for this new group in society.

Williamson (1997) suggests that, instead of achieving citizenship, that, at 18, some young people experience '... a chronic condition of helplessness and hopelessness...; a crisis both reflecting and creating the symbolic prolongation of youth' (p. 183). He goes on to claim that, at 20, personal development for those marginalised from traditional pathways to adulthood stops. Without the resources to complete the transition, but with societal expectations that they should, Williamson claims that 'despondency' (p. 183) is the result and that some remain 'trapped as teenagers' (p. 184). These claims are widely supported by other authors, for example the cohort studies of Bynner *et al.* (1997) and Henderson *et al.* (2007) and the work of Mizen (2004), all discussed above. Walther and McNeish (2003) suggest that this is a European wide phenomenon that 'may constitute a major threat to future social cohesion' (Blasco et al., 2003, p. 3).

However, Evans (2002) believes that, even amongst those most disadvantaged that very few report a 'fatalistic' (p. 513) attitude. Evans comments that

respondents in the UK groups feel 'forced' into unemployment schemes and therefore not 'in control' while at the same time feeling individually responsible for their predicament. They believed it was down to them to get out of their situation, despite the negative environment. They experienced stress in dealing with their situation, and emphasised 'being realistic' about what they can achieve' (p. 509: original emphasis).

Evans offers a different view suggesting that her studies indicate that young people marginalised on their pathway to adulthood still have a sense of agency but that this is experienced as frustrated.

The authors cited above claim that transition, or youth in transition, or both, have become thought of as a problem. At the same time they think the task of addressing this problem has, to some degree, been transferred from the community to the individual. In all cases the partners, like Evans (2002), thought that young people perceive themselves as having the capability to address their own problems with the right help. Whilst they may not see young people as 'the problem' they are attempting to help young people tackle the problems they face for themselves locating the task of managing transition with them by enhancing their capacity for agency. This view is endorsed by the European Commission who state that 'despite the more complex social and economic context, young people are well equipped to adapt' (European Commission, 2001).

### **Youth Transition as Problem**

The way in which young people are understood to be a problem and how the members of the Stoneleigh Group understood this is worth exploring further. Griffin (1997) thinks of transition as a problem. She supports the view that the trends in our society have resulted not only in individualisation but also in an externalising of the problems of growing up from the community onto the young person. In this sense the partner organisations could be understood as an extension and professionalisation of the community's role and a counter to the trend Griffin identifies. Nevertheless, the partners also support the shift of the locus of control to the young person as the agent of the process.

Griffin explores how this transition became understood as a problem. She makes the distinction between the idea of adolescence, which she understands as based on biological factors especially puberty, and the concept of youth, which she describes as socially constructed. In her view the divergence of the age ranges that these two ideas are supposed to encompass is the source for much of the problematisation of young people (she claims the average age of puberty has decreased to 12 whilst the average age of financial independence has increased to 25). Griffin claims that much of the construction concerning young people defines them either as ‘youth as trouble’ or ‘youth in trouble’. For example current UK and European policy statements on young people categorise them as student, labour or problem (IARD, 2001). As a result Griffin believes adults view young people as either ‘deviant or deficient’. Policies are designed on the assumptions of the need for support or control. This approach she believes to be heavily influenced by the ‘storm and stress’ model that emerges from the biological understanding of hormonal changes during puberty. It is no accident, she believes, that ‘being in trouble’ is a euphemism for becoming pregnant and that such a biological event is given a high profile as a ‘problem’. She claims this is the origin of the tendency to understand young people as problematic and the cause of young people’s problems as being located in the young person thereby taking attention away from other possible social causes.

Griffin’s (1997) concern that adults construct young people as the cause of trouble or as being in trouble echoes Kelly’s (2003) concern that adult anxiety concerning young people, what Cohen (1972) termed ‘moral panic’, appear to young people as mistrust. These, Kelly believes, have a range of negative consequences including policies of surveillance and regulation.

Griffin (1997) claims that:

Dominant representations of youth in mainstream academic literature operate in conjunction with social welfare policies to target specific groups of young people as in need of ‘surveillance’, ‘protection’ and/or ‘care’. Radical perspectives would tend to construct particular sections of young people as in need of support and

empowerment. It is this focus on *power relations* ... that distinguish radical approaches from the mainstream perspective.

(p. 24: original emphasis).

