



A RESEARCH REPORT

THE EDUCATIONAL  
IMPACT OF SCOUTING:  
THREE CASE STUDIES ON  
ADOLESCENCE



World Organization  
of the Scout Movement  
Organisation Mondiale  
du Mouvement Scout

Presented by the Research &  
Development Committee of the  
World Organization of the  
Scout Movement

© World Scout Bureau, 1995.

Reproduction is authorized to national  
Scout associations which are members  
of the World Organization of the Scout  
Movement. Others should request  
permission from authors.

World Scout Bureau  
P.O. Box 241  
1211 Geneva 4, Switzerland  
[worldbureau@world.scout.org](mailto:worldbureau@world.scout.org)  
<http://www.scout.org>

This report has been made possible  
through the support given by the Johann  
Jacobs Foundation.

## LIST OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Research and Development Committee of the World Organization of the Scout Movement would like to thank everyone who contributed to making this research report possible.

This list makes no attempt at being exhaustive as so many people gave their time and energy to the project and assisted the researchers in so many ways.

First and foremost, deepest thanks go to the Scouts, their parents and the leadership teams of the three case study groups in Belgium, France and Scotland.

Our particular thanks go to the following:

Thierry Bontemps  
Bertrand Chanzy  
Philippe Da Costa  
Alan Dickson  
Rosemary Gold  
Arnaud Gorgemans  
Sophie Henry  
John Kennedy  
Reverend William McDonald  
Michel Melin  
Philippe Missotte  
David Shelmerdine  
Ken Thomson  
Alan Willoughby  
Luc Van Cauter.

Everyone who took part in the preliminary interviews, including the Geneva Scouts for participating in the testing phase.

The researchers:

Mai Tra Bach  
Laurie Huberman  
Françoise Sulser.

Last, but not least, our thanks to the Johann Jacobs Foundation for its financial support and interest in the project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS	INTRODUCTION	Page	1
	1. BACKGROUND		1
	2. AIM OF THE STUDY		1
	3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK		1
	3.a Rationale		
	3.b Review of Scouting in relation to adolescent growth trends		
	3.c Research questions		
	4. CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF THE CASE STUDY GROUPS		5
	5. METHODOLOGY		6
	6. NOTES TO THE READER		8
	PART I		
	CHAPTER I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE CASE STUDIES		9
	1. GENERAL INFORMATION		9
	1.a The Belgian Venture Scout unit		
	1.b The French Venture Scout unit		
	1.c The Scottish Scout troop		
	2. PROFILE OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE INTERVIEWED		10
	2.a Age		
	2.b Girl membership		
	2.c Family composition		
	2.d Socio-economic background		
	2.e School attendance		
	2.f Other members of the family in Scouting		
	2.g Extent of experience of Scouting		
	3. THE LEADERSHIP TEAMS		11
	3.a General		
	3.b The leadership team of the Belgian Venture Scout unit		
	3.c The leadership team of the French Venture Scout unit		
	3.d The leadership team of the Scottish Scout troop		
	3.e Preparation and training for leadership		
	3.f Sources of support for the leaders		
	4. OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE UNITS AND TROOP		15
	4.a The Belgian Venture Scout unit		
	4.b The French Venture Scout unit		
	4.c The Scottish Scout troop		

CHAPTER II: SCOUTING: THE EXPECTATIONS AND SOURCES OF MOTIVATION EXPRESSED BY THOSE INTERVIEWED	21
1. THE PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS AS TO WHAT THE SCOUT EXPERIENCE WOULD OFFER THEIR CHILDREN	21
2. THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY ON A YOUNG PERSON'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE MOVEMENT	21
3. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S POINTS OF VIEW	22
3.a Expectations and sources of motivation	
3.b Motivation to continue when faced with competition for less leisure time	
4. THE LEADERS' EXPECTATIONS AND MOTIVATIONS	26
5. CONCLUDING REMARKS	26
CHAPTER III: AN OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING IN EACH GROUP	29
1. INTRODUCTION	29
2. THE BELGIAN VENTURE SCOUT UNIT	29
2.a General	
2.b Overview of activities in the Belgian Venture Scout unit	
2.c The way in which the unit operates	
2.d Admission of new members	
3. THE FRENCH VENTURE SCOUT UNIT	34
3.a General	
3.b Overview of activities in the French Venture Scout unit	
3.c The way in which the unit operates	
3.d Admission of new members	
4. THE SCOTTISH SCOUT TROOP	38
4.a General	
4.b Overview of activities in the Scottish Scout troop	
4.c The way in which the troop operates	
4.d Admission of new members	
5. CONCLUDING REMARKS	43

CHAPTER IV: THE LEADERS' EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES	45
1. INTRODUCTION	45
2. THE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH OF THE BELGIAN VENTURE SCOUT UNIT	45
2.a General	
2.b Learning through group life	
2.c Integration of new members	
2.d The project as an educational tool	
2.e Taking into account individual needs and interests	
2.f Evaluation and progression	
2.g Coeducation	
2.h The leaders' view of their role and focus of their work	
2.i Interaction between the leaders and the young people	
3. THE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH OF THE FRENCH VENTURE SCOUT UNIT	51
3.a General	
3.b Offering a balanced and varied programme of plentiful activities	
3.c Efficient management	
3.d Teamwork	
3.e Taking into account individual needs and interests	
3.f Adhering to a code of living	
3.g Integration of new members	
3.h Coeducation	
3.i Evaluation and progression	
3.j Interaction between the leader and the young people	
4. THE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH OF THE SCOTTISH SCOUT TROOP	57
4.a General	
4.b Patrols	
4.c Traditional Scouting skills	
4.d Interaction between the Scout leader and the young people	
4.e Taking into account individual interests and needs	
4.f Evaluation and progression	
5. CONCLUDING REMARKS	62

## PART II

CHAPTER I: THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S APPRECIATION OF VARIOUS SCOUT ACTIVITIES AND VIEWS ON MOTIVATING FACTORS	65
1. INTRODUCTION	65
2. GENERAL APPRECIATION OF SCOUT ACTIVITIES	65
3. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S OPINIONS ON VARIOUS KINDS OF ACTIVITIES	66
3.a Outdoor activities in general	
3.b Scout camps	
3.c Games	
3.d Projects and travel	
3.e Discussions	
4. MOTIVATING FACTORS	79
4.a Challenge	
4.b Having fun	
5. CONCLUDING REMARKS	81
CHAPTER II: THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF PEER RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE UNIT OR TROOP	83
1. INTRODUCTION	83
2. INTEGRATION INTO THE GROUP	83
2.a General	
2.b The importance of knowing others in the group upon arrival	
2.c The role of teams and senior members	
2.d The role of camps, common activities and shared experiences	
2.e The custom of "bizutage" (initiation rites)	
2.f Some difficulties in adapting to a new group	
3. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S OPINIONS ON THE PEER RELATIONSHIPS DEVELOPED THROUGH LIFE IN SCOUTING	88
3.a The influence of social backgrounds on relationships	
3.b Comparison of friendships amongst Scouts and those made at school or elsewhere	
3.c Factors enabling closer friendships through Scouting	
3.d The importance of maintaining the cohesion of the group	
3.e The young people's opinions concerning tolerance and the resolution of conflicts in the Scout environment	
3.f Particular difficulties of certain young people in relating to others	

4.	RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SENIOR MEMBERS	95
4.a	General	
4.b	The role of senior members	
4.c	The young people's views on the patrol/team leader's responsibilities and the qualities required	
4.d	The senior members' view of their role	
4.e	The influence of senior members in decision-making	
4.f	Perceptions concerning the influence of senior members on the young people	
4.g	Perceptions concerning the relationship between younger and senior members	
4.h	Complementarity between senior members and adults	
5.	THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING COEDUCATION IN SCOUTING	102
5.a	Coeducation in Scouting	
5.b	Extent of exposure of the young people to a mixed or coeducational environment	
5.c	The coeducational units: the young people's views	
5.d	The single-sex Scout troop: the young people's views	
5.e.	General opinion on coeducation for the Venture Scout age section	
6.	CONCLUDING REMARKS	109
CHAPTER III: PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF THE ADULT LEADERS		111
1.	INTRODUCTION	111
2.	THE LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THEIR ROLES	111
3.	THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S REACTIONS TO THE ROLE IMAGES	112
3.a	"Guide" and "adviser"	
3.b	"Older brother"	
3.c	"Teacher"	
3.d	"Model or example to follow"	
3.e	"Figure of authority"	
3.f	"Organiser"	
3.g	"Parent"	
4.	RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR LEADERS	122
4.a	Differences in relationships	
4.b	Development of relationships over time	
5.	THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE LEADERS' LEVEL OF EXPECTATIONS	123



6.	THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS CONCERNING THE IDEAL LEADER PROFILE	124
6.a	Guidance and support	
6.b	A balance between friendship and authority	
6.c	Partnership	
7.	A FEW CRITICISMS OF THE LEADERS	126
8.	OVERALL APPRECIATION OF THE LEADERS	127
9.	SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS	128
9.a	General	
9.b	Diverging perceptions between parents and young people	
10.	INFLUENCE OF THE LEADERS ON THE YOUNG PEOPLE	132
11.	INFLUENCE OF THE THE YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE LEADERS	133
12.	CONCLUDING REMARKS	133
	CHAPTER IV: THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE SCOUT PROMISE	135
1.	INTRODUCTION	135
2.	GENERAL POINTS CONCERNING THE PROMISE IN THE THREE GROUPS	136
3.	PREPARING TO MAKE A COMMITMENT	136
3.a	In the Belgian and French Venture Scout units	
3.b	In the Scottish Scout troop	
4.	THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROMISE	137
5.	THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PREPARATORY PHASE	138
6.	THE INFLUENCE OF THE PROMISE ON THE YOUNG PEOPLE	139
7.	CONCLUDING REMARKS	140

CHAPTER V: THE YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS ON THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION IN SCOUTING	141
1. INTRODUCTION	141
2. APPROACHES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION	141
2.a Inner reflection	
2.b Religious practice in the three groups	
3. THE YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS	142
3.a The young people and the quest for a spiritual meaning to life	
3.b The young people’s views on church services and the observance of religious rites	
3.c Scout services	
4. CONCLUDING REMARKS	145
CHAPTER VI: THE YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS ON HELPING OTHERS, COMMUNITY SERVICE AND CONTACT WITH THEIR COMMUNITY	147
1. INTRODUCTION	147
2. “HELPING OTHERS” - A SCOUT “VALUE”	147
2.a General	
2.b Helping others within the Scout community	
3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND SERVICE IN THE THREE GROUPS	149
4. THE YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS ON SERVICE ACTIVITIES	150
4.a General	
4.b Reservations concerning service activities	
4.c Service activities as an opportunity to establish a feeling of mutual understanding and appreciation	
5. THE YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS ON THEIR CONTACT WITH THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY	153
6. CONCLUDING REMARKS	154

CHAPTER VII: THE YOUNG PEOPLES' PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THEIR EXPERIENCES OF DECISION-MAKING AND RESPONSIBILITY IN SCOUTING AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING AND EVALUATION	155
1. INTRODUCTION	155
2. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING AND THE EXERCISE OF RESPONSIBILITY IN THE THREE GROUPS	155
2.a General	
2.b In the Belgian Venture Scout unit	
2.c In the French Venture Scout unit	
2.d In the Scottish Scout troop	
3. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THEIR LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN THE THREE GROUPS	157
3.a In the Belgian Venture Scout unit	
3.b In the French Venture Scout unit	
3.c In the Scottish Scout troop	
3.d In all three groups	
4. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR ABILITY TO MAKE DECISIONS	159
5. THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE CONCERNING THE EXERCISE OF RESPONSIBILITY	161
5.a The members of the Venture Scout units	
5.b The members of the Scottish Scout troop	
5.c Differences and similarities in perception and in the level of motivation to take on responsibilities	
5.d The young people's perceptions concerning the development of their ability to assume responsibility	
6. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING AND EVALUATION AND THE BENEFITS THEY PERCEIVE	166
6.a General	
6.b The young people's perceptions	
7. CONCLUDING REMARKS	169

## PART III

CHAPTER I: THE INFLUENCE OF THE SCOUT EXPERIENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUNG PERSON	171
1. INTRODUCTION	171
1.a General	
1.b The extent to which the parents perceive Scouting as having an educational role	
1.c The level to which the young people interviewed are conscious of their development and able to analyse how, if at all, Scouting has contributed	
2. DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-CONFIDENCE	176
2.a General	
2.b Self-expression	
2.c Confidence in abilities	
3. SELF-AWARENESS	179
3.a Self-analysis	
3.b Discovery or reinforcement of talents, aptitudes and personal interests	
4. THE YOUNG PERSON IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS	181
4.a The quality of the young people's relationships with others in the group	
4.b Self-assertiveness, discovery of limits to personal freedom and the development of tolerance for others	
4.c Experience of interdependence, the development of a sense of responsibility towards others and solidarity	
5. DECISION-MAKING	188
6. APTITUDE AND CAPACITY TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY	189
6.a General	
6.b Responsibility for leading a patrol or team	
7. TECHNICAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS	191
8. INFLUENCE ON ATTITUDES TO LIFE	193
8.a General	
8.b A more dynamic, active approach to life	
8.c A greater aptitude to take initiative and overcome obstacles	
8.d Greater openness to others	
9. INFLUENCE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF VALUES	196

10.	PREPARATION FOR ADULT LIFE	198
	10.a Development of skills and attitudes perceived to be useful for adult life	
	10.b Influence on the choice of career	
11.	THE DOMINANT IMPACT OF THE SCOUT EXPERIENCE IN EACH CASE STUDY	200
	11.a The Belgian Venture Scout unit	
	11.b The French Venture Scout unit	
	11.c The Scottish Scout troop	
12.	UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS OR CHANGES DESIRED	203
	12.a The parents' point of view	
	12.b The young people's point of view	
	12.c The leaders' point of view	
13.	CONCLUDING REMARKS	205
CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS		207
1.	INTRODUCTION	207
2.	GENERAL	207
3.	THE ROLE OF THE ADULT LEADER AND THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPED	209
	3.a To what extent does the adult leader act as a role model for the young people?	
	3.b To what extent is the adult leader a mentor for the young people?	
	3.c How does the adult leader help the young people to construct their own value systems and make the choices necessary for their future roles in the adult world?	
	3.d The relationship between the leader and the young people: a balance between authority and friendship	
4.	IN WHAT WAYS DO THE ACTIVITIES PROVIDE THE YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THE KINDS OF CHALLENGES AND MEANINGFUL ROLES WHICH HELP THEM MEET THEIR ADOLESCENT GROWTH NEEDS?	216
	4.a General	
	4.b Personally enriching activities	
	4.c Acquisition of technical and practical skills through activities	
	4.d Activities and socially meaningful roles	

5.	THE PEER GROUP AS AN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT	221
5.a	Interaction between activities and group dynamics	
5.b	Development of values, attitudes to life and interpersonal skills through group life	
5.c	Effects of differences in age/maturity within the peer group	
5.d	Effects and perceptions concerning coeducation in the peer group	
5.e	The role of camps	
6.	EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OR "LEARNING BY DOING"	226
7.	CONCLUDING REMARKS	226

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. BACKGROUND

The present study, entitled “The Educational Impact of Scouting: three case studies on adolescence”, was commissioned to external researchers by the Research and Development Committee of the World Organization of the Scout Movement, a body created in 1989.

The principal objective of the Research & Development Committee is to:

*“Offer better Scouting for more young people by undertaking scientific research which would support and assist the overall development of Scouting and enhance not only its effectiveness, but also its credibility as an educational Movement.”<sup>1</sup>*

### 2. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study on “The Educational Impact of Scouting: three case studies on adolescence” is to examine through three case studies how Scouting is practised and the different effects perceived on the development of young people in the 14-18 year age range. This would make it possible to indicate whether, and to what extent, the Scout experience corresponds to at least some of the growth needs of adolescents.

This study is in no way intended to present “ideal models” of Scouting to be emulated elsewhere, but rather to present a concrete analysis of three very different kinds of Scouting being offered to young people in the specified age range. It is hoped that this report will be of assistance to national Scout organizations in reflecting on where they are and on where they want to go.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.a Rationale

The idea for this study originated from the fact that, while much has been done in the field of social and psychological research to identify the needs of adolescents, there are very few studies documenting successful experiences which illustrate how young people can be helped through their transition into adulthood.

In a preliminary phase to this research, two documentary research papers were prepared by social researchers commissioned by the Research and Development Committee (primarily for internal use) on the findings of social scientists concerning major problems affecting adolescent growth caused by changes in society, occurring to varying degrees in many parts of the world. The papers, entitled “Narrowing the Margins: Adolescent Unemployment and the Lack of a Social Role”<sup>2</sup> and “Adolescents Facing the Future”<sup>3</sup> are summarized below.