Griffin's remarks indicate a second set of adults and institutions that she calls 'radical' in their approach. This radicalism includes the elements of freedom, trust, and lack of surveillance, not only by adults of young people but also as experienced by young people. This has a direct bearing on the mutual and egalitarian approach that the Stoneleigh Group organisations claimed to take (see Chapter 5). MacDonald and Marsh (2001), Raffo and Reeves (2000), and The Prince's Trust (2004) provide qualitative studies that support this view identifying trusted adults, often in professional roles, as significant social capital especially at times of crisis in the process of transition.

Research conducted by The Prince's Trust (2004) found that young people also consider the world to be problematic and themselves as part of the problem. Their research identifies:

There are currently 649,000 16–24 year olds economically inactive and not in full time education. A further 405,000 are unemployed and not in full time education. This is almost 16 per cent of the age group. Many of these young people are not only facing significant barriers, but – crucially – they aren't picked up soon enough, while there is a realistic prospect of getting their lives back on track.

(p. 4)

For those young people defined by the Prince's Trust in its report as marginalised those between the ages of 14 and 17 reported that the two main factors they considered to hold them back were their own bad behaviour and lack of confidence. 18 to 21 year olds also felt confidence was an issue along with their criminal records and lack of qualifications. Those over 21 felt they also lacked experience, and young women in this age class also felt they were held back by parental roles. Also in this age class the young men, for the first time, identified an external concern that was the lack of suitable employment, a point made

by several Stoneleigh Group partners. For example the Arthur Rank Centre seek to create agricultural and rural ‘work opportunities at which practical young people can succeed’ (see Table 1). According to Hunt (1989) youth development out of doors seeks to address issues of personal behaviour, confidence, lack of experience, and the development of life skills for employment among other aims. From the perspective of young people involved in the Stoneleigh Project it would seem to be an attractive form of support.

### **Youth Development**

The Stoneleigh Group partners sometimes understood young people as ‘in trouble’ but they did not see them as the cause of the trouble. On the contrary they understood them as an opportunity so far let down by society. For example The Prince’s Trust aim to ‘realise their potential and transform their lives’ in order to ‘make a positive contribution to their communities and society’ (see Appendix 4).

Rogers (1997b) claims the concept of ‘young person’ as a site for social, moral and political concern is relatively new, perhaps 150 years old. Nevertheless he believes the situation of young people has undertaken rapid changes, none more so than in the last 50 years. He concurs with Furlong and Cartmel (1997) that the questions of class and gender as social determinants of adult roles have been questioned as has the locus of the construction of the identity of the emerging individual.

Young (1960) believes that youth development as a cultural response to the need to support young people in these changes emerged during the Victorian period. He argues a profound change in British Christianity led to a moral revolution. Rogers (1997b) describes this shift as launching a project to ‘... bring an external moral gaze to, and to foster an internal self-surveillance upon, the many faces of evil’ (p. 9). As a result he believes that ‘young people found themselves the target of a spectrum of moral entrepreneurs’ (p. 9) both at home, at work, and in the public sphere. The members of the Stoneleigh Group could readily be described as the outcomes of a small number of ‘moral entrepreneurs’. Dick Alcock (Endeavour Training and The Arthur Rank Centre), Simon Weston (Weston Spirit), The Prince of Wales (The Prince’s Trust), Brian Ware (Mobex), and Sue Bennett (Eden Community Outdoors) are the founders of their respective voluntary organisations.

Each of these organisations continues to draw heavily on the beliefs of their respective founders to direct the intentions of their various ‘projects’. The socio-political histories of youth organisations, especially those that work out of doors, and their influence on the beliefs and practices of the Stoneleigh Group will be explored in more depth in Chapter 5.

Like the early youth workers the Stoneleigh Group also emphasised moral development. Embedded in the Stoneleigh Project were beliefs in a set of what Brahma Kumaris (Gill-Kozul, 1995) call universal or ‘living values’ that lead to ‘right living’. Alongside this belief was also a belief in a plurality of expressions of these values. A central idea for the Stoneleigh Project was the belief in the importance of individuals experiencing some connection with the universal source of ‘right living’ and exploring how this informed their own unique selves and their choices of action in the world. The terms ‘leadership’ and ‘spirituality’ were used, sometimes interchangeably, to capture this idea of moral beings determining their own paths.

Developing her argument of youth as the beginning of a time of critical reflection that helps young people to find what virtue means to them and to find a virtuous way to live by those values, Young (1999) claims that the support and accompaniment of a young person on this path is the central role of youth work. Evans and Heinz (1995) ‘explored the real experiences and needs of young women and young men in making their way as citizens, focusing on the interfaces of personal lives, work and learning’ (p. 11). They conclude that ‘educational and social policies should assist in this process, fostering independence, autonomy and active citizenship, within a vision of the future’ (p. 11).

The aspirations of the Stoneleigh Group go further than social and moral concerns and enter the political domain. Colin, a Rank Foundation director involved in helping the Stoneleigh Group obtain funding from his organisation, was motivated to work with the Group by his own belief that is summarised in Chapter 2 as ‘that the idealism of young people in touch with their core values is a force for good in the world. 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.’ Two of the Stoneleigh Group partners (Eden Community

Outdoors and the Iona Community) explicitly hold beliefs in the notion that marginalised young people are more likely to become agents of change in their communities because they have little left to lose. They think, based on their anecdotal experience of working with young people, that children succeeding at school are unlikely to break from the conventional path available to them or challenge the values of the world they are seeking to join. On the other hand they believe that marginalised young people, with appropriate adult support, are more likely to transform their circumstances and some aspect of the world around them in the process.

According to the research conducted by the Prince's Trust (2004) marginalised young people feel there is a lack of provision both in helping them with the issues they face and in helping them to find things to do. The report found that young people are more likely to respond to organisations that are voluntary, that seek them out, and who then maintain an ongoing relationship through the same adult who is a volunteer. This suggests that voluntary youth organisations have a key role to play in reaching these young people and the report recommends a significant role for these groups in the overall mix of youth work provision.

The Stoneleigh Project set out to support young people in managing their own lives and in helping them to address some of the causes of the problems in their lives to be found in the communities around them. However, the Stoneleigh Group also had its own agenda for social change and understood the young people involved in the Stoneleigh Project as agents of that change. This idea of agency and the political context in which it rests within the Stoneleigh Group will be examined in Chapter 13.

### **Transition and Risk, Structure and Agency**

Rapport and Overing (2000) define agency as '...the capability, the power, to be the source and originator of acts; agents are the subjects of action'. This definition fits well with the liberal and radical approaches to youth development discussed further in Chapter 5. These approaches claim to support young people through related ideas such as empowerment for example from outdoor development (Hopkins and Putnam, 1993) and from informal education (Jeffs and Smith, 1999). The Stoneleigh partners make similar claims, for

example ‘realis(ing) potential’ (Prince’s Trust from Appendix 4) and ‘transform(ing) their lives’ (Prince’s Trust from Appendix 4) in order to become ‘active participants in their communities’ (Mobex from Appendix 4).

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) discuss a long-standing philosophical debate between those that claim people have a degree of agency and those that believe life is largely determined by structural factors such as class, race, and gender. They conclude that, whilst class and gender especially can still be determinants, young people in the last 20 years can best be understood from a modernist perspective. They suggest two central ideas as useful ways to understand this. The first is Giddens’ (1991) idea of ‘structuration’ that offers a model that provides for a degree of agency within structural constraints. The second is Beck’s (1992) notion of a risk society in which the risks of modern life have increased and are understood to be beyond the influence of the individual and yet the individual is the locus of response to these risks a process he termed ‘individualisation’. Arnett (2004) claims that the extended period of youth is a response to this changing context calling the life stage ‘emerging adulthood’. Elder (1998) describe the navigation of this phase as ‘pathways’ whilst Roberts and Parsell (1989) discuss this process as a series of ‘trajectories’ involving individuals in a series of choices leading to adult identities. They all hold that young people experience considerably more agency and social mobility in this process than previously.

Bynner (2005) points out that, whilst the concept of emerging adulthood is a helpful one, it is based on a psychological perspective using theoretical concepts of development. Such a generic model misses, he claims, the diversity of social situations experienced by young people during their development. In Bynner’s view many of the traditional structural issues of class, race and gender remain of significant concern especially to those who are marginalised by social, educational, geographical or employment issues. He also highlights the increasing number of higher education drop-outs who then become marginalised and subject to structural factors as well. Bynner refers to Putnam’s (2000) work in highlighting a further concern that, whilst agency during emerging adulthood may be enhanced for many young people, Putnam claims that trust and social capital through which agency

might be exercised have significantly reduced, a trend he understands as another consequence of 'individualisation' in a 'hyper-modern' society.

Arnett (2006), in arguing with Bynner's (2005) emphasis on the importance of structural factors in emerging adulthood, suggests that these factors may be more or less important to some people in certain contexts and not others. For example, he supports Bynner's view that unemployment is experienced as a structural disadvantage but that, in a wider model of citizenship such as that proposed by Smith, Lister, Middleton and Cox (2005), he claims that emerging adults in Europe, including the UK, have considerably more agency in their identity formation and that problems of agency are as likely to be personal or social as structural.