---

<sup>1</sup> Terms of Reference, Research & Development Committee of the World Organization of the Scout Movement, April 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Laura E. Hess and Anne C. Peterson, Pennsylvania State University, 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Laurie Huberman, Mai Tra Bach, WOSM Research & Development Committee, Geneva, 1990.

During the 20th century, the structure of the family has undergone important changes. The nuclear model has grown disproportionately to that of the more extended family model as employment opportunities have drawn people to urban areas. Women have increasingly joined the wage labour market as well and, because such activities take parents away from home, the family can provide many fewer opportunities for young people to learn vocational skills and to progress smoothly toward insertion in the adult world.

Modern society has come to regard schools as the primary institutions for socializing the young, although the family remains a crucial determinant of child development. However, the role of both school and family in this socialization process is made more difficult by the current rapid rate of technological change and a certain loss of faith in the “old certainties” based on religious beliefs and the simpler forms of earlier community life.

Adolescents (i.e. young people in approximately their second decade of life) thus find themselves spending more years in schools and more time in age-segregated (peer) groups. Interaction between age groups both within the community and the family seems to be lessening. Yet, this period in a young person’s life, during which the transition is made from childhood to adulthood, is one of vital importance and one which requires help from the older generations. In order to develop a consistent self-image, to plan for the future and find a sense of meaning for their lives, young people need to be able to interact with their elders.

The family, or other significant adults, help adolescent development in three important ways. They provide support and affection, they set limits and guide socialization, and they are sources of role models which help in identity formation and the elaboration of a system of values. Outside the family, the school and other youth-serving institutions can also provide relevant role models for young people. When such people take on more conscious educational goals, they are often referred to as “mentors”. A mentor has been defined as *“an older, more experienced person who seeks to further the development of character and competence in a younger person by guiding the latter in acquiring mastery of progressively more complex skills and tasks in which the mentor is already proficient... In the course of this process, the mentor and the young person develop a special bond of mutual commitment. In addition, the young person’s relationship to the mentor takes on an emotional character of respect, loyalty and identification”*<sup>4</sup>.

To a young child, parents are the main objects of identification and would normally be the primary mentors. However, the fact that many more fathers and mothers are working full-time away from home, or that single parents, either due to divorce, death of a spouse, or birth out of wedlock, are assuming full responsibility for child-raising, has

---

<sup>4</sup> “Apprenticeship for Adulthood: Preparing Youth for the Future”, Stephen F. Hamilton, Free Press, New York, 1990.



restricted the opportunities for children to learn from their parents. Because of the accumulation of problems faced by these youths, they are sometimes referred to as “at risk”.

In any case, as young people move into adolescence, they begin to look for mentors outside their families. The prolonged years of schooling and relatively late entry into the job market, which is the typical experience of more and more adolescents around the world, could be argued to be an advantage, easing the transition to adulthood and providing time for trying out new roles. However, where there is a significant delay in assuming a work role, either by choice or not, several negative consequences may result. One of these would be the decreased number of occasions to interact with potential mentors from the adult world. Other consequences can be just as problematic. For example, there are few opportunities for adolescents to take on meaningful roles that are valued by others. They are *“too young to marry; largely excluded from employment; they do not participate in elections; there is no presently effective way for them to take part in the political, commercial, financial or cultural aspects of the community”*<sup>5</sup>. This is, of course, mainly true of the industrialized countries, but is echoed in developing countries as well.

Social science researchers believe that the development of the adolescent is assisted by an increased involvement in responsible, task-oriented activities outside the home, which bring him or her into contact with adults other than parents who offer a mentoring role. This can also mean contact with other young people in a setting which is structured by adult expectations and values. Where studies have shown that too heavy dependence on unstructured peer groups can lead to problem behaviour and produce youthful alienation, the role of a structured youth group can be quite positive. After all, adolescents report being happiest when in the company of their friends. The challenge thus becomes to combine the pleasures of the peer group with environments organized by adults to include both relevant adult mentors and the possibility of participating in meaningful activities.

### 3.b Review of Scouting in relation to adolescent growth trends

The stated purpose of Scouting is to be a non-formal educational movement contributing to the development of young people. When it was started in 1907, the movement was largely based upon the ideas of Lord Baden-Powell and reflected concerns of the British middle classes at that time. The principles and values which were then put forward remain largely in place today, although Scouting is now a worldwide youth movement and therefore its various cultural accommodations have caused it to evolve with remarkable heterogeneity at the local level.

---

<sup>5</sup> Sorensen, 1962.

The Scout Method is defined as *“a system of progressive education through: a promise and law; learning by doing; membership of small groups, involving, under adult guidance, progressive discovery and acceptance of responsibility and training towards self-government directed toward the development of character, and the acquisition of competence, self-reliance, dependability and capacities both to cooperate and to lead; progressive and stimulating programmes of varied activities based on the interests of the participants, including games, useful skills, and service to the community, taking place largely in an outdoor setting in contact with nature”*<sup>6</sup>. This would seem to provide several opportunities for responding to some of the needs of adolescents as described above.

First of all, Scouting provides occasions to spend time with peers in a small, informal group setting which nevertheless involves the participation of an adult and the structuring influence of a traditional value system. If the activities pursued are indeed based on the interests of young people, their motivation to take part in them should be high.

However, research seems to indicate that for the older adolescent (i.e. between 14 and 17 years old) activities need to be more than just fun. Even if they are learning new skills and participating in group activities, this is often not enough. Along with this, young people need to be provided with opportunities to try out meaningful roles. Scouting provides just such opportunities within the patrol system. Learning to take responsibility for different aspects of the group’s functioning is an important part of this experience. Furthermore, Scouts can try out different roles both through community-oriented activities and through the multiplicity of projects coming under the heading of “doing a good turn” which have been carried out in every country where Scouting exists.

Scouting also provides opportunities for young people to develop a relationship with an adult outside the family. If the adult leader-Scout relationships are indeed nurtured and developed, this can provide a connection between generations which can, in turn, be helpful to adolescents in constructing their sense of identity and values.

Therefore, the Scouting experience has the potential for providing at least two important elements promoting healthy adolescent development:

- 1) positive adult role models who both exemplify certain values and accomplishments and encourage the development of a positive self image and set of values among the unit members.
- 2) the opportunity of participating in activities which allow the young people to try out roles and learn skills which are perceived by themselves and by others as being socially meaningful and helpful in the construction of their adult self.

---

<sup>6</sup> “Constitution and By-Laws of the World Organization of the Scout Movement”, World Scout Bureau, Geneva, 1983.

### 3.c Research questions

Based on the above, the present research aims to answer two fundamental questions:

- In what way is the Scout leader a model who helps the young people to construct their own value systems and make the choices necessary for their future roles in the adult world?
- In what ways do the activities provide 14-17 year olds with the kinds of challenges and meaningful roles which help them meet their adolescent growth needs?

The main areas of investigation were to determine:

1. How the troop leader construes the Scout philosophy and method;
2. The adult leader's perception of the growth needs in the 14-17 year old age group;
3. In what way he/she promotes activities and relationships that address these needs and the extent to which activities open out and connect to the larger community;
4. The Scout's perceptions of these activities and relationships.

Data and observations were thus collected on:

1. Background and history of the troop/unit
2. Organization of activities
3. Characteristics and attitudes of the adult leader
4. Characteristics and attitudes of the troop/unit members
5. Relationships/interactions between the adult leaders and the troop unit members
6. Possible perceived/observed outcomes relative to adolescent growth needs.

## 4. CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF THE CASE STUDY GROUPS

The choice of cases was deliberately geared towards groups perceived as "successful" (i.e. in terms of fulfilling the criteria developed and explained below), irrespective of whether such groups were considered to be "representative" of the associations to which they belong.

Ideally, many more cases should have been studied throughout the world but resource constraints restricted the possible scope to three case studies in Europe. Nonetheless, the final selection of the case studies was determined so as to be able to examine in depth three very different kinds of Scouting being offered to young people in the selected age range - a consideration which was felt to be of greater significance in the process of strategic thinking vis-à-vis the development of better Scouting for more young people.

The criteria used for the selection of the groups were groups in which:

- the leader:
  - had fulfilled the function with adolescents aged 13-16 for several years and was likely to continue to do so;
  - was interested in participating in the research;
  - adhered to the principles and ways of working promoted by the national Scout association and yet was sensitive to the individual and group needs of the young people and sought to adapt the Scout programme to meet those needs;
  - consciously sought to fulfil his/her role as an educator and help the young people to reflect on values;
  - gave special priority to the integration of young people in their community and was open to new ideas which would enlarge the experience and the horizons of the young people;
- and in which:
  - more than 10 youth members were between 13 and 15/16 years of age;
  - the members came from mixed social and family backgrounds;
  - membership was composed of boys and girls;
  - the group had existed, ideally, for more than 7 years, was a popular group for young people, and had a relatively high membership compared to other groups in the area.

The identification of potential candidates for the case studies turned out to be more difficult than anticipated, due to a number of factors:

- 1) Language barriers forced the researchers to limit their research to countries which are either francophone or anglophone, or where one of these languages is widely understood and local help available for added translation.
- 2) The need to follow the units' activities over a substantial time and in different sites posed limits to the quantity of case studies that could be undertaken within the time frame and within the human and material resources available. For these reasons, the identification procedure concentrated on units within Europe.

5. METHODOLOGY The research method selected is a qualitative approach consisting in collecting several points of view (leaders, parents and, especially, the young people themselves), in order to have a clearer understanding of different Scout practices and their influence on the development of young people. All the data was collected by means of intensive interviews in the field and by observing and participating in different group activities and events.

Depending on the nature of the question, the instrumentation tools used during the interviews were open questions, statement cards, and questionnaires. Whatever the tool used, the participants were encouraged to explain their views.

From April to September 1991 the interview questionnaire for leaders, parents and Scouts was developed and tested in Geneva. Between October 1991 and May 1992, 4 visits were paid to each group leading to a total of 12 field visits. The data collection was completed in May 1992. The interviews with the young people took place during the first and last terms of the Scout year, in order to be able to discuss the changes that the young people had perceived in their progress or in long-term projects. The interviews were recorded, and 232 tapes had to be transcribed before the analysis process could start. A variety of documents were also collected for the purposes of the analysis.

For a variety of technical reasons, not all of the young people in the units could be questioned on every aspect. In some cases, this was due to the fact that the young people were unavailable at the time of the interviews. In other cases, as time constraints during the interviews did not make it possible to interview the young people in depth on every aspect, greater emphasis was placed on obtaining their explanations on certain points on which they had particularly strong views. Most interviews were carried out on an individual basis, but in Scotland four interviews took place in small groups of two or three young people. In these cases, care was taken to allow each young person to express himself in turn. The interviews were shorter than in the other two groups. This difference in approach was an adaptation due to the fact that they were on the whole younger than the young people in the other two case studies.

The advantage of this methodology is that long-term monitoring in the field helped to dispel a certain mistrust on the part of the participants in respect of "research". The fact of being chosen out of many groups constituted a self-actualizing element for the group, but they still remained somewhat suspicious faced with an external element. Through the regular contacts, these "defensive" reactions were, however, gradually dispelled and a relationship of trust was established, allowing a more open dialogue and more in-depth discussions concerning the values "experienced" and a better control of the reliability of the answers.

The reactions observed in the field tend to show that the approach adopted has influenced the participants to a certain extent. It has helped to encourage reflection by some leaders on the different aspects of their daily leader's life. Most of the leaders concerned have a very significant "Scout experience" behind them, but have rarely had the opportunity to take so much time to describe what they do and why. The questions put to them, the necessity to describe in detail their way of managing the group, of developing the Scout values and philosophy, as well as analysing the reasons for their action, have helped them to become more aware of some of their educational practices and priorities. Furthermore, the Scout leaders were very interested to learn about other leadership experiences, particularly in different contexts to their own. New orientations sometimes appeared in their suggestions for activities.

The disadvantage of the approach adopted is that it requires a significant investment in terms of the preparation and testing of tools, and the collection and analysis of the data. The interview techniques require specific skills and should be conducted by independent researchers. For these reasons, it would be difficult for Scout associations to use the methodology in its present form.

## 6. NOTES TO THE READER

For convenience, the groups interviewed are identified according to their country but this does not mean that the nature of activities or the methods of functioning are representative of those used elsewhere by the national Scout associations to which the groups belong.

The age section to which the young people in the French-speaking case studies belong is “Pionnier”. This term has been translated as “Venture Scout” as it corresponds to the same age range in many English-speaking countries. It is important to note, however, that “Pionnier” and “Venture Scout” do not imply similar educational approaches. A brief explanation of the “Pionnier” concept is provided in Part I, Chapter I.

PART I, CHAPTER I  
BACKGROUND  
INFORMATION ON  
THE CASE STUDIES

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.a The Belgian Venture Scout<sup>7</sup> unit

The Belgian Venture Scout unit is located in a residential area in a suburb close to Charleroi<sup>8</sup>. The unit is coeducational. The youth members are aged between 15 and 18; 35% of them are girls. The unit has been in existence since the early 1960s and is part a Scout Group<sup>9</sup> which first started in 1938 and belongs to the Catholic Scout Federation (FSC)<sup>10</sup> of Belgium. The unit attracts an increasing number of young people who wish to join it. Membership in recent years has been between 30 and 40 young people.

1.b The French Venture Scout unit

The French Venture Scout unit is located in the town centre of Bourges<sup>11</sup>. It comprises young people aged 14 to 17 (with a few young people aged 13). The unit has been open to girls for about 10 years, but they have always been in the minority (around 15-20%). The unit has existed since 1964 and is part of a Scout Group created in 1926 and which belongs to the Scouts de France<sup>12</sup>. Membership of the unit has always been relatively high (25 or more young people) in comparison with the average membership of other units in the area (10-12).

1.c The Scottish Scout troop

The Scottish Scout troop comprises boys aged 10 1/2 -15 1/2. It is located in a residential area of Edinburgh<sup>13</sup>. The troop is part of a Scout Group which was founded in 1920 and belongs to The Scout Association of the United Kingdom. The number of young people enrolled each year varies between 30 and 40, and exceeds the average membership of other troops in the area<sup>14</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> Note that "pionnier" has been translated as "Venture Scout" as it reflects the same approximate age range as Venture Scouting in anglophone countries, although "pionnier" also reflects a particular educational approach.

<sup>8</sup> A town in south-west Belgium with over 200,000 inhabitants.

<sup>9</sup> A number of age sections working together so as to provide continuity of membership. Note that "group", used without a capital "g", is used in its generic sense referring to the unit or troop interviewed in a particular case study.

<sup>10</sup> A Catholic Scout association within Guidisme et Scoutisme en Belgique (the Belgian Guide and Scout Federation).

<sup>11</sup> A town in central France with approximately 79,000 inhabitants.

<sup>12</sup> A Catholic Scout association within Scoutisme Français (the French Scout Federation).

<sup>13</sup> The capital city of Scotland with 434,500 inhabitants.

<sup>14</sup> An average of 22.5, according to the January 1993 census conducted by the Edinburgh Scout Centre.

## 2. PROFILE OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

### 2.a Age

Of those interviewed, the youngest were between 13 and 14 years of age and represented less than one third (29%) of the total. Almost half (41%) were between 15 and 16 years of age, and about one third were 17 years of age or above (these were young people reaching the end of their time in the group or who, as in the case of the Scottish Scout troop, had already left the group but returned occasionally to help out).

Only young people with more than one year's experience in the group and corresponding to the selected age range were chosen for the detailed interviews. Contact with young people who did not correspond to this profile was informal and sporadic.

### 2.b Girl membership

Girls are under-represented, as only two of the three groups are coeducational, and girls are weakly represented in the French group.

### 2.c Family composition

Most of the young people are from families with two or more children, but there were some cases of only children and single-parent families in the Belgian and French groups.

### 2.d Socio-economic background

Membership of the Belgian and Scottish groups is relatively homogeneous in terms of socio-economic background, comprising mainly young people from relatively well-off families with a few young people with more limited financial means. The socio-economic background of the members of French group is much more varied.

### 2.e School attendance

Few of the young people in the French and Belgian groups attend the same schools. Many of the young people in the Scottish group attend fee-paying schools which also offer them a wide range of extracurricular activities (sports, music, theatre, community activities, etc.).

### 2.f Other members of the family in Scouting

Many of the young people have brothers or sisters in the same Scout Group (who are either youth members or, in some cases, leaders) and find themselves together from time to time. Most of the parents of the young people had themselves been Scouts in their youth or had



belonged to another youth organization. In contrast, a high proportion of young people in the French group come from families with no experience of Scouting.