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) explore the effect of these changes in society on youth transitions and on the processes of 'social reproduction' that take place as young people reproduce or create the adult world through their 'trajectories' from child to adult. To explain the traditional method of social reproduction they develop Roberts' (1995) metaphor of a train journey. The authors suggest that the passenger knew which station they would board at, which train they would catch and what the destination would be. It was a transition that was highly structured with little opportunity for individual agency to affect the outcome. They propose that the current situation is more like a car journey. Whilst there is one starting point there are many routes, many intermediate stops, and diverse destinations. What is more, the young person is a driver making choices and not a passenger constrained by circumstances.

Building on the metaphor Evans and Heinz (1995) can be understood to comment on the approaches taken by young people to navigation. They identify four styles of transition. These offer a more nuanced interpretation that draws on the general trends highlighted by Furlong and Cartmel (1997) toward greater agency yet taking account of those Bynner (2006) identifies who do not experience this trend through marginalised or other circumstances. 'Strategic transition behaviour' replaces the original 'train journey'. Routes are well planned with well-established maps, clear destinations and well-prepared navigators. 'Step-by-step transition behaviour' compares with the car journey with no clear

route or destination. Nevertheless the young people are well prepared to make choices as the journey progresses. 'Taking chances transition behaviour' involves setting off on a journey with no route or destination and making choices along the way based on what will be found challenging. Evans and Heinz indicate that this approach has an emphasis on learning about the person on the journey whilst the previous behaviours were intended as a means to find a way through the maze to a successful outcome. 'Wait-and-see transition behaviour' is characterised by Evans and Heinz as 'learned helplessness'. The young person has no sense of 'navigating' and makes route choices only to avoid matters getting worse.

Raffo and Reeves (2000) conducted empirical research that supports Furlong and Cartmel's theories. They identified the same contextual changes described by them. These, they believe, have created 'a whole new set of contradictions and paradoxes, and made outcomes more insecure, requiring young people to be even more sophisticated in dealing with everyday tasks and situations' (p. 148). Like Beck (1992) they see this as heightening the risk of everyday life for young people though they acknowledge that the degree of risk is subjective and largely constructed by the individual or by those expressing concern for the individual.

This view is also held by Lawy (2002). He identifies the relationship between risk (as perceived by the young person) and identity, as critical and essential elements in the process of learning for transition. He believes young people make decisions and choices in a way that is integrated with their evolving identities. In this sense the risk is subjective and held within the network of social capital the individual is centred in. It is not an external or objective risk from outside of the personal and social world of the individual. These two sets of perceptions of the degree of risk are, they claim, often at odds.

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) support this view finding that agency and opportunity could be considerable even when the young person was disadvantaged by factors such as family and neighbourhood poverty, high unemployment locally or sink schools. They use the term 'individualised systems of social capital' to describe the way in which young people find and create opportunities for transition. They define social capital as 'a dynamic, social,

spatially, culturally, temporally and economically embedded group, network or constellation of social relations, which has the young person at the core of the constellation and which provides authentic opportunities for everyday learning' (p. 150). What is more the young person is an actor at the core who is making choices and influencing the relationships in order to learn and move. The relations in this network are thought to both augment and constrain the individual.

Putnam (2000) and Arnett (2006) also suggest that the dimensions of social and civic life are significant areas in which young people exercise agency in the construction of their identities. Putnam (2000), discussing the personal and social consequences of disconnection in American society, for which he blamed television and the move to the suburbs, identified a decline in social capital as a result. In his view social capital, raised through civic connections, rivals marriage and affluence as a predictor of happiness. As well as happiness he believes that social capital enhances health and leads to safer public spaces. Whilst Raffo and Reeves (2000) are claiming that young people can be more capable than Putnam suggests at creating social capital in a fragmented world there is no doubt in their minds that any breakdown in this process is a serious impediment to transition. Holland, Reynolds and Weller (2007) go further by rejecting a deficit model of social capital. They identify the many ways that young people in all kinds of situations actively create social capital to help in their transitions to adulthood and build their identities.

The Stoneleigh Group hoped that, by supporting these 'individualised systems of social capital', they would enhance the capacity of individuals to manage their own transitions. Further it was their hope that these transitions would also take the form of agents of change. However, these authors highlight a tension concerning the point of view that is held when judgements of risk, agency, efficacy and value are being made. It is not clear from the Stoneleigh Group's literature whether the participants are thought of as acting as agents of change on their own behalf, on behalf of the Stoneleigh Group, or on behalf of some larger social desire for change.

Raffo and Reeves (2000) have identified four types of individualised systems of social capital; weak, strong, changing and fluid. Weak systems are often the result of critical incidents such as moving home, leaving school and long-term illness. In this case the network is limited in extent and may be passive in nature. Strong systems can be constructive and support self-esteem. However, they can also hold individuals back or constrain them in counter-productive behaviours. Holland (2007) refers to this form of social capital as ‘bonding social capital’ and points out that by restraining the mobility of young people this form of social capital can trap them in situations of disadvantage. Changing systems create new opportunities that can be experienced as risky and unpredictable. Fluid systems have a quality and flexibility that support transition and movement by the individual whilst still providing support for diverse choices. Holland (2007) uses the term ‘bridging social capital’ to highlight the capacity this creates for young people to be socially mobile. Raffo and Reeves (2000) see this last system as the type that best supports young people in transition and so highlight the significance to them of mobility in youth to adult transition in modern social contexts in the UK.

MacDonald and Marsh’s (2001) qualitative study found that this way of understanding social capital could just as readily be present, though necessarily limited and bounded by circumstances, in situations of disadvantage. Equally they thought that young people in advantaged situations can be at the centre of weak systems and unable to initiate the changes that could address this. This led them to question policies of social inclusion that equate exclusion with disadvantage.

Côté (2002) offers a model of identity capital that recognises the assets held by an individual are crucial in any given context. His study concludes that, for youth in transition, the degree of agency the individual is able to call on is the most critical factor in negotiating what the individual perceives as a successful transition to adulthood. In so doing he highlights the importance he places on the role of young people in constructing their identities.

Evans (2002) thinks that the dualism between structure and agency is unhelpful. Her research revealed what she claims to be a situation that moves beyond the simplistic

analysis made possible by ideas of structure and individualisation. In her view the idea of bounded agency, in which certain constraints are modified by the personal perceptions of a young person for actions or decisions, is a better concept to describe this process. Young people, she claims, actively seek to maximise their opportunities and minimise their risks within the structural constraints by which they are limited and according to their personal competences and confidence. These constraints, she suggests, consist of both social and historical contexts as well as social relations in peer groups. In Evans' view, young people do not perceive themselves as the passive recipients of social capital but the active creators of it.

The views of these authors, whilst differing in degree, all emphasise the importance of the personal and social worlds of a young person in actively establishing social capital that can influence their pathways to adulthood in the public worlds of education and employment and so to a completed transition to an adult identity. It is the view of many of them that social policy should take account of this and not leave it up to the voluntary sector to support and resource these aspects of a young person's development. Some account seems to be being taken of this position. Kovacheva and Pohl (2007) claim that, across Europe, the one trend in social inclusion policy for young people that can be discerned is what they term 'activation' that is 'mobilising individuals to engage more actively in the process of their own labour market integration and wider social inclusion' (p. 37).

It will be interesting to take note of the biographies of the participants in the Stoneleigh Project in relation to these concepts. Systems of social capital may help interpret the narratives of participants and the contribution played by the programme in these unfolding biographies. The conditions of high modernity are characterised according to Beck (1992) by the idea of the 'risk society'. Furlong and Cartmel (1997), applying this to the world of young people, describe it as a society in which the structures of race, gender and class still have a major effect on the lives and the opportunities of young people. However, they claim the solutions to finding a life path is increasingly constructed by the individual rather than collectively. The risks in life, for instance in finding work, a partner or a home, the three defining tasks of transition to adulthood according to Roche and Tucker (1997) are increasingly the problem of the individual. They offer the example of a person out of work

who would now be understood as lacking in the necessary skills for employment rather than the victim of a reduction in the labour force. This would result in the individual seeking retraining rather than the collective creating work opportunities for which the person was skilled.

Putnam (2000) also discusses the degree and quality of trust in relationships as a central component that supports the building of social capital. Trust was also a critical component of Raffo and Reeves' (2000) model of young people's networks. Stoddart (2004) explored the potential of an outdoor project in Cumbria to develop social capital. The participants, identified and recruited for being marginalised members of Cumbrian communities, saw trust and reciprocity as critical to the development of feelings of empowerment and sustained networks that Stoddart understood to provide enhanced social capital. Like The Prince's Trust report (Prince's Trust, 2004) and the views of Jeffs and Smith (1999), she also noticed that the manner of the approach to the young people in the first instance, and the provision of follow up opportunities after the main outdoor residential experience, were important factors in successfully building trust and reciprocity

## **Conclusion**

It will be helpful to summarise the ideas covered in this chapter in order to explore them further later once the theories of Bernstein have been introduced in Chapter 8. They will provide a context with which to interpret the Stoneleigh Project.