In the Belgian unit, some of the members have had several generations of their family pass through the same Scout Group, first as youth members then as leaders. Almost all the leaders of the different age sections are former youth members of the Group.

## 2.g Extent of experience of Scouting

Most of the young people interviewed started their Scout careers relatively early, as Cub Scouts or Scouts. In the French group, a few did not join the Movement until the age of 13 or 14. In the Belgian and Scottish groups, previous Scouting experience is a prerequisite for membership of the unit/troop.

## 3. THE LEADERSHIP TEAMS 3.a General

In the three groups selected for the case studies, the leadership teams are composed of 3 to 5 leaders. Responsibility vis-à-vis the public and parents is taken on by the most experienced adult (the unit or troop leader). The profile of the leadership teams is different in each of the three groups. It is composed of men and women in the Belgian and French groups, which are coeducational, and of men only in the Scottish group. In the French and Scottish groups, the unit leader and troop leader respectively have occupied their positions for more than 20 years. In contrast, the leaders of the Belgian unit have fulfilled their roles for a much shorter span of time.

The Belgian and French units also have a chaplain who fulfils a leadership role in terms of spiritual development, religious practice, reflection on values, etc., but who is not necessarily involved in the everyday life of the group to the same extent as the other leaders. In both groups, the chaplains (who have been involved with the Scout Group for many years) also have a leadership support function within the Scout Group.

## 3.b The leadership team of the Belgian Venture Scout unit

At the time of the interviews, the three leaders in the Belgian group were all aged between 20 and 23 and were all university students. It was the unit leader's first year in this function as she had been an assistant leader for the two previous years. The chaplain is the eldest (50 years old).

Leaders generally fulfil their function for a minimum of three years. The adults begin as assistant leader and gradually prepare to become unit leader after about two years. Nearly all of the leaders of the

entire Scout Group (Cub Scout, Scout and Venture Scout sections) are students. The end of their term of office as leaders usually corresponds with the end of their studies. Some of them then take on a leadership support role at local or regional level, but most become absorbed by their entry into professional life and leave the Movement.

The fact that the leaders fulfil their function for three years appears to be one of the factors of the success of this group, as the turnover of leaders in other Venture Scout units in the area is more rapid.

### 3.c The leadership team of the French Venture Scout unit

The French leadership team is composed of four members: the unit leader, the chaplain (both over 40 years of age) and two young assistants (20 and 21 years of age). The unit leader has professional experience in a number of different fields. For a long time he worked in construction and architecture, but he is presently employed by the Department of Youth and Sports.

### 3.d The leadership team of the Scottish Scout troop

The leadership team of the Scottish group is composed of five members. The troop leader and one of his assistants are over 40 years of age, the second in charge is over 30, and the two other leaders are under 20. In professional life, the oldest leaders occupy various administrative and business positions, and the youngest are students.

### 3.e Preparation and training for leadership

None of the leaders in any of the groups had had any formal leadership training prior to becoming leaders other than the experience and skills that they had gained through previous involvement in the Movement.

In the Belgian group, the leaders started as assistant leaders and were progressively trained to take on the responsibility of unit leader. They have followed a few regional training courses but rely essentially on the resources and support developed by their Scout Group. They were nonetheless already familiar with the operating structure and educational approach when they began as nearly all of them had been youth members of the unit.

In the French and Scottish groups, the present unit/troop leaders took on this responsibility straight away, without being “broken in” to the role as assistant leaders as there were no other leaders available or willing at the time to keep their respective groups running. In addition to their responsibilities as unit or troop leader, they are both Scout Group leaders and help to train other leaders.

In most cases, the leaders feel that their Scout experience in their youth prepared them fairly well for their leadership role. In their experience, one year is, on average, the amount of time necessary to become familiar with the role and to develop a style of leadership adapted to one's own personality. In the Scottish group, the troop leader found that it took him somewhat longer (about three years), as he had to re-establish all the necessary conditions for the patrol system and the traditions of the troop to work effectively. When he took up his position, the Scouts in his troop had not been trained in this way and had not developed the necessary skills to internalise this structure and method of functioning.

All respondents claimed to be satisfied with their leadership roles and have not been disappointed in their expectations. Out of all the different tasks that they have to carry out, they single out the planning and running of camps as being the most enjoyable. They all find administrative tasks less pleasant. Their greatest source of satisfaction is being able to follow the personal development of the young people, to watch them progress, to see their projects take shape and their challenges met. They feel that their contact with young people has allowed them to stay young in mind.

The educational objectives remain more or less constant in all three groups, although they point out that their leadership approach has evolved over time. They feel that they have become more effective as leaders and attribute the change mainly to feedback from the young people and a greater understanding of them.

### 3.f Sources of support for the leaders

- Leadership support

The Belgian Venture Scout leaders rely mainly on the support network of the local Scout Group comprising former leaders of the various age sections in the Scout Group and the chaplain. Leadership review weekends are organised once or twice a year to enable the leaders of all the age sections to meet together with the chaplain. The chaplain sometimes acts as a "mediator" between parents and leaders. His influence is important as he is highly respected by the young people, leaders and parents alike. His involvement also to some extent reflects the continuity of the "traditions and spirit" developed within the group, as he has been involved in the Scout Group since the 1960s, and it is thanks to him that most of the group's history has been able to be traced.

Both the French and the Scottish leaders use educational materials and activity ideas developed by their national associations. The French leader estimates that approximately 50% of the activity ideas that he develops for the members of his unit emanate from the Scouts de France. The other 50% are his own, based on his experience and ideas gained through contacts made in his professional life, local organisations and clubs. In the case of the Scottish Scout troop leader,

many of his activity ideas come from Scout magazines published by his association, but he normally adapts them to his individual style of leadership. He maintains close contact with the district Scout structure and the local Scout Group of which he is also the leader.

- Sources of other forms of support

#### *The local parish*

In all three groups, the facilities are provided by the local parish. The Belgian Scout Group has the use of large premises in the countryside with meeting places for each age section and playing fields.

The French Venture Scout unit has the use of fairly large premises in the town centre where it can meet, store equipment, and plan and organise activities. There is a well-equipped workshop and a courtyard which enables them to work outside. Over the years, the unit has acquired a sizeable amount of equipment (tools, files, books, magazines, cassettes, records, etc.) that members can borrow or use on the premises.

The Scottish Scout troop has the use of the large local parish hall, which is available for all youth groups in the parish. The Scouts also have a small separate room, called a den, where the troop leader and patrol leaders can meet and store their equipment<sup>15</sup>. The troop also receives logistic support from the local parish in recognition of its contribution to youth work.

#### *Parents*

In the Venture Scouts units, the parents provide some assistance with transportation and funding of camps, although as the young people are in their mid- to late teens, they are fairly independent in terms of transportation. Thanks to the emphasis on raising their own funds through “extra-jobs”<sup>16</sup>, the amount of financial assistance requested from parents is kept to a minimum. The leaders in the Belgian unit also receive logistic support from their own families and from former unit or Scout Group members.

In the Scottish troop, most camps are funded entirely by the parents. The Scouts and their families participate in fund-raising activities (coffee mornings, etc.) organised within the parish for the more expensive camps and to support the Scout troop’s general running costs. Many parents participate directly in the administration of the troop and belong to the parents’ committee. They help in particular with the organization of family events and the management of the administrative structure of the group.

---

<sup>15</sup> The troop also rents a cottage outside Edinburgh for activities.

<sup>16</sup> Short-term remunerated work.

#### 4. OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE UNITS AND TROOP

##### 4.a The Belgian Venture Scout unit

The Venture Scout unit is part of a Scout Group which is characterised both by an adherence, generation after generation, to educational objectives based on a system of values developed within the Group, and by a permanent process of reflection on how to improve the Scouting offered. The objectives include helping young people to search for the essential values of life, a sense of authenticity through life in nature, a sense of self-worth, a sense of commitment, responsibility vis-à-vis oneself and others. The leaders have also sought ways to enable the young people to experience Scouting as a unique adventure.

During the 1960s the leaders of the Scout Group sought to introduce a number of improvements in the educational approach being offered to the adolescent age range. At the time, changes were being developed at national level, largely based on a major revision of the educational approach undertaken in France by the Scouts de France. In addition to contributing to the substance, the Scout Group acted as a pilot group.

The major changes relate to the structure of age sections for the adolescent age range, the introduction of coeducation, the reinforcement of certain aspects of the Scout Group's educational approach in general, and the leadership structure.

- Change in the structure of the adolescent age section

Originally one age section (Scouts) was intended to serve the needs of all youth members aged 12 to 17 years. Practice was showing that this structure was not effective. This age section was divided into two sections: Scouts (12-14 years of age) and Venture Scouts (15-18 years of age). This innovation created considerable interest amongst leaders in other Scout troops who started to consider adopting the same approach.

Along with the change in the structure for older adolescents came a shift in the nature of activities and learning opportunities. Acquiring knowledge of nature and traditional Scouting skills (knots, orientation, first aid, setting up a Scout camp, etc.), represent the core of the proposals offered to young people in the 12 to 14 age range. For the 15 to 18 age range, the emphasis is on enlarging the young person's horizons giving the young people the greatest possible degree of responsibility and independence to organise their own projects based on guidelines in line with the Group's values.

- Introduction of coeducation

In 1982, the number of youth members and leaders in the Venture Scout section of this Scout Group and in the corresponding age section in the local Guide group started to decline. The idea arose of introducing coeducation for young people aged 15 and above by merging Guiding and Scouting in this age section at local level. The group chaplain strongly supported this idea, and succeeded in

convincing the families of the young people who had reservations. The membership of the Venture Scout unit rose sharply as a result of this merger and it now attracts an ever increasing number of young people who wish to join it.

- Reinforcement of the educational approach

- While hospitality, solidarity and mutual respect have always been a priority, the sense of belonging to a group and the development of strong friendships have been reinforced during the last five years in response to a growing climate of anonymity that the young people feel in their present social environment. Their relationship with the leaders is now closer and more friendly and the group as a whole has become more close-knit. In the view of the parents interviewed and of the newcomers, this is presently the strongest image that the group projects to the outside world.
- While helping the young people to internalise the values of the Group has always been a central element in the educational approach, the present leadership team has reinforced this priority by seeking, with the aid of the chaplain, ways to focus the young people's reflection through regular informal discussions as they prepare to make their Scout promise.
- Aspects which may, on the surface, appear to be major changes are in fact the result of an "avant-garde" tradition in the Group. The first leaders of the Venture Scout unit had already broken with traditional practice in other Groups by moving away from activities based solely on traditional Scouting skills and placed more emphasis on the acquisition of manual and technical skills (audio-visual presentations, photography, technical workshops, construction work camps, handicrafts, etc.). The workshops organised were open to the public and exchanges were organised with other Scout troops in the region and in France who were experimenting with the same approach. While this radically different approach initially met with some reticence, it eventually created considerable interest on the part of Scout leaders from other areas.

The present leaders of the Venture Scout unit continue to encourage rather unusual projects, but with a greater focus on involvement in community life and meeting others.

- Change in the leadership structure

While the age at which leaders have taken up the position has varied very little (all began around the age of 20 or 21), they tend to leave at an earlier age now than in the 1960s, as they feel the need to devote more time and energy to their professional careers. This shorter tenure has meant that new leaders have had to be recruited every few years. While the short tenure, the youthful age and lack of leadership experience might have constituted a serious stumbling-block in ensuring the quality of the Scouting offered, a number of factors have helped to overcome this problem:

- Most of the leaders had been youth members of the Scout Group and so identify with what the Group is trying to achieve.
- The chaplain and previous leaders provide a continuity to the meetings once or twice a year so that the leaders of all the age sections can share their experience and discuss how to tackle problems while being faithful to the educational objectives and values of the Group.
- The level to which the educational objectives are achieved by each young person and by the troop or unit as a whole constitutes the basis for the evaluation of progression of the young people and of the troop or unit to which they belong. During the leaders' meetings, the leaders of the various age sections analyse and evaluate the methods of working, the activities, the young people's views and their own personal objectives according to these criteria which helps to reinforce the coherence of the approach.

#### 4.b The French Venture Scout unit

In the early 1960s, major efforts were undertaken at national level by the Scouts de France to develop an educational approach more specifically adapted to adolescents (14-16 years of age) and to promote the adoption of this new initiative known as the "modèle pionnier".

The "modèle pionnier" centres around "entreprises" (projects), conceived by the young people themselves. The young people present their project ideas, from which the leaders create a new project incorporating the elements deemed important by the young people in each of the projects proposed, thus creating a sense of ownership and motivation. This new project is further "enriched" by the leaders to ensure that as many learning opportunities as possible are offered within the framework of the project. The senior members (team leaders) and the leadership team work out the main areas of tasks to be carried out (and skills to be learned) in order to carry out the project. All of the members then select the areas of work according to their interests<sup>17</sup>. The project is therefore the driving force behind the acquisition of skills. At the end of the project, an evaluation session is held with the entire unit. The leaders and the young people discuss how far they managed to achieve the project's objectives, the high points, the difficulties, etc. The evaluation session is also an opportunity to discuss personal and group progression. A party is then held in celebration.

---

<sup>17</sup> While the young people continue to "live" in their teams so as to develop relationships within a small group, the missions (task forces) enable the young people to get to know others in the group and to work with them in task-oriented groups. In addition to these missions, the young people also have a number of regular responsibilities at team level, providing other skill-learning opportunities.

The name “Pionnier” (which has nothing to do with the youth organisations of the same name in many Communist countries) was chosen for this age group as it brings to mind the goals and achievements of the early pioneers - discovering, initiating, paving the way, building a new society, etc. as a group within which each person had specific responsibilities, reflecting the surge of economic expansion and a number of social changes in France at this time. It also created a clear cut with the former “Raider” model and associated programme (created in 1948 for young people in the 12-17 age range), which emphasized personal survival in the woods, while camouflaging one’s tracks, etc., popular after World War II as it symbolised the heroism and ability to survive in adverse circumstances of, for example, commando troops<sup>18</sup>. The “Raider” programme was in fact a set of extra, more demanding challenges for troops disenchanted with the programme of traditional Scouting skills of pre-war times<sup>19</sup>.

The Venture Scout unit interviewed was created around 1964 at the time of these reforms. The present leader has been in charge of the unit since it was created and has gradually developed a personalised approach based on the general educational approach proposed by the Scouts de France, using resource materials from leader magazines and handbooks, but adapting them to fit with his own style of leadership and with the interests of the young people in his unit.

Some of the adaptations he has made include:

- Assistant team leader

The position of assistant team leader (which does not figure in the Scouts de France’s “modèle pionnier”) is included in the operating structure due to the large number of activities and meetings in his unit.

- Coeducational teams

Contrary to what is proposed by the Scouts de France, the teams are mixed. After a rather unsuccessful attempt to set up a team of girls, who already felt “marginalized” by constituting a minority in the unit, they asked to be put into mixed teams.

---

<sup>18</sup> The uniform of the “Raider” days changed from beige (for better camouflage) to a bright, conspicuous red for the “Pionniers” (Venture Scouts).

<sup>19</sup> One of the reasons for developing the “Raider” programme was that the pre-war traditional programme did not offer any real opportunities for senior members to undertake responsibility if they were not team leaders - leading to a decline in membership in mid-adolescence. While the “Raider” programme offered more exciting possibilities for young people in mid-adolescence, the challenges were often too difficult for the youngest to pursue at the same pace - leading to a decline in membership in the lower end of the age range.



- Advancement scheme

While he has maintained the three-step advancement scheme proposed for the Venture Scout age section, the leader has modified the evaluation criteria for being awarded badges. The criteria generally go beyond the recommended standard.

- Adapting to social trends

The leader believes that Scouting can only continue to attract young people if it continues to meet their needs and interests and follows social trends. In his view, Scouting no longer represents one of the main ways in which young people can have fun and make friends, as there is a vast range of leisure activities competing for less and less time away from their studies. He places a greater accent on activities which will expose them to a variety of experiences in line with their main interests: adventure, camps abroad, meeting others, music and technology.

He notes that while nature is still of interest to young people, the emphasis has shifted. The leader recalls that in the 1960s, young people were interested in observing and learning about nature, whereas today they seem more interested in activities to preserve nature. The leader has therefore incorporated this aspect into the programme, especially through “ecological” work camps.

#### 4.c The Scottish Scout troop

From 1948–1958, the troop was very popular as it had the reputation of always being well placed in county and district competitions. In 1958, the group merged with another and underwent a transitional period during which the turnover of leaders was fairly rapid. It took two years for the group to stabilise, and membership started to grow again at the beginning of the 1960s. During the next few years, the leaders changed again, which caused a membership decrease and a reduction in activities. In 1972, the present troop leader took over, since when membership has increased considerably.

The training of the older Scouts to pass on skills and develop co-operation within the patrols has always constituted the backbone of the leadership approach. He has maintained the troop’s tradition of participating in district competitions as the level of performance achieved by previous generations constitutes a marker which the present generation are keen to beat.

The greatest change in the Scout troop over the years has been in the area of interpersonal relations. The leader was distinctly more “authoritarian” when he took up his position, but over the last ten years his relationship with the Scouts has changed and become closer, as he realised that he could get better results and get the Scouts to do their utmost by being more encouraging and friendlier. He has also

concentrated more on promoting an atmosphere of trust and respect within the troop by encouraging the other leaders and the older Scouts to treat the younger Scouts with respect.

PART I, CHAPTER II  
SCOUTING:  
THE EXPECTATIONS  
AND SOURCES OF  
MOTIVATION  
EXPRESSED BY THOSE  
INTERVIEWED

1. THE PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS  
AS TO WHAT THE SCOUT  
EXPERIENCE WOULD OFFER  
THEIR CHILDREN

Most of the parents interviewed were Scouts themselves in their youth or had belonged to another youth movement. Most of those who had been Scouts have good memories of their Scout experience, and for this reason wanted their children to benefit from the same experience of a *"unique environment where you live together, away from the watchful eye of parents or teachers, and where you are encouraged to take responsibility for yourself and perhaps to be responsible for younger members"*<sup>20</sup>. In these families, Scouting has become a tradition and is considered to embrace the values that the parents are themselves seeking to impart. In the French group, although many of the parents had no experience of Scouting, their expectations closely resemble those of parents who had been Scouts in their youth.

The majority of the parents perceive Scouting as a learning experience for social life within the framework of an organised, reassuring and structured group of peers. In their opinion, Scouting contributes to character development in a way not provided by the family, school, sports activities, etc. The group structures itself through a philosophy and a way of life that cannot be found elsewhere. It gives young people time to reflect on themselves, to learn to deal with situations and conflicts within the group and to find solutions through discussion. The parents also perceive Scouting as *"a structure which enables young people to become more active"*, but admit that this structure does not suit all young people as not all of them necessarily want to be *"actors rather than spectators"*.

They feel that Scouting offers a rare opportunity for young people who have little contact with other young people in their area – for example, because they attend different schools – to form a circle of friends in their neighbourhood. This characteristic was stressed as a unique element by families whose children seemed to have difficulty in making friends with others (single children, timid or withdrawn children, or children with an assertive character who have difficulty accepting others and other points of view, etc.).

For these parents, Scouting's aim is primarily to help young people to learn to get to know and understand others and to take on responsibilities within a group.

2. THE INFLUENCE OF THE  
FAMILY ON A YOUNG  
PERSON'S INVOLVEMENT  
IN THE MOVEMENT

Most of those who started out as Cub Scouts did so at the insistence of their parents, but, in contrast, the choice to continue and to move up to the senior sections was a personal one.

*"It's changed. My parents enrolled me in Cubs because they'd been Scouts. It was mainly to give me something to do, as I did nothing at home. It was... a pastime for the weekend, but now it's a passion and I try to devote as much time as possible to my Scout activities."*

---

<sup>20</sup> A minority of parents indicated that their Scouting experience was less satisfactory. In these cases, their children were encouraged to join the Movement by friends and the parents did not object because of the reputation of the Scout Group in which their children were enrolling.

Some young people were motivated to join on account of the experience of their brothers, sisters or cousins.

The family's influence is important in supporting a young person's long-term involvement. The positive attitude and interest of parents concerning their children's experience may sway the balance in favour of Scouting when a young person has to give up some activities due to school pressure. It should however be noted that this influence is not always a determining factor, as if the young person genuinely has a very specific field of interest and if there are no other factors which tie him to the group (friendships, possibilities for developing a sense of self-worth through his participation and status in the group, etc.), the choice will fall in favour of the predominant field of interest. This is the cause of a certain loss of members when school obligations increase, notably around the age of 15-16.

In all three groups, the families have a very positive attitude vis-à-vis their children's involvement in the Movement, and most help out in a variety of ways<sup>21</sup> but most would not wish to, or cannot, be more involved in the life of the group. Family involvement seems to be greater in families where the parents have themselves been Scout leaders and express a keen interest in their children's experience in the Movement and take care to give them the necessary support to continue in Scouting<sup>22</sup>.

### 3. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S POINTS OF VIEW

#### 3.a Expectations and sources of motivation

Those young people who joined Scouting relatively early considered that the transition from one section to the next was a logical evolution when their experience in the lower section had been positive. Quite a few had no precise expectations, but the majority expected a change when they moved up to a more senior section. Most hoped that their transition to a more senior section would give them the opportunity to participate in a greater range of activities and in more unusual activities than those available previously and the opportunity to be part of a more mature group. This was especially the case for the young Belgian and French Venture Scouts, as the units that they were going to join were undertaking activities within the framework of annual projects and planning camps abroad. In addition, the young Belgians highlighted their enthusiasm at becoming part of a group considered to be very dynamic and close-knit.

*"For Scouts, going up to Venture Scouts is a great ambition. It's the ultimate goal, especially when you see them going off on their bus. As a Scout, you see the Venture Scouts as a close group and you really want*

---

<sup>21</sup> See Part I, Chapter III: An overview of the activities and ways of working in each group.

<sup>22</sup> Some comments indicate that the young people would not like to have their parents as leaders of the group to which they belong.

*to join them. Normally, the older Scouts can't wait to go up to Venture Scouts. Venture Scouts is something quite amazing. Going abroad, taking part in larger scale activities, that's what I expected. The project to go to Romania was a terrific year, everyone was so enthusiastic."*

Those young people with no previous Scout experience initially had a rather distorted image of the way in which the group functioned and were quite surprised at what they found<sup>23</sup>.

*"I imagined a rather military style, always having to be well-behaved, and so on. I thought it was going to be boring, but it's in fact good fun. What surprised me was that you have a lot of responsibility."*

The nature of the young people's motivation tends to evolve with time. Some, whose initial aim was to get out of the "family cocoon" and to be with young people of the same age, later started to value sharing experiences with others.

*"To start with, I saw Venture Scouts somewhat as a way of getting out of the family cocoon because it's quite strict at home. But now I see it differently. It's living with others and sharing experiences, rather than getting away from home."*

Others, who were initially attracted by the recreational and social side, have developed a taste for the initiatives and responsibilities that have to be taken.

*"When René invited me to go along, it was more for the games because that was what I expected at Scouts. In Venture Scouts, we play games but less often. It's more to do with projects in which we can take the initiative, and lots of responsibility at camp. It's sometimes difficult to accept these responsibilities during the year, as we have other things to do, but during the holidays, there's nothing else to do. Personally, I enjoy it very much."*

There are a few cases of young people who joined the Movement at an early age, stopped for a few years, then joined again at the encouragement of friends. These young people state that they feel much more motivation to continue now than when they were in the junior sections. Some of the others who had passed from one section to the next without any interruption also admit that they had sometimes lost interest and almost left the Movement, but that they were encouraged to continue by their friends, leaders or parents.

---

<sup>23</sup> A number of young people in all three groups mention that they do not generally discuss Scouting with other young people outside of the Movement, or else only with a few friends.

Table 1

“Scouting is a place where I feel best, like for example when I am with my team (patrol)”

Interviewees	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
Agree	7% (1)	63% (10)	15% (2)
It depends	93% (14)	31% (5)	77% (10)
Not really	–	6% (1)	8% (1)
Total	(15)	(16)	(13)

When presented with the statement “*Scouting is where I feel best, for example in my team (or patrol)*”, the options chosen appear to indicate that the Scout environment is moderately appreciated. In a number of cases in the three groups, the explanation given was that they also feel at ease in their family environment. In other cases, the young people explained that they chose the answer “I partially agree” because they get on well with the whole of the unit and do not feel a preference for the members of their team. In the Scottish troop, the majority of the young people participate in other enjoyable extracurricular activities in addition to Scouting.

*“I feel comfortable at home. I feel comfortable with the Scouts and with my friends. I don’t have any problems. You don’t do the same kind of things with friends as with Venture Scouts; you do much more with the Venture Scouts. It’s perhaps not quite the same at school, where you perhaps only see those you want to see, whereas in Venture Scouts you are all together and you have to learn to live together.”*

### 3.b Motivation to continue when faced with competition for less leisure time

In the Belgian and French groups, where the young people are older than the majority of the young people in the Scottish group, the young people have to devote much more time to school work, especially those who are finding the work difficult. At around the age of 14 the pressure of school is felt very strongly by the young people (and by their parents) and many are then obliged to choose a single leisure activity. Even then some find it difficult to participate regularly in Scouting activities.

*"School plays a role because when I was in the third year, I was able to participate to the full [in Scouting], but now I have had to ease off. I still participate as much as possible and do what I can, but there is a great difference between [last year and this year]. It takes up all of our time. There is so much to learn and to revise. If we have problems at school, it's better to take much more time over school work than Scouting."*

Those young people who opt for Scouting mention their enjoyment of the activities and the friends that they have in the group, but also the fact that being involved in Scouting gives them more than other, purely sports activities.

*"It's quite hard to choose between Scouts and sport. Both are as important as each other, although I think Venture Scouts is more interesting. I myself gave up gym to go to Venture Scouts. I couldn't do both because of time. I don't think I regret my decision. Venture Scouts is more interesting, it's different. If a fellow Venture Scout were hesitating between a sports activity and Scouting, I would encourage him or her to choose Scouting. I'm not saying that sport is uninteresting, but I think that Scouting offers bigger and better things."*

Despite the possibility of undertaking activities with school friends, for many of the young people the school atmosphere does not always encourage positive contacts between young people. For some, Scouting represents a unique environment in which they can communicate with each other in a more trusting atmosphere and form closer relationships. The strength of the relationships is based on the fact that the young people have been able to get to know, to accept and to appreciate each other through experiences shared over a period of time.

*"At school, friendship is not the same. You see your friends in the playground and have a quick chat. At Scouts, it's different. You do activities together, you know each other much better. It's one big family. I feel much more comfortable with Venture Scouts than with school friends. It's a closer, different kind of friendship. You live together, you learn to live with others. Living with others as part of a group is important. There are 25 of us in my group. If you don't get on with the others, it's no good."*

*"Here you can always talk. There's always someone to listen to you. That's what's good about Venture Scouts. You experience things that you never experience at school. You stick together more than at school. To start with, I didn't know many people, but they immediately put me on the right track. It's not the same attitude. I go to a rather strange school, where the atmosphere has rapidly degenerated. People are nasty to you right away. Here you can joke. No one's nasty to you. It's*

*not serious. I know that if someone makes fun of me, it's a joke, and that the person making fun of me means no harm."*

#### 4. THE LEADERS' EXPECTATIONS AND MOTIVATIONS

Nearly all the leaders (male and female) interviewed became involved in the Movement at a relatively early age (around the age of eight) and progressed from one section to the next. In most cases, other members of their family also belonged to the Movement. The reasons given for taking on a leadership role are very similar in all three groups.

For them, becoming a leader seemed to represent a logical sequence in their Scout career, and most became involved in leading their unit or troop at around the age of 20. They were particularly interested in working with adolescents as they thought that the relationships would be easier and more rewarding, and that the range of possible activities would be more interesting and dynamic.

The main influence on their decision to become a Scout leader was that their own experience of Scouting as youth members had been very enriching, with good leaders, and wanted to share Scouting with young people. Their enjoyment of Scouting's "lifestyle", the desire to remain in contact with younger people, the desire to contribute to the personal development of young people and watch them develop, and to undertake interesting activities with them are also mentioned in the comments of the leaders of each group.

They all believe that Scouting makes an important and positive contribution to character development and that the values developed within Scouting are increasingly important in today's society.

In two groups (France and Scotland), the decision of the unit and troop leaders to take on the role was also prompted by the need to keep the group running, as there were no other leaders available to run the groups in which they had been youth members.

#### 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Most of the young people interviewed were active and sociable by nature, although a few were more timid. Those young people with no previous Scout experience were initially apprehensive about joining as they imagined Scouting to be "military" in style<sup>24</sup>. Most of the young people who started out as Cub Scouts did so at the insistence of their parents, many of whom were Scouts in their youth or had belonged to another youth movement and had positive memories of their experiences. The choice to continue and to move up to the senior sections was, however, a personal one.

---

<sup>24</sup> In the Belgian and Scottish groups, previous Scouting experience is normally a prerequisite for membership.



The majority of the parents perceive Scouting as a learning experience for social life within the framework of an organised, reassuring and structured group of peers, embracing values which they themselves are seeking to impart to their children. They believe that Scouting helps young people to learn to understand others and to take on responsibilities within a group.

The nature of the young people's motivation for Scouting tends to evolve with time. For some, the initial aim of joining was to get out of the "family cocoon" and to be with young people of the same age. For others, it was especially the recreational and social side which attracted them. While the young people continue to be motivated by the fun and challenge of the activities, the older adolescents (aged 14 and above) described relationships and sharing of experiences, opportunities for greater autonomy and a group "spirit" as being particularly important to them. While many of the young people had friends at school and took part in leisure time activities with them, many of the older adolescents found that relationships at school remained fairly superficial, a fact that they often attributed to a competitive atmosphere and few opportunities to get to know others on a deeper level.

At around 14 years of age, the young people have to devote much more time to school work, especially those who are finding the work difficult and are under pressure from parents to succeed academically. Many are thus obliged to choose a single leisure activity or even to devote themselves entirely to their studies. The extent to which the parents perceive Scouting to be beneficial for their children can therefore become a decisive factor as to whether the young people continue or leave Scouting at this age.

Concerning the motivation of the adults to become leaders, the main influence on their decision was that their own experience of Scouting as youth members had been very enriching, with good leaders, and wanted to share Scouting with young people. Their enjoyment of Scouting's "lifestyle", the desire to remain in contact with younger people, the desire to contribute to the personal development of young people and watch them develop, and to undertake interesting activities with them are also mentioned in the comments of the leaders of each group. They were particularly interested in working with adolescents as they thought that the relationships would be easier and more rewarding, and that the range of possible activities would be more interesting and dynamic.

In two groups (France and Scotland), the decision of the unit and troop leaders to take on the role was also prompted by the need to keep the group running, as there were no other leaders available to run the groups in which they had been youth members.



# PART I, CHAPTER III

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING IN EACH GROUP

This chapter is intended as an overview of the activities and ways of working in each group as observed and described during the course of interviews and field visits with the leaders and the young people, supplemented by documentation. The main aspects are an overview of a typical year in each of the groups, a description of how the groups operate, the nature and level of involvement of leaders, young people and team leaders in the planning and organization of activities and group life, and how progression is determined and recognised<sup>25</sup>.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It should be noted that certain practices relating to community-oriented activities, the spiritual dimension, the Scout promise, etc., are only mentioned briefly in this chapter as they are the subject of separate chapters<sup>26</sup>.

### 2. THE BELGIAN VENTURE SCOUT UNIT

#### 2.a General

The Belgian Venture Scout unit is located in a residential area in a suburb close to Charleroi<sup>27</sup>. The unit is coeducational. There are between 30 and 40 young people in any given year aged 15-18, 35% of whom are girls.

At the time of the interviews, the three leaders in the Belgian group were all aged between 20 and 23 and were all university students. It was the unit leader's first year in this function as she had been an assistant leader for the two previous years.

#### 2.b Overview of activities in the Belgian Venture Scout unit

In the unit year, the first seven or eight months (from September to June) are devoted to the implementation of a project, called an "entreprise".

Projects undertaken in recent years include helping to build leisure facilities for young people in different areas of the town; improving Scout premises; making a film; organising a travelling show using horse-drawn carts; constructing a rickshaw for a district race.

In addition to an outing organised to celebrate the start of the Scout year and to welcome members coming up from a lower age section within the Scout Group, the Venture Scouts plan two camping weekends, one in January or February, and the other during the Easter vacation.

---

<sup>25</sup> The leaders' educational philosophy underlying the activities and ways of working are treated in Part I, Chapter IV: The leaders' educational approaches, and the young people's opinions concerning various aspects described in this present chapter are treated in Part II of this report.

<sup>26</sup> See Part II of this report.

<sup>27</sup> A town in south-west Belgium with over 200,000 inhabitants.

From April onwards the work is concurrently oriented towards determining and preparing a different project: the summer camp.

The month of July is devoted to the organization and search for the necessary resources to help finance the summer camp. Money is primarily earned through “extra-jobs”<sup>28</sup>. One such “extra-job” which has been organised for the last 4 or 5 years during the Easter weekend is to clean all the windows and doors of a training centre for young blind people.

The summer camp lasts at least three weeks and for a number of years has taken place abroad, mainly in Europe. One of the objectives always concerns meeting and being of service to others. Such camps can involve organising activities for handicapped youngsters, for a school, a village or others forms of contributing to community life. The 1991 camp was an expedition to Romania to bring toys and to take part in leading activities for groups of children in hospitals, orphanages and schools.

While the unit’s projects are the main priority during the year, it is also punctuated by a variety of activities not related to the projects. The young people organise or take part regularly in activities which bring together the other age sections of their Scout Group, their families and former unit members. Sporadic contacts with other Venture Scout units in the region also take place. In addition, they take part in collections of food organised each year at national level and are involved on an ad hoc basis in other service activities locally.

## 2.c The way in which the unit operates

- Teams and missions

The unit is composed of teams of 5-6 young people. Each team is coordinated by a team leader (one of the senior youth members) who assumes this responsibility for a year. Newcomers choose the team they wish to belong to. The selection of team leaders is made by vote of all the young people and the leaders, except the newcomers.

During the year, the main task of each team is to conceive, prepare and present project proposals to the unit (see below). This takes place twice a year - once at the beginning of the year for the “entreprise” project, and the other around April for the summer camp project.

In addition to the teams, there is a system based on missions (i.e. task forces) which operates in parallel. The tasks to be carried out in the various missions are determined according to the objectives of the

---

<sup>28</sup> Short-term remunerated jobs carried out by the young people to earn money towards the cost of projects, camps, etc.

project selected for the year, other activities which take place during the year including camps, and according to the various, more or less permanent, sets of tasks which need to be carried out in order to ensure that the unit functions as a group. Each person chooses which missions he or she wishes to be involved in according to personal interest, abilities and time availability. The number of young people working on any particular mission depends on the amount of work required. Within the mission, each person decides whether he or she feels capable and interested or not in taking on the additional task of being a mission coordinator who is then responsible for its advancement and completion.

All of the needs of the unit (broadly grouped into 12 missions) must be met by the young people. They must take care of writing the advance documentation for meetings, organising activities during breaks between meetings and during evening get-togethers, first aid, maintenance of the meeting place and equipment for activities and camps. They are responsible for financial management, catering for snacks, meals or parties organised by the unit (this task includes purchasing the food, preparing menus and cooking). They keep written records of the experiences and events of the unit. Some are in charge of making contacts with people outside the unit when required and to propose recreational activities outside the weekly meetings for those interested.

- The project process

The unit's annual project, or "entreprise", constitutes the main part of the year's programme. Within the project are a number of activities and tasks to be carried out in order to reach the project's objectives. All of the young people and the leaders are involved in selecting the project on the basis of different proposals made. The selection is made by secret ballot<sup>29</sup>.

The leaders give the teams a presentation outline to prepare their proposals. Each project presented follows a precise format and must indicate the objectives of the project, the advantages and foreseeable problems, the tasks to be carried out defined in terms of missions (task forces), the timetable of the activities foreseen and the budget needed to carry out the project.

During the debate prior to the votes, the leaders encourage reflection amongst the young people concerning the relative interest and viability of the various projects proposed; the extent to which the project proposals offer possibilities for each member to take an active part throughout the year; and opportunities for discovery, meeting and helping out others.

---

<sup>29</sup> It should be pointed out that the original concept of the project method developed in Scouting in the 1960's in France and later in Belgium does not include voting for a project as, by definition, the vote of the majority tends to exclude the interests of the minorities. Normally, a new project would emanate incorporating the key elements of all of the project proposals, thereby stimulating the motivation of all concerned. See Part I, Chapter I.

The young people take on board most of the preparation and organization, including preparing the meetings. The leaders meet amongst themselves to agree on the points that they will raise during the meetings and especially to agree on a common approach to resolve difficult points.

The periodic evaluation of the advancement of the project and its final evaluation involve examining to what extent the objectives of the project are being or have been met and what difficulties are being encountered. The evaluation sessions are also an occasion to review the progression of each member.

- Role of team leaders and other senior members

The role of the team leaders during the year is to help the newcomers to feel welcome and at ease, and help them to become familiar with the way in which the unit functions. They are also in charge of helping their teams to find and prepare the projects. The more senior members who have already acquired experience in the different missions and in the preparation of projects help the youngest ones to get used to this method of working.

- Venture Scout meetings

The meetings take place on Saturday afternoon at the Venture Scout building, but when weather permits they have their meeting outside on a basketball court as they have a large games area near the woods. The Venture Scouts sometimes meet the younger and older age sections of the Scout Group who also have their meetings in the same area.

The young people meet as a unit with the adult leaders to discuss the advancement of the project and to make the necessary decisions concerning planning, sharing out the work and implementation. The team of adult leaders lead the meeting, check on the advancement of the project and on the work of the different missions. The implementation work generally also takes place during the meetings, although sometimes the young people have to work outside of meeting hours. The meeting lasts all afternoon with a break for a snack and a recreational activity. The meetings continue during the school holidays but are interrupted during exam periods.

- The nature and extent of involvement of youth members

The young people are directly involved in the decision-making process concerning their programme of activities and in the functioning of their unit. They assume most of the responsibilities involved, under the guidance of the adult leaders and in accordance with their guidelines. The extent of the responsibilities undertaken depends largely on the young person and the extent of experience within the unit.

- The nature and level of involvement of adult leaders

The role of the leaders is to ensure the coordination of the various activities and tasks to be carried out, to ensure that the projects and activities are going according to plan, to help to get the project off to a new start if the young people feel in a demotivated phase, and to ensure that the code of living is respected.

The leaders spend relatively little time on planning during the year as it is most often to determine the agenda of meetings and to supervise the advancement of work on the projects. The missions enable a maximum of work to be delegated to the young people.

During the periods preceding the camps or unit excursions, the leaders intervene more directly in coordinating the programme of activities, dealing with some of the administrative details, and discussing the preparation of the promise with the chaplain for those young people who feel ready to make their Scout promise<sup>30</sup>. The leaders share tasks between them informally.

- Progression

Progression in this group is not determined or measured according to formal criteria, but is discussed and assessed informally during meetings which involve the entire unit and which generally take place at the end of a project or camp. Each young person is invited to evaluate a number of aspects related to his performance, attitudes, etc. These include, for example, how successfully the young person feels he<sup>31</sup> has carried out the tasks or responsibilities undertaken (both in the context of the projects and activities and in the context of contributing to the welfare of the group), the level of motivation felt and effort made, to what extent he feels integrated within the group. He can also give his opinion on the activities, group dynamics, relationships and on possible problems encountered. Every member of the unit including the leaders can then express their own perceptions concerning the quality of participation in group life, attitudes, and perceived progress of that person.

Each person is then encouraged to determine areas in which he could improve. These areas can be the development of practical skills, undertaking greater responsibilities, trying to be more tolerant of others, gaining greater self-confidence, etc.

The leaders take part in the process of self-evaluation in the same way as the young people and are invited to evaluate their performance, attitudes, etc. The young people then give their feedback on their leaders' self-evaluation, any difficulties perceived in the relationships between the leaders and the young people, and their opinions concerning the leaders' level of participation in the life and progress of the unit.

---

<sup>30</sup> See Part II, Chapter IV: The young people's perceptions concerning the Scout promise.

<sup>31</sup> Or she.

#### 2.d Admission of new members

Newcomers must have previous Scout experience. There is already a relatively high ratio of youth members to adult leaders, and so enrolment is restricted.

### 3. THE FRENCH VENTURE SCOUT UNIT

#### 3.a General

The French Venture Scout unit is located in the town centre of Bourges<sup>32</sup>. It comprises young people aged 14-17 (with a few young people aged 13). The unit has been open to girls for about 10 years, but they have always been in the minority (around 15-20%). There are approximately 25 youth members in any given year.

The French leadership team is composed of four members: the unit leader, the chaplain (over 40 years of age), and two young assistants (20 and 21 years of age).

#### 3.b Overview of activities in the French Venture Scout unit

The programme of activities is based upon a multiplicity of activities throughout the year and a number of projects of variable duration. The unit sometimes works on several projects simultaneously. Week-long camps are proposed regularly during each school vacation. The major project is the month-long summer camp which is voted upon by the entire unit<sup>33</sup>.

The programme of activities has several key areas: opportunities for new experiences, development of contact with the community (parish, neighbourhood, city, local Scout Group, etc.), development of practical skills, personal challenges in sports activities, reflection on values and spiritual development.

Debates are organised around themes which interest the young people. Special guests are sometimes invited to talk with them. Subjects range from the Paris-Dakar rally to the career of a young priest.

Most of the week-long or shorter camps are organised in France. February camps are now traditionally reserved for pot-holing and each year the young people go on a weekend hike in the area and a kayak expedition. Many camps combine adventure and service.

It has become a tradition to hold the month-long summer camp abroad. The summer camps are generally opportunities for discovery, adventure and sports. The 1991 camp took place in Aragon, Spain where they went canyoning<sup>34</sup>.

---

<sup>32</sup> A town in central France with approximately 79,000 inhabitants.

<sup>33</sup> As stated earlier, voting for a project is not part of the original concept of the project method.

<sup>34</sup> A high adventure activity involving crossing mountainous country and rapids by swimming, walking, abseiling, etc.



When the opportunity arises, and when the Venture Scouts request it, activities to develop their knowledge of nature and the environment are organised. Such activities are often integrated into the summer camp as the sites chosen are generally in the wild. In addition, the unit has won prizes for its participation in natural disaster relief work (saving the St. Victory Mountain in Provence, a clean-up operation after an earthquake in Greece, etc.).

The camp projects have become more ambitious than in the past and many activities during the year are “extra-jobs” to earn money to help finance them. Many of the “extra-jobs” require becoming familiar with a number of skills, particularly construction skills. Preparatory workshops are organised in order to learn the various skills needed, such as enamelling, masonry, metal forging, mechanics, etc. The jobs often involve complex work such as demolishing a timber-frame house, although they may also be much simpler - distributing publicity leaflets, cloak-room surveillance, gardening, clearing land, maintenance or cleaning jobs, wrapping presents, etc.

A priority is given to service and other community-oriented activities throughout the year and the unit participates in all major local events. They help the local community to install or dismantle the sound or lighting systems, structures, etc. during festivals or other events. Each year during the Printemps de Bourges<sup>35</sup>, the young people organise a left-luggage depot. In return, they go to concerts that they like and sometimes meet the bands. On occasion, they are themselves actors in public entertainment shows (flame-blowing, magic acts, etc.) during the town's festivities. Each year, during the Christmas period, they put on entertainment shows in homes for the handicapped, they help put up the parish nativity scene and take part in activities to help prepare the Christmas Mass. Towards New Year, they help serve meals at a centre for the homeless. Each year they take part in campaigns to collect clothes for a number of charities.

Every month, the unit members take turns in preparing a mass for the unit with the chaplain and, on Sundays, activities usually begin with mass in the church of the parish where the rest of the activities are to take place.

### 3.c The way in which the unit operates

- Teams

The unit operates primarily through a team system with 5 to 6 young people per team. Each team is coordinated by a team leader and an assistant (senior youth members) who are appointed by the unit leader and who assume the responsibility for a year. The names of candidates are written on a board and members sign up under the

---

<sup>35</sup> An annual music festival in the town.

name of the team leader they prefer for the coming year. Newcomers choose the team they wish to belong to and may change if they do not feel comfortable in a particular team.

The team leaders in this unit are relatively more involved in the decision-making process than their team members and have a considerable amount of responsibility for their teams.

- Role, responsibilities and training of team leaders

The team leaders in this unit are responsible for coordinating the work of their teams throughout the year and for assisting their team members to progress through learning to carry out their roles (responsibilities). The team leaders are helped in this task by an assistant team leader. They take part in the preparation of the activities with the adult leaders during council meetings<sup>36</sup>. They have a greater time commitment than their team members as, in addition to the meeting with their team members, the council meeting takes up one evening per week.

During the council meetings, the adult leader and his assistants present the activity proposals on which the team leaders can express their opinions. Occasionally the team leaders themselves present proposals. They can also discuss any difficulties that they are encountering in organising their team's work. The team leaders act as intermediaries between the leaders and the team members as they report on the advancement of their teams to the leaders, proposals made by the council are transmitted to the youth members via the team leaders, and objections or suggestions from team members are generally passed to the adult leaders via the team leaders.

Training is provided for the team leaders during weekend training sessions. Informal training also takes place through the fact of participating in council meetings with the leaders. In addition, an hour-long training activity in the form of a discussion debate is incorporated into council meetings. On a rota system, each team leader proposes a subject for reflection and leads the debate. They often choose current events topics or social issues such as the role of women in society, the degradation of the urban environment, divorce, famine in the Third World, apartheid, AIDS, etc.

- Responsibilities of the youth members in general

Within the teams, each young person chooses one or more roles which he or she fulfils throughout the year. In addition, the young person chooses a number of tasks which need to be carried out to do with the activities he or she wishes to take part in within the framework of the projects proposed.

The roles undertaken by the young person within his team are determined by the nature of the tasks which will be carried out to

---

<sup>36</sup> A meeting of the adult leaders, team leaders and assistants.

ensure the functioning of the unit, particularly during outings or camps. Certain roles require teaming up with his or her homologue in the other teams. The Financial Manager takes care of the budget, financial management and the accounting records of the team. The Lodger is in charge of finding camp sites and selecting an itinerary. The Equipment Manager looks after the instruments and equipment needed for the activities. The Caterer is in charge of meals and menus. The Artist is in charge of camp fire evenings or other festivities. The Reporter records and looks after the notes describing the life of the unit, and is responsible for writing the unit's diary "magazine" which appears regularly and to which each member can contribute and express himself as he wishes. The magazine is written during the summer camp and describes all the adventures of the unit as well as the impressions of the participants.

In addition to the team system, there is also a system of missions whereby the young people sign up for tasks to be undertaken for the summer camp project.

- Venture Scout meetings

The weekly meetings take place during the half-day weekly break from school, on Wednesday afternoon. The young people group as teams and it is the team leader or the assistant who leads the meeting. The meeting times are staggered to enable the teams to have a separate corner for discussions without being disturbed by the others. They generally last less than an hour. The team leaders who had prepared the meeting the evening before in the council meeting transmit information to their team members and plan how the tasks will be shared out amongst them.

- Nature and extent of involvement of youth members

The young people can submit ideas for activities that they are interested in and give their opinions on activities proposed by the council. While they take part in preparing camps, they have relatively little responsibility for the general planning and organising of activities.

The major exception concerns the month-long summer camp project, for which the young people present project proposals which are discussed by the entire unit and submitted to a vote. The presentation of projects requires proposing the destination of the trip, supported by illustrations, and the general aim of the project.

- Nature and level of involvement of adult leaders

The selection, planning and organization of projects and activities is largely carried out by the unit leader, in association with the team leaders and assistants. The leader ensures that a balance is maintained in the nature of the activities and plans the programme three months ahead. Additional activities may be added as opportunities or requests arise.

- Progression

Progression follows the model proposed for Venture Scouting by the Scouts de France. It is organised in three stages and is based on the Scouts de France's Venture Scout charter<sup>37</sup>. The first stage consists of becoming familiar with the group and taking part in activities, then (if the young person chooses to continue) of making the Venture Scout promise<sup>38</sup>, which symbolises the formal commitment of the young person to Scouting and its principles. This leads to the second stage which is a contract to progress in five areas. For each of the areas (relationship with God, relationship with oneself, with others, with things, and with one's body) the young person must define two ways in which he or she aims to progress. These orientations are also expressed in practical terms for the young people through five verbs: search, go, act, discover, live. The third stage corresponds to a new commitment whereby the young person uses what he has gained for the benefit of the unit.

In general, members can earn badges by participating in activities organised during the year and at camp, based on the evaluation of their performance in contributing to the functioning of the unit and in their participation in the various activities. No activities or events, however, are organised specifically for earning badges. The only exception is the first aid badge, as many members are keen to take the "National First Aid Badge". Training for this is provided and certified by an outside body<sup>39</sup>.

Evaluation meetings involving the whole unit are held periodically, during which the team leaders report on the projects undertaken. Members may also express themselves if they so wish.

### 3.d Admission of new members

New members are not required to have any previous Scouting experience and can join at any point during the year. Although not encouraged, some members have joined at the time of a summer camp.

## 4. THE SCOTTISH SCOUT TROOP

### 4.a General

The Scottish Scout troop is located in a residential area of Edinburgh<sup>40</sup>. It is composed of patrols of 6-8 boys aged 10 1/2 -15 1/2. The number of young people enrolled each year varies between 30 and 40. The young people selected for interviews in the troop are aged 13 upwards. A few interviewed are over 17. These are former members of

---

<sup>37</sup> The charter defines the main directions in which the young people are expected to progress.

<sup>38</sup> See Part II, Chapter IV for an explanation of the Scout promise.

<sup>39</sup> The French Red Cross Society.

<sup>40</sup> The capital city of Scotland with 434,500 inhabitants.

the troop who come periodically to help with the young people, but they do not have a real leadership function.

The leadership team of the Scottish group is composed of five members: the troop leader and one of his assistants are over 40 years of age, the second in charge is over 30, and the two other leaders are under 20.

#### 4.b Overview of activities in the Scottish Scout troop

The majority of the activities throughout the year are based on the acquisition of traditional Scouting skills (knots, first aid, back-woodsmanship, etc.). The young people learn the skills in 3-week cycles. During the first two weeks the young people become familiar with the different skills and practise them. The skills are then tested in week 3 in a global activity (presented in the form of a game or imaginary situation in which practical problems have to be solved) requiring all the skills acquired over the previous two weeks to be put into practice.

At various points in the year, the young people take part in competitions against other troops in the area which require using a variety of the skills gained thus far. They have acquired a good reputation in the competitions and are often amongst the best.

Sports activities (rock climbing, water activities, etc.) are organised several weekends a year.

Weekend activities for one or more patrols are also organised periodically at the country cottage<sup>41</sup>. The weekends are a mixture of skill-training and recreational activities.

Two camps are organised each year, one in May and the second in summer. In view of the age of the majority of the young people, most camps are organised nearby. In 1991, however, a camp was organised in Normandy, France.

Each year the young people take part in operations to collect money to support Scouting in their area. They take part in an operation around Christmas-time each year to collect and distribute mail and greetings cards in their neighbourhood. Some of the parents also come to help organise the sorting out of the mail collected.

The young people undertake community service activities either individually or in small groups on an ad hoc basis to complete the requirements for their badges or advancement to the next level. Such activities include visiting old people's homes, hospitals, etc.

Special activities are organised for the older members of the troop. For example, the leader helped four Scouts aged 15 to climb three mountains and reach three peaks on the same day so as to raise

---

<sup>41</sup> A cottage rented outside Edinburgh.

funds to buy the material and equipment necessary in order to make the district Scout centre accessible to handicapped youngsters. Another such activity is becoming a tradition - with the help of the leader, the patrol leaders write a "magazine" describing the main events of the troop.

#### 4.c The way in which the troop operates

- Patrols

The troop is divided into patrols. Each patrol is led by two senior youth members (patrol leader and assistant patrol leader). The patrol leader is appointed by the troop leader, and the assistant patrol leader is chosen by the patrol leader. The general orientations of work are defined by the troop leader and transmitted to the members of the patrols by the patrol leaders.

- The role, responsibilities and training of patrol leaders and their assistants

The patrol leaders and assistant patrol leaders are responsible for organising and coordinating the work of their patrols, motivating patrol members, ensuring that each person acquires the skills necessary to take part in the activities and to earn badges, and for ensuring a high quality performance of the patrol as a whole.

While most of the planning and organization is carried out by the troop leader, the patrol leaders and their assistants have a large degree of responsibility for the management and implementation of activities and have a greater time commitment than their patrol members. The patrol leaders and assistants meet during the course of each Scout meeting with the troop leader in a separate room for about half an hour to discuss the planning of future activities and the instructions to give to their patrols, the coordination of their patrols' work and any difficulties arising.

The troop leader spends considerable time preparing and organising training sessions and activities for the young people who are appointed to positions of responsibility. He prepares a number of weekend outings for the troop, during which the patrol leaders and assistants are responsible for leading activities. The troop leader ensures transport to the activity site and stays to ensure the security of the young people but does not directly intervene in the activities. He uses this opportunity to observe and evaluate the capacity of the young people to plan and coordinate the patrols' activities.

Patrol leaders' council meetings are organised periodically over a weekend during which the patrol leaders (and often their assistants) meet with the troop leader to evaluate the progress of their patrols, the performance of patrol members, and to practise Scouting skills in which they do not feel fully competent. In addition, they also have an opportunity to practise their catering skills, as they are expected to prepare the menus, purchase and cook the food over the weekend. A

patrol leader chairs the review session. The troop leader is present to advise and help the young people to find solutions to the problems being discussed.

During the year, the assistant patrol leaders have opportunities to replace the patrol leaders, and towards the end of the year the patrol leaders are responsible for organising and preparing activities for an entire evening.

- Troop meetings

The meetings take place every Friday evening and bring together the entire troop. All the young people are in uniform and each meeting starts with a flag ceremony and an inspection of each patrol. The patrol leaders inspect the uniforms of their patrol members and report to the troop leader. The young people then get changed into jogging outfits or shorts to start the activities. The assistant patrol leaders, patrol members and the adult assistant leaders return to the big hall and group in patrols for various games and activities. The patrol leaders and the troop leader retire to a small room (den) for about half an hour to receive instructions which will enable them to guide the work of their patrols during the rest of the evening's activities.

The activities are presented as games or instructions to carry out and aim mainly at enabling the Scouts to become familiar with new skills or to use a variety of Scouting skills already acquired to solve new problems. Many of the activities are carried out in the form of a competition or race between the patrols, but which require close team work within the patrol. The patrol leaders read out the instructions and encourage their patrols. One such situation required making a rope ladder (including estimating the amount of rope needed), following a map, making a stretcher and leg splint for an imaginary accident victim, etc., all in a race against the clock. Other activities are in co-operation with the other patrols. Part of the evening is also used to do test work for badges.

The results of each patrol are noted by the troop leader and his assistants. The criteria for the final score of each patrol show that the young people are not only tested on their ability to carry out the tasks required, but also on the regularity of their attendance, and on their aptitude to behave in a disciplined manner during the activities. The young people receive a bonus which increases the score of their patrol if they never miss meetings, but points are taken off if they are absent, late or lack discipline. Each month the patrols' scores start again from zero. A ceremony to lower the flag marks the end of each meeting. The patrol leaders and their assistants stay on to meet informally with the leaders and to discuss the evening.

- Nature of involvement of youth members in general

In addition to taking part in the activities, the patrol members have a number of duties to carry out, particularly during camps and outings. Decision-making for the patrol members takes place mainly within

the patrols in terms of discussing and coordinating each person's participation in the activities and duties. When preparing to go on a camp, for example, a young person within each patrol will be responsible for food, another for the tents, etc.

The patrol leaders and their assistants take part more directly in the decision-making process of the troop and have a number of responsibilities to fulfil. The choice of activities stems mainly from the consensus of the patrol leaders and assistant patrol leaders based on activities proposed by the leaders and the wishes expressed by the patrol members. Within the patrols, the young people can express their opinions concerning the activities proposed. Their views are transmitted to the leaders, primarily through the patrol leaders.

- The nature and level of involvement of the troop leader and assistant leaders

The troop leader organises and coordinates everything to do with the functioning of the troop and the work of the patrols. He trains the patrol leaders and their assistants, plans and organises camps and activities with the other adult leaders, and arbitrates in the case of conflicts. He also organises meetings to inform the families about the troops' activities and to reassure them about safety precautions.

Three assistant leaders take over in leading the activities with the young people when he is occupied with the patrol leaders. The assistant leaders help the young Scouts to become familiar with the skills being taught, to understand the instructions which they are given to implement the activities, and to motivate and encourage the young people when necessary.

Several former troop members also help out sporadically, especially during camps and outings.

- Progression

Progression is based on a system of proficiency badges and awards. A series of progressive tests of knowledge, skills and activities to be carried out in various areas are presented in booklets. Once the leader is satisfied that the young person has successfully fulfilled the requirements, he gains the corresponding badge or award. The badges which can be earned are very varied. The awards are: the Scout Award (which the young person usually earns within the first year), Pathfinder Award (average time of completion is 1 1/2 years), Explorer Award, Chief Scout Award. Not all of the young people seek to earn the highest awards.

The progressive system also involves promotion to positions within the troop: 3rd Scout, 2nd Scout, 1st Scout. A patrol leader will normally have attained the position of 1st Scout.



The troop leader monitors the acquisition of each young person's skills based on his own observation and also on the results noted and transmitted to him by the patrol leaders which he reviews and stamps. The general progress made by the patrol members is discussed with the patrol leaders during the patrol leaders' council meetings.

Patrol and troop activities are designed to help all members to develop their leadership capacities through helping the youngest to acquire skills. For a certain number of young people, depending on the qualities of the individual and on the number of patrols in the troop, developing their leadership skills will prepare them to be appointed assistant patrol leader or patrol leader and thus lead a small group of peers.

#### 4.d Admission of new members

New members must have previous Scouting experience. The local Cub Scout pack (aged 8-10) is the main source of membership for the Scout troop. In a few cases, new members have enrolled after having been in a different Cub Scout pack as their families had recently moved to Edinburgh. Many parents and young people learn of the Scout troop through the parish church.

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The programme of activities, the operating structure and ways of working are different in each of the groups.

In the Belgian group (youth members aged 15-18), the bulk of the year's activities centre around the preparation and implementation of relatively long-term projects. The young people themselves are responsible for ensuring the welfare of the group and for organizing and preparing their projects, through a system of teams and missions, under the supervision of the leaders. While the senior members undertake the most responsibility, all of the young people take part in the decision-making and evaluation processes. Progression is not determined according to formal criteria but is based on self- and mutual evaluation according to personal development objectives set by the young people themselves. The leaders also take part in the evaluation process in the same way as the young people.

The French group (youth members aged 14-17) is characterized by a multiplicity of varied activities and relatively short-term projects. Activities are on offer every weekend. The activities place an accent on unusual sports and discovery of new places, acquisition of technical skills, community involvement and religious practice. The unit leader spends considerable time preparing and organising the activities and training the team leaders (senior youth members). The team leaders have more overall responsibility than the other unit members and generally act as intermediaries between the team members and

the leader. Progression is based on a contract to progress in a number of different areas. While badges are awarded, no activities (with the exception of the national first-aid badge) are organized with the purpose of badges in mind.

In the Scottish group (youth members aged 10.5 - 15.5), activities centre around the acquisition of traditional Scouting skills (knot-tying, orienteering, etc). Similarly to the French group, the adult leader spends considerable time planning and organizing activities, and training the patrol leaders (senior youth members) to coordinate the activities of their patrols and to help them to acquire the skills necessary to take part in the activities. Many of the activities are carried out in patrols in the form of a competition against the other patrols, but which require a high degree of cooperation within each patrol. The troop has a high standard of technical achievement in Scouting skills and often win competitions against other troops in the area. Progression is recognized through a badge and award system and through promotion through a number of ranks. The patrol leaders act as intermediaries between the troop members and the troop leader.

Camps of varying duration take place several times a year in all three groups.

## PART I, CHAPTER IV

### THE LEADERS' EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

While Scout troops or units must operate on the basis of Scouting's educational principles and method, it is unlikely that any two troops or units will operate in precisely the same way<sup>42</sup>. A number of factors, which may include the socio-economic and cultural context, the educational philosophy of the national association, the age and number of the young people in the group, the leaders' personality, experience, style, and perceptions of the needs of the young people involved, etc., will ultimately bear an influence on the way in which the various elements of Scouting's principles and method are articulated and put into practice.

This chapter is intended to provide an overview of the educational approach described by the leaders of each group in helping to meet the needs of adolescents; how the approach and objectives translate into the activities and ways of working in the groups; and how the leaders try to take into account the specific needs of the individual young people. The content of this chapter is based on in-depth interviews with the leaders. It should be noted that in the two Venture Scout units the adolescents are aged between 14 and 18 years, in the Scottish Scout troop, the age range is from 10 1/2 – 15 1/2.

#### 2. THE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH OF THE BELGIAN VENTURE SCOUT UNIT

##### 2.a General

The educational approach of the leaders of the Belgian Venture Scout unit is to help each member to develop greater autonomy through learning to make decisions and through taking responsibility for the functioning of the unit and for one's own personal development; and to develop self-confidence, self-knowledge and social solidarity in an environment which aims at fostering attitudes of mutual respect and support, strong bonds of friendship and a sense of belonging. The focus of the leaders' work is on developing and maintaining the cohesion of the group, based on the unit's values, *a sine qua non* condition, in their opinion, to attain the educational objectives. In this group, while the programme of activities is an important element in developing group dynamics and developing certain skills, the essence of the educational approach is reflected in the way in which the group functions. As the leaders' point out, "everything is based on the fact of being in a group".

##### 2.b Learning through group life

In the leaders' opinion, learning to communicate with others and live as a group helps the young person to broaden his perspectives, learn to respect and understand other people, their views and feelings, and to appreciate their qualities. At the same time, the group can help each person to gain confidence, and to learn to understand himself

---

<sup>42</sup> See Part I, Chapter III: An overview of the activities and ways of working in each group.

better, to learn to recognise his strong and weak points, and thus to develop. The leaders feel that the fact of having boys and girls in the group is an asset in this respect as they are forced to learn tolerance for others. The leaders feel that group life as experienced in Venture Scouting, especially during camps, can add a new dimension to the lives of young people as they learn to live without many of the usual material comforts and undertake activities together which they would not be able to do with their family or friends. The feeling of closeness developed fosters deeper communication and relationships. What the young people learn about others and about themselves through being in the group helps to prepare them for other experiences and ways of life in the outside world.

Helping the young people to develop an awareness of, and respect for, the unit's code of living is one of the main ways in which the leaders seek to develop the cohesion of the group. It is explained by the leaders and older members at the start of the Scout year, and is reinforced by the many details which make up the daily life of the unit. For example, the rule of "regard for others" is expressed during meals and snacks by the fact that each member must wait until the whole unit has been served before starting to eat. One of the ways in which members learn to integrate the notion of "sharing" is through the consumption of food. The unit has a custom of sharing a plate of food or drinks between two people and making sure that the other person has his fair share. Group welfare tasks must also be divided amongst everyone, and the leaders do not like to see the same people always doing the same tasks, even if they have volunteered.

The leaders encourage the young people to participate fully in making the decisions affecting the life of the group and to determine and share out all the tasks and responsibilities which have to be assumed within the unit. The leaders believe that it is mainly through personal experience that the young people can develop, and that making mistakes is part of the learning process. Through this working method, the leaders try to help the young people to realise, on the one hand, the benefit of collective effort in helping each person to rise to greater challenges and stretch his possibilities, thus contributing to his self-esteem, and on the other hand, that the group cannot achieve its objectives unless each person contributes. The projects developed as a unit are the key element through which members learn to develop their capacity to cope on their own, while gaining a better understanding of interdependence, group solidarity and the unit's values.

## 2.c Integration of new members

Particular attention is paid to the integration of new members. The unit is composed of teams which make it easier for the members initially to get to know each other, but they must gradually get to know all other unit members. They may choose their team, but the composition criteria for the teams requires a balance of new and senior members, girls and boys. The leaders feel that it is important to

be able to pursue the same objectives with everyone and so discourage the formation of “cliques”.

Newcomers to the unit must have been members of the Scout section for at least one year, and so have already developed a certain number of skills and abilities. Nonetheless, the leaders are less demanding of new members so as to give them time to observe and familiarise themselves with the group’s way of working. By the time of their first camps they are expected and helped to become more active and to develop more initiative. The leaders believe that they need above all to be given room and a structured setting to be able to take initiative and accept responsibility. Those who have been in the unit for longer are encouraged to take more responsibilities, and the kinds of tasks for which they are responsible are different from those given to the younger (or newer) members.

The newcomers are not included in the vote on the election of team leaders<sup>43</sup> as the newcomers, by definition, have not had the opportunity to become familiar with what is required of team leaders, nor to assess the potential of the young people in fulfilling this role. They do, however, vote on other issues.

So as not to discourage young people from poor families from joining on account of the unit’s sometimes costly camps or projects, parents are asked to cover the costs of the equivalent of a camp in Belgium, irrespective of where the camp is actually to take place. The entire unit raises the rest of the funds.

## 2.d The project as an educational tool

The philosophy of the unit is *“to accomplish something together that is unusual, while respecting others and the environment.”* Each year the unit has to carry out at least two projects, based on proposals made by the young people themselves. The unit discusses the viability of each proposal and each person may state his or her preference, but the final decision is made by secret ballot. Once a project has been selected, the young people have to organise the assignment of tasks, find the necessary resources, carry out the projects and ultimately evaluate the success of the project and what has been gained individually.

When proposing projects, the leaders encourage the members to use their imagination, and try to find project proposals which are out of the ordinary and a little beyond their present capacities in order to challenge the group and each individual. The leaders then help them to think through the ideas to see if and how they could work in practice. The projects and objectives are different each year, although the choice may sometimes be influenced by the experiences and projects of their predecessors.

---

<sup>43</sup> The team leaders are elected by the young people and leaders at the beginning of the Scout year.

The project proposals are analysed by the unit and the leaders according to criteria which include examining how far the project, and the various activities to be undertaken within the framework of the project, correspond to the interests of the majority and whether everyone would be able to participate actively. In this respect, the leaders feel that the mix of boys and girls within the group is a considerable advantage as the projects and activities are more varied.

The leaders always guide the members towards projects which will result not only in the satisfaction of the group, but which include gaining greater awareness of social issues and becoming involved in meeting community needs, in particular those of the socially underprivileged. Having the opportunity to meet people in the outside community is considered to be as important as providing material support, and many projects combine these two aspects. This social service dimension has been translated into concrete action in the last few years by many building projects (construction of playgrounds and meeting facilities or the restoration of various buildings) and through camps abroad. The unit was one of the first to organise project camps in eastern Europe (Poland and Romania). The members also help out the other sections of their Scout Group. For example, they built a meeting place for the Cub Scout pack and help with the organization of activities involving all sections of the Group.

According to the leaders, the project selection process helps the young people to learn to make decisions as, until the project is considered finished, all the activities will be based on achieving the project and each person will have to take part in each stage of its implementation. It is therefore in their personal interest to weigh up the advantages and inconveniences associated with the various projects.

The level of responsibility and initiative required of each member varies according to age and, more particularly, according to how familiar each member is with the group.

The leaders insist on the need to achieve concrete results, as these constitute the driving force behind what the group experiences and provide an opportunity for each member to have a clearer understanding of the objectives. The fact of achieving results is not, however, a goal in itself, as the success of the project also depends on the way in which the members implement it and on what they have learned from it:

*"There has to be something concrete, we have to be involved in it, we have to really learn something and feel that each individual has developed."*

The fact that the young people have to find paid jobs to fund the majority of their projects is, in addition to the skills thus acquired, an introduction to the working world.

## 2.e Taking into account individual needs and interests

The young people are given room to express their opinions and their satisfaction or dissatisfaction concerning activities and relationships, their level of participation and personal development within the unit.

While each person may state his preference for a particular project, for example, each person has to learn to accept the choice expressed by the majority and actively contribute to making it a success. The older members of the group play an important role in helping the younger ones to adapt to this way of working. A member may try to influence the choice of activities on the basis of his interests, but can only sway the decision of the group by his ability to negotiate or persuade the others.

Individual needs and interests are also accommodated through the fact that each young person determines his own advancement objectives (see below).

## 2.f Evaluation and progression

The progress and development of each member is not measured on the basis of formal criteria. Evaluation and the determination of new advancement objectives take place during council meetings, generally at the end of a project. Each member has to reflect on the areas in which he believes he has progressed and present his analysis to the group. The other members and the leaders then provide feedback, which may confirm the young person's analysis or be in disagreement with it. The leaders believe that, through having worked to build up the cohesion of the group throughout the year, the young people feel sufficiently at ease with the group to be able to undergo this exercise. The fact that each person (including the leaders themselves) goes through the same exercise tends to help the young people to consider carefully how to offer criticism without being aggressive. Outbursts do sometimes occur, however, when the young people feel strongly that someone has not been "pulling his weight" within the group.

In the leaders' view, each evaluation represents a new start which allows each member to have a clearer idea of his experience, of what could be improved, and to continue in a positive way. In this respect, recognition and pressure from the unit as a whole plays an essential role in encouraging the young person to reconsider attitudes or behaviour deemed unacceptable by the group.

Within the framework of the group's objectives for the year (and bearing in mind the feedback from the group), each member establishes a set of objectives to be reached. The determination of these objectives is considered to be a private matter, and the young person is not expected to make a formal declaration. On the basis of these objectives, each young person can choose the type of work or responsibilities that he wishes to undertake from the broad range of tasks to be carried out within the framework of the projects and unit

life. The young person may, in theory, undertake a great deal of responsibility or relatively little. The pressure of the group and of the leaders, however, encourages each person to accept increasingly greater responsibilities<sup>44</sup>.

The leaders are convinced that each member will develop during his three years in the unit, although not all would want to accept the responsibility, for example, of being a team leader. Promotion to the role of team leader is a tangible sign of appreciation by the whole unit, as nominations are made by secret ballot. The selection criteria applied by each unit member and by the leaders are very similar, as one member was able to predict all those who would be elected team leaders the following year.

## 2.g Coeducation

The leaders do not feel that there are any particular problems caused by the fact of offering Scouting to both boys and girls. Within the framework of the projects, teams and the system of missions, there are opportunities for each person to choose responsibilities and activities according to his or her interests and abilities and to work with others of either sex. The leaders find that the fact of having boys and girls in the unit tends to break down stereotyped images and makes the young people more tolerant of each other.

## 2.h The leaders' view of their role and focus of their work

The leaders feel that their main role is to encourage and assist the young people to cope by themselves and achieve what they had set out to do. The main aspects of their work are coordinating the activities and life of the group, developing and maintaining the cohesion of the group, and, when needed, refocusing the young people's attention on the group's values and code of living.

## 2.i Interaction between the leaders and the young people

The leaders' authority and credibility are based essentially on a relationship of trust and on their ability to put their ideas across. In general, the leaders communicate with the members as a group (which may be the unit or the smaller groups - the missions or teams). During camps and outings, communication between the leaders and the young people is more on a person-to-person basis as the leaders take part in what the young people do and use these moments to develop their relationships with each person.

---

<sup>44</sup> This point has been illustrated in more detail in Part I, Chapter III: An overview of the activities and ways of working in each group.



Those members who have been in the unit for one or two years also play an important role in advising and guiding those with less experience and in contributing to the dynamics and smooth running of the group. They make an essential contribution in conveying the life style and values of the unit to newer members.

Discipline relates principally to the respect of the code of living and to the respect of others. The leaders and often the young people themselves react strongly if someone breaks a rule.

### 3. THE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH OF THE FRENCH VENTURE SCOUT UNIT

#### 3.a General

The main priority of the leaders of the Venture Scout unit in France is to prepare young people for the transition into adult life. The unit leader has incorporated into his approach the educational objectives of the Scouts de France for the adolescent age range, based on helping young people to discover new things, develop their understanding of the world around them, acquire new skills, and develop a sense of effort and commitment.

In his opinion, young people need opportunities for exposure to as many, varied experiences as possible, to gain a variety of technical and practical skills, to learn to take on responsibility and prepare themselves to be active citizens. He seeks to ensure this through activities undertaken in an environment which encourages them to recognise, understand and internalise values which will serve as a guide through adult life.

#### 3.b Offering a balanced and varied programme of plentiful activities

The leader believes that as so many leisure time activities are now available for young people to choose from, it is important to offer a constant flow of varied projects and activities in order to maintain their interest. Activities or excursions are proposed every weekend, and camps are organised during each school holiday.

In order to maintain an intense rhythm, the leader has made a number of adaptations in the general educational approach proposed by the Scouts de France for this age section<sup>45</sup>.

Ideas for activities come from Scouts de France publications and from opportunities which arise through his contacts at work, in the parish and in the local community in general. The leader selects the projects on the basis of what the members want to do or what kind of experience they want to share together, and on the basis of the educational objectives to be achieved.

---

<sup>45</sup> See Part I, Chapter I: Background information on the case studies.

The main areas of development pursued through the activities are:

- Physical development. The sports activities (pot-holing, mountain climbing, canoeing, etc.) undertaken are not only physically challenging, but are designed to include opportunities for discovery and learning. Physically challenging activities are always a component of the summer camps.

The sense of effort and the development of autonomy are also reflected in the fact that cycling is the preferred means of transport for excursions and getting around.

- Acquisition of technical skills. The “extra-jobs” which the young people do to help finance the camp projects are often opportunities to learn or consolidate new technical skills. The leader encourages the young people to learn skills which can prove useful in today’s world. Traditional Scouting skills (setting up camp, orienteering, knots, etc.) are incorporated as needed, or when the young people take part in activities with other age sections, but do not constitute a major focus.

- Development of communication (photography and creative writing) skills. The unit’s diary describes the major events in the unit’s life in a satirical style. It enables the unit to express its sources of satisfaction and frustration and to record shared experiences. A photo exhibition organised at the start of each Scout year provides an overview of the summer camp activities and of all the year’s other activities intended for the Venture Scouts themselves and as a way of sharing their experiences with their families.

Through the skills gained as a result of the activities, young people discover their talents and gain confidence in their abilities. In addition, the money earned and the skills learned as a result of the extra-jobs help them to become more autonomous.

- Participation in local community life and a sense of community service. The leader strongly emphasises the need for the Scout experience to be firmly rooted in today’s world and in local life and he encourages them to play an active role in society.

Contact with the local community occurs through taking part in public entertainment activities organised at parish and town level (magic shows, fire eating, sketches, etc.). The unit’s community activities are often covered in the local press.

The leader encourages the members to respond to requests from the local community to help with or participate in various service activities. The unit members are now becoming increasingly attracted by humanitarian and environment rehabilitation operations. The leader tries to incorporate the idea of acting locally and internationally into the projects. In addition, discussions and debates are regularly organised on social or environmental issues to broaden the young people’s perspective.

- Spiritual development and religious practice. This is a focal point of unit life and is reinforced by reflection on values and social issues. Outside speakers invited to share their experience in different fields provide opportunities for discussions and reflection periods organised regularly on current topics. The leader feels that religious practice is important and regular services are prepared by the chaplain and one of the unit members, based on a rota system. On Sundays, whenever possible, the young people attend church services in the parish where the activities are to take place.

The leader tries to incorporate several objectives into the projects. A recent camp involved restoring an old fort on an island. The project involved doing “extra-jobs” to pay for it, learning construction skills, discovering the island, meeting new people, etc. In his opinion, project camps offer an ideal setting in which the young people can assume their responsibilities to the full.

### 3.c Efficient management

As the leader is concerned that the young people might get bored during the year, several projects are often undertaken concurrently (albeit in different stages: choice, preparation, implementation, and evaluation). The duration of each project varies and the objectives are different each time.

In view of the quantity of activities, the leader places considerable emphasis on efficiency. He plans the activities over a three-month period, while keeping time open if new opportunities arise to correct any imbalance in the educational objectives being pursued. The leader spends considerable time training the team leaders and their assistants so that they can be responsible for coordinating the work of their teams. The planning and structuring of activities is discussed with them every week at the council meeting. He gradually gives the young people an increasing amount of responsibility, and often prepares the ground for them in the form of information kits or tools which he produces.

While the young people are involved in the preparation and financing of the projects, and have a certain number of responsibilities to ensure the smooth running of the unit (keeping the premises in order, maintaining the equipment, etc.), the leader spends considerable time following each step in the planning, organization and management of the activities and group life with the team leaders.

Although the young people learn the skills required during the course of the projects, the leader sometimes organises workshops so that the young people can become familiar with certain skills prior to carrying out the project when the young people request help or when the nature of the project requires it. For example, when the young people wanted to do a moped rally, he organised a mechanics workshop so that the young people would be able to deal with potential technical problems.

### 3.d Teamwork

The leader feels that an important part of his work is to ensure that the team structure works, not only for the sake of efficiency, but also because he believes that it is through living and working at team level on the planning, management and implementation of activities and group life that the young people can assume responsibility to the level of their ability. It is also at this level that they can acquire the skills necessary for them to manage their personal lives, discover their talents, develop their self-confidence, build upon their experience of life and develop a sense of sharing and group solidarity. The leader feels that these aspects meet a crucial need at present, as, in his view, the way society is evolving tends to dilute the notion of responsibility in the young person, and blurs the bearings that community life, group discipline and spiritual life used to represent.

In his opinion, camps offer excellent opportunities for the young people to assume responsibility and develop strong bonds of friendship through the meaningful experiences lived through together. The fact of being in a group, he feels, encourages the young person to overcome his initial apprehension and undertake activities which he never imagined he would be capable of doing.

### 3.e Taking into account individual needs and interests

Individual needs and interests are expressed mainly in the contract that each member is invited to write once they have had time to familiarise themselves with the operating structure and have decided to make a personal commitment (symbolised through the Scout promise) to adhere to the values of the unit. These values are contained in a "charter", which defines the main means of advancement, based on the principles of the Scout law and adapted to adolescents. The contract specifies the areas of personal progression: physical development and self-control, development of all kinds of technical skills (including creative skills), development of relationships with others, personal challenges, character-building, spiritual reflection and religious practice. On the basis of this, each member may define the activities and type of reflection that he or she wishes to undertake in order to advance in these different areas. It should, however, be stressed that this is an individual task, which does not necessarily take place within the framework of the unit's activities.

The young people are consulted as to what activities they wish to undertake, but it is generally the leader who proposes them. He is very persuasive and often manages to influence the choice of activities in line with his priorities. The young people may choose the tasks or aspects of the activities according to their interests and the amount of free time that they have, but they are expected to take part in every activity. Training sessions are organised once or twice a year for the team leaders and their assistants. If the young people request a particular kind of activity, the leader will try to accommodate their

wishes. However, the young people rarely suggest new activities as the variety is already vast and they have difficulty in attending all of those already on offer.

### 3.f Adhering to a code of living

The code of living defined by the unit is the concrete expression of the members' commitment and acceptance of responsibility. All the rules of conduct are contained in the "Unit Constitution". They are established and drafted by the whole unit during the first camp of the year, and each member signs and promises to follow this code of conduct. The rules are very similar from one year to the next, as the members often take inspiration from the previous version, adding points here and there which they feel are important in order to improve relations, motivation, or the acceptance of responsibility on the part of each member. The rules mainly deal with "respect for oneself and others" (e.g. personal hygiene, punctuality, regular attendance, respecting the work and rest of others, respecting belongings, etc.), and the acceptance of responsibility vis-à-vis the group's welfare (accepting the principles of meeting one's debts and responsibilities, maintaining the premises and equipment in good order, participating in activities, wearing the uniform, showing one's adherence to the Catholic faith through religious practice, etc.).

### 3.g Integration of new members

Young people can join the unit at any time of the year. Previous Scouting experience is not a prerequisite as the more senior members help to teach those who do not yet have the necessary skills, and the leader organises workshops when special skills are needed for a project or activity.

In order to overcome any financial barriers for the parents of the young people, all members contribute to financing activities by doing paid jobs.

The leader pays attention to a number of details which he feels helps the young people feel that they belong to the group. At the beginning of each Scout year, a ceremony is organised at Bourges cathedral to welcome new members (and those moving up to a new age section) to the Scout Group<sup>46</sup>. Coloured paths are marked out which correspond to the different colours of the Scout uniform for the various age sections. The young people walk through a portico and assemble according to the colour of their age section.

As he attaches great importance to the Scout promise, he arranges for the ceremony to take place in a way which is significant to the young people. For example, one year the ceremony (prepared with the chaplain) took place during a pot-holing weekend.

---

<sup>46</sup> He is also the leader of the Scout Group.

On joining, members choose which team they wish to belong to (they may change team if they do not feel comfortable) and are given a role to fulfil, thereby participating immediately in the life of the unit. The team leader and assistant team leader are responsible for helping newcomers to feel part of the unit.

The leader feels that the meeting place plays an important role in helping newcomers to feel at ease as it is welcoming and reflects both the past experiences of the unit, its current projects and the way the unit operates. In his view, it is important for the young people to feel at home there and insists that it be well kept.

Each team has a name which the young people opt to retain or change each year. The names generally reflect meaningful moments spent together. At the time of the interviews, three of the teams had adopted names of canyons that they had discovered during the summer camp in Spain.

### 3.h Coeducation

The leader does not feel that any fundamental changes have needed to be introduced as a result of having girls in the unit, although attention does need to be paid to offering activities which will appeal to the interests and abilities of everyone. There are a certain number of ground rules which the young people must respect. He considers it important to be able to anticipate delicate situations in advance, but does not feel that there are any major problems.

### 3.i Evaluation and progression

The unit leader believes that everything revolves around the personal development of the individual. Scouting is a way to develop one's potential by acquiring technical skills and accepting responsibility. Progression in these areas is a fundamental part of the educational approach. Progression is based on three stages: a personal commitment to adhere to Scouting's principles; a contract to advance in a number of directions; and the use of the skills acquired for the benefit of the unit.

Progress is recognised by awarding merit badges recognising the skills acquired. The leader has adapted the badge requirements proposed by the Scouts de France to his own activities. He does not, however, accord a great deal of importance to obtaining badges. He attaches much more importance to the way in which the young people socialise and fit into their teams, and the way in which they carry out their role and responsibilities. He is thus able to identify the potential of each person and encourages them to take on greater responsibilities. He also thus identifies those able to lead and help the others and who can also cope with the responsibility of being a team leader. The nomination of team leaders and assistant team leaders, however, is based not only on their ability to fulfil this role, but also

to a great extent on their availability and the agreement of their family, as fulfilling such a role requires a significant time investment (one evening per week plus weekends), which not everyone can manage. This problem has been partially resolved in some cases by sharing out the leadership responsibilities among several young people, thus permitting a less intensive time commitment.

### 3.j Interaction between the leader and the young people

The leader considers himself as the “motor” of the group. He takes an interest in the personal situation and difficulties of each young person, and maintains regular contact with their families. However, on a day-to-day basis, the team leaders and their assistants serve as links between the leader and the young people and are responsible for resolving any conflicts within their teams.

The leader stresses the importance of relationships of trust for developing the young people’s motivation and encouraging them to give their utmost, but also uses group pressure to strengthen individual commitment vis-à-vis the group. He sometimes applies more tangible persuasive measures. For example, a team has to pay a fine to the unit if one of its members does not carry out his duties.

## 4. THE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH OF THE SCOTTISH SCOUT TROOP

### 4.a General

The main objectives of the leader of the Scottish Scout troop are to help the young people to develop their self-confidence, sense of responsibility and autonomy through developing their ability to cooperate as a patrol, to develop their ability to use the skills acquired to resolve new problems and to gradually learn to take charge of a small team (patrol), in an atmosphere based on relationships of mutual respect and support, and discipline. He believes that by pursuing these objectives, the young people will be better prepared for their roles and responsibilities in adult life and, in the meantime, will be better able to resist peer pressure from other social circles to form health-damaging habits such as smoking and drinking.

### 4.b Patrols

The troop functions essentially on the basis of work in small groups (patrols). In the troop leader’s view, the development of self-confidence, the capacity to take on responsibilities and of the young people’s potential in general takes place through their ability to make the patrol structure work. This requires co-operating together in an atmosphere of mutual respect to achieve the goal assigned to them within the framework of the proposed activities. The leader therefore works to help develop the young people’s capacity to take on a leadership role and coordinate their activities within the patrol. He

feel that it is important for the patrols to operate as autonomously as possible. He nonetheless seeks to ensure that each Scout takes an active part in the life of the troop, and is given room to take initiative and develop his autonomy. The leader adapts his ideas to the capabilities and degree of maturity of each Scout so that each member can take on responsibilities within the group.

Each patrol is led by two senior members (patrol leader and assistant patrol leader). Their main role is to help their patrol members to develop the necessary skills to climb the patrol hierarchy. Those motivated to do so may eventually become assistant or patrol leader.

The patrol leaders are sounded out and appointed by the troop leader, based on their level of maturity, personality and level of personal progress. However, in order to strengthen cooperation between the Scouts, he allows the patrol leaders to select their assistant, subject to his approval. The patrol leaders act as the main communication link between the leaders and the younger members. In the troop leader's view, the promotion to the position of patrol leader and the fact of becoming responsible for a small group enables the older members to develop greater confidence in their ability to act and helps to prepare them for assuming responsibilities and resolving problems in adult life.

With this in mind, the troop leader devotes considerable time to the training of the older troop members in order to help them to develop the necessary skills to guide the advancement of their patrol. He brings the patrol leaders and assistant patrol leaders together regularly to monitor the work accomplished and to hear about any difficulties the patrols are encountering. He keeps a certain distance from the activities when they are being implemented but carefully follows the progress and encourages those who need motivating by gradually giving them more responsibility for managing and implementing the activities and by creating opportunities for them to show initiative and to take charge of their patrol.

He encourages cooperation and solidarity between the patrol leaders and assistant patrol leaders by seeking their opinions as often as possible to find solutions to problems, and encourages their spirit of initiative. He regularly finds opportunities for the assistant patrol leaders to train themselves in carrying out the responsibilities of the patrol leaders.

He listens to the ideas and suggestions of the patrol leaders and their assistants and tries to incorporate them into the programme of activities. He tries to vary the activities, and plans meetings and camps very carefully in order to avoid slack periods and to ensure that the Scouts are always busy.



#### 4.c Traditional Scouting skills

In addition to a number of sports activities, the programme of activities centres around learning a variety of traditional Scouting skills (knot-tying, first-aid, backwoodsmanship, etc.) in progressive phases and the use of these skills to resolve problems of a practical nature. The young people's achievements are recognised by a progressive scheme symbolised by badges and awards. The leader spends considerable time finding and organising skill-learning activities in the form of games which the Scouts will enjoy doing. The young people only learn of the activities two or three weeks in advance as the troop leader establishes a three-week cycle of learning and because he likes to keep some elements of surprise in order to motivate the Scouts to persevere until they reach the set goal.

Many of the activities are carried out as competitions between patrols as the troop leader believes that a spirit of competition is important in maintaining the Scouts' interest. The underlying competitive aspect of the games appears to be stimulating for the young people as each patrol does its best to score higher than the other, but it also develops cooperation within each patrol. The articulation of these two (seemingly contradictory) dimensions appears to contribute to the enjoyment of the young people and to the dynamism of the troop.

Some activities and training sessions are designed to strengthen relations between the patrols and to enable the Scouts to gradually get to know all troop members. For example, when planning skill-training activities, the leader may ask each patrol leader to lead an activity in which he feels the most competent. Each patrol then has to rotate activities during the evening and change "instructor" every so often.

Throughout the year the activities aim at developing the acquisition of Scouting skills necessary to take part in camp activities and in competitions between troops in the district, thereby stimulating the young people to progress. For the leader, camps are above all an opportunity to enable the Scouts to use and to incorporate the various skills acquired during the year. The leader encourages the young people to take part in competitions as they help to boost the interest and dynamics of the group and provide opportunities for them to demonstrate the "technical" level they have reached. The troop's performance is of a high standard as the troop is often been highly placed in district competitions. The troop leader tries to instil the Scouts with the desire to maintain a high standard so that they can be proud to belong to the troop, without, however, being boastful towards other troops. In addition to performance, he encourages a spirit of fair-play and regard for others. He tries to ensure that the Scouts' competitive spirit does not prevail over their spirit of cooperation and mutual support. Each Scout's participation is recognised with a reward in order to encourage him to do his best. Patrol and individual progress is monitored step by step by evaluating individual badge work and by attributing points for patrol activities.

During competitions it is especially the capacity to integrate and articulate the different techniques which is tested. The results depend on the degree of competence of each member of the group, but also very much on the capacity of the young people to coordinate themselves and work together within their patrol, under the leadership of the patrol leader and his assistant.

#### 4.d Interaction between the Scout leader and the young people

The troop leader places great importance on developing relationships based on mutual understanding, support and trust within the group and also on adherence to rules of discipline.

He considers himself to be strict and demanding, but open to discussion. He encourages the assistant leaders to be attentive towards the Scouts and to treat them as they would have liked to be treated when they were Scouts. This attitude aims to make each Scout aware of the mutual respect that they should show each other. He seeks to make the older members aware of the needs of the younger members and to encourage them. The younger members tend to look up to the leaders and the senior members as they acknowledge their greater skills and experience. The fact of sharing skills and experience tends to strengthen trust on both sides and to favour the development of patrol unity.

Although most everyday decisions are made in consultation with the patrol leaders, he prefers to consult the whole troop directly when major decisions which could affect the young people directly have to be taken. A case in point was when the leader had to decide whether or not to accept a young blind boy as a member. By explaining the situation to the young people, and pointing out the difficulties that it might pose to the troop's performance and the patience that would be required, the troop as a whole was involved in the decision. After a debate, the young boy was accepted. The troop members have shown a considerable awareness of the young boy's particular needs - who has so far taken part in every troop activity, however adventurous.

The rules of discipline and behaviour are reflected in the requirements concerning punctuality, regular attendance, uniform, the opening and closing ceremonies of troop meetings, and evaluations and inspections at camp. They are also reflected through the hierarchic structure of the troop. The leader attaches great importance to his Scouts being polite and well-behaved when they are in public places or at district gatherings as a group, as this helps to develop a favourable public image of the troop.

The leader feels that the respect of discipline is an important factor in helping the Scouts to fit into this operating structure. It helps them to identify with their patrol, to move up in the hierarchy, to be recognised for their performance and to increase the troop's potential in

competitions. The Scouts gradually realise that by accepting the restrictions of this operating method, the patrol works more effectively and they are able to acquire the qualifications necessary to be given more responsibility and greater decision-making opportunities within the troop. At the same time, in the leader's experience, the Scouts' motivation is derived above all from the enjoyment they get from the activities.

#### 4.e Taking into account individual interests and needs

Individual interests may be expressed within the patrol. The Scouts can communicate their views regarding the choice of activities and can discuss problems with the leader. However, the operating structure leaves relatively little room for the expression of individual needs, as it does not generally allow the Scouts to choose the roles or functions they wish to fulfil. The choice of activities stems largely from the consensus of the patrol leaders and assistant patrol leaders and the objectives defined by the leaders. Nonetheless, the badge system allows more individualised activities to be proposed to those interested.

For those who become patrol leaders or assistant patrol leaders, the activities proposed as part of their training focus on their individual needs in terms of carrying out their role. Nonetheless, when the senior Scouts express an interest in an activity they would like to try, he encourages them and helps them to carry out their ideas. In this way, the troop magazine came into being several years ago. The leader encouraged the Scouts to persevere with their idea and gave them the means to be able to produce it. He has also introduced some new sports activities and developed water activities. In order to revive the interest of the older Scouts, he organised a camp in Normandy (France). As a result of the troop's enthusiastic reaction, he plans to organise another camp abroad, but this time preferably in a mountainous country.

The troop leader makes an effort to get to know each Scout individually and tries to find out what could contribute to, or hinder, the development of their self-confidence. He is thus better able to help each young person to advance. When a boy is ready to go up from Cub Scouts to Scouts, the troop leader makes contact with him by going to see him before he joins the troop, and then takes care of him personally to begin with so that they can get to know each other better. The leader's contacts with the family and parents enable him to identify any problems or difficulties more easily and, as far as possible, he takes these into account and tries to meet the needs identified. However, he believes that Scout activities are not suitable for all boys, as some are not attracted by the aspect of adventure and participation in group life. As the troop is well-known in the parish, with more boys waiting to join than the troop can accommodate, he selects those whom he feels have the greatest chance of fitting in well. He does not feel that an excessive amount of time should be

spent trying to integrate those who have no interest whatsoever in such activities.

He takes a great interest in the Scouts' behaviour towards one another and hopes that they will remain in close contact with the friends they make during their time in the troop. Many of the former troop members have stayed in contact with him. The former troop members interviewed and the other leaders remark that the leader's attitude towards the young people has changed over the years and attribute it to the contact developed with some of the older Scouts. He nonetheless remains very attached to group discipline and still represents a figure of authority.

#### 4.f Evaluation and progression

The troop leader believes that although earning badges is important, it is only one element among many which serves to encourage the personal development of the young people. In his view, some are able to benefit a great deal from their Scout experience without earning many badges. What he considers essential in order to achieve the educational objectives is that the Scouts enjoy the activities. Secondly, he favours the experience of learning to lead a patrol. He feels that these two aspects naturally lead to a desire to progress and develop self-discipline. Skill training is the cornerstone which enables the Scouts to gradually cope with more and more responsibility and to learn to lead a patrol. The troop leader tries to identify the expectations of each Scout and to ensure that they are given due consideration in the decisions that he takes concerning the attribution of roles of responsibility. Not all the Scouts in the troop, however, will reach this ultimate point, as some will not express a desire to do so or will not develop the necessary skills to fulfil such a role. Sometimes the age structure of the group in a given year poses a restriction limits the possibility of offering this opportunity to the older members (who, in such cases, outnumber the number of patrols).

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The same purpose drives the leaders of all three groups as they believe that their most important aim is to enable their young members to develop their self-confidence through recognising their individual potential and by gradually accepting more and more responsibility in a trusting and fun environment. They hope that by so doing, the young people will live through the period of adolescence in a constructive manner and be better prepared for adulthood.

In the three groups, many of the values presented to the young people through group life are very similar, including respect for oneself and for others, openness towards and concern for others, and the acceptance of responsibility. All the leaders focus their attention on the development of relationships with others and on the young people's ability to learn to live constructively with others.

In all three groups, the operating structure and the educational objectives rely on teamwork and on developing the capacity of the older members to pass on skills to the younger ones, to encourage them and to convey the group's code of living.

The development of the skills required to take on the responsibility of training younger members and to coordinate the work of a team represents a "desirable" goal in all three groups. The leaders point out, however, that the young people can nonetheless learn a lot from the Scout experience without ever reaching this goal (not all are motivated to the same extent, or will not show the same potential in this area). In the Belgian group, and to an extent in the French group, opportunities to exercise a leadership role are not limited to being team leader or assistant team leader as the system of missions enables other young people to take charge of a mission and coordinate the advancement of the work of several young people if interested and if they feel capable of doing so. In all three groups, opportunities to exercise responsibility are not restricted to becoming patrol/team leader or assistant as each young person has a number of tasks to perform within the scope of group activities or group welfare. In practice, however, the extent to which other kinds of responsibilities are given value in the groups differ.

While in all three groups the notion of becoming patrol/team leader is associated with a certain prestige, popularity, maturity, recognition of skills, etc., the reasons underlying the motivation in the three groups, however, is somewhat nuanced according to the educational approaches and the ways of working. In the Scottish group, offering the young people the opportunity to experience leading a small group is the main thrust of the educational approach. In the French group, it is especially the notion of using what one has gained for the benefit of the group (although other opportunities to do so exist). It is especially in the older groups that the young people consider the matter carefully before taking on the extra responsibility.

Despite the fact that the leaders have the same basic purpose in mind, each of the principal leaders nonetheless has a somewhat different approach and proposes different methods to help the young people to develop. In this respect, the way in which the leaders in each group describe the role of camps appears as a reflection of the different areas of focus. In the Belgian group, the emphasis is on the opportunity to strengthen relationships, as they consider the cohesion of the group to be essential in helping the young people to gain autonomy and to cope with interpersonal relations. In the French group, the accent is on exercising responsibility so that the unit functions well and on developing a sense of solidarity. In the Scottish troop, it is on putting a wide variety of skills into practice and, for the patrol leaders, to exercise their capacity to lead their patrols.

The leaders in all three groups feel that camps and activities in contact with nature create a certain distance from everyday life. Camps appear to meet a need in adolescents to develop a greater degree of

independence outside the family and school environment, and to free themselves from their daily constraints by sharing a separate experience with other young people which allows them to apply and reflect on the group's values.

In all three groups, the leaders have high expectations of the young people, but modify their expectations to what they know of each young person, his character and capabilities. While the leaders attach great importance to the progress made by the young people, the recognition and manner of promoting this progress is expressed differently in each of the three groups.

The degree of direct control appears to be different in the various groups. The leaders of the French and Scottish groups spend considerable time and effort in selecting, planning and monitoring every step of the activities so that everything runs smoothly and so that the young people will enjoy their experiences. In the Belgian group, while the leaders set the general guidelines and follow the young people as they plan and organise their projects, they appear to have more of a background role. They consider that they provide a safety net and believe that the young people learn a lot from encountering and overcoming stumbling-blocks, from having to negotiate, to take into account other people's views, to find compromises and to make their projects a success.

PART II, CHAPTER I  
 THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
 APPRECIATION OF  
 VARIOUS SCOUT  
 ACTIVITIES AND VIEWS  
 ON MOTIVATING  
 FACTORS

1. INTRODUCTION

Activities are one of the principal vehicles through which Scouting seeks to achieve its educational objectives. From a young person's point of view, it is often the prospect of a wide range of challenging and fun activities in the company of new-found friends that attracts them to Scouting. However, as young people reach adolescent age, they are faced with a number of options competing for their free time. During the course of the interviews, therefore, the young people were presented with a number of questions and statements to determine how far different kinds of activities corresponded to their interests, and to determine the importance they attach to challenge and having fun which are two key factors popularly assumed to increase young people's motivation to take part in the activities.

The young people's opinions on religious practice and community service activities are treated separately in Part II, Chapters V and VI respectively.

2. GENERAL APPRECIATION OF  
 SCOUT ACTIVITIES<sup>47</sup>

Table 1

"I'd rather spend more time sitting around relaxing than being 'busy' with Scouts"

Interviewees	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
Agree	-	-	-
It depends	39% (7)	44% (7)	43% (6)
Not really	61% (11)	56% (9)	57% (8)
Total	(18)	(16)	(14)

When presented with the statement *"I would rather spend more time sitting around relaxing rather than being busy with Scouts"*, nearly two-thirds of the young people questioned on this aspect disagreed. Most of the young people enjoy the activities and the group atmosphere. Many of those who only partially agreed with the statement feel that, as they have many interests, they sometimes wish that they could have more time to devote to activities outside of Scouting, such as sports, or activities with their friends or family.

<sup>47</sup> See also Part I, Chapter II: Scouting: the expectations and sources of motivation expressed by those interviewed.

*"I don't agree, otherwise I would have quit [Scouting]. Maybe sometimes it would be nice to have a break... when there are a lot of activities, I can't do everything, but I wouldn't like to sit around all day relaxing. I like [Scouting] because we are active... When I have a Scout commitment and friends