### ***The Idea of Youth***

According to the academic writers cited in this chapter the construction of identity during teenage years became increasingly the task of the individual rather than of society since the rise of moral concerns for young people in late Victorian times. This individualisation of the construction of a morality, a working life, relationships, and homemaking has been described as moving from being like that of a train passenger to that of a car driver. The former has an externally pre-determined destination whilst the latter has many more options and far more influence over the outcome. This change, it is believed, has been brought about by larger socio-economic shifts in society. It is thought that part of the

consequence of this change is the growing idea of youth as a period of time in life, a period which has extended and in which the role of the young person has become more influential and diverse.

In order to adjust to these circumstances it is considered that young people have, to some degree, become the locus of control for their moral centres and for constructing their identities. In order to do this they are described as, to some degree, becoming actors in their own social networks and their own agents for choosing their paths into adulthood. There are mixed views concerning the degree to which class, gender and race have become less deterministic of adult roles amongst youth, especially marginalised young people. On balance it would seem to be still significant but more fragmented. Opportunities to transform personal situations are, it is suggested, more often realised.

One view of the purpose of this new time of youth is that it is 'necessary' in order to construct spaces in which the values of society are rejected and identity can be more widely explored. This is considered to be one way in which traditional pathways are being disrupted. It is more widely accepted that young people build horizontal networks of social capital amongst their own peer groups and are less likely to develop strong vertical relations with adults. These networks have been characterised as variously weak, strong, changing, and fluid, of which the latter is thought to support the greatest degree of agency and so, it is claimed, best supports the process of transition.

Within these networks the risks of growing up in a modern world are often thought to be differently perceived by the young person from the way that they are perceived by adults. However, it is clear that some are not prepared for managing their transition or lose direction. They find it hard to see a trajectory and/or lack confidence to take it. In these cases they often seek sustenance and security as well as identity from within their peer group. These young people think that the problems of transition that they experience are largely their own problem (for example poor education and criminal records) although they also believe the lack of suitable work is a contributory factor.

### *Institutional Views of Youth*

It is claimed that many people and institutions in society see the transition of young people or the young people themselves as a problem and therefore in need of control. They are considered deviant or deficient and so society supports or implements policies of surveillance and regulation. This, it is claimed, leads to a lack of trust by young people in adults.

Even the goods of the period of youth are thought of as a compensation for a proper trajectory to adulthood and not of value in themselves.

Others understand the problem differently placing it external to the world of young people. They think of marginalised young people as vulnerable and excluded, lacking the power, resources and/or social capital to transform their situations. These people and institutions construct young people as in need of support and care. From the perspective of a young person this can also seem like regulation and surveillance. Nevertheless these organisations also tend to think that individual agency is the key to helping the young person transform their own circumstances.

Many believe there to be a lack of a pedagogic handrail to support young people through this extended period of youth. Institutions are thought to be lagging behind the changing needs of society. Voluntary youth agencies are seeking to address this and claim to provide support to young people in the transition from youth to adult. They understand the problems experienced by young people to be external to their situation including specifically the types of work available and the nature of formal schooling.

Voluntary youth work organisations focus on the social and public aspects of a young person's life and believe that finding appropriate work should remain a responsibility of the public domain. They also believe that engaging young people with adults is important. The problem of trust is recognised.

It is a useful question to consider whose agenda is being fulfilled by the work of voluntary youth organisations, especially those that make claims to support the development of agents of change in our society. The Stoneleigh Group partners believed they were supporting youth transition by developing agency and that this was an effective youth development strategy for young people who were experiencing their transitions as problematic. The Stoneleigh Group were also critical of aspects of modern society and saw the young people as potential agents of change in that society. This research follows the stories of the participants in order to consider the degree to which the pedagogic claims of supporting youth transition and enhancing the agency of the participants also supported the aspirations for social change. The focus of the research will be on how the experience of the Stoneleigh Project was understood by the young people as well as on how it is interpreted by the Stoneleigh Group. It will consider whether the young people think the Stoneleigh Project helped them in the secular transitions to their own homes, jobs, and families or whether they think it was encouraging the spiritual life of a new generation of social entrepreneurs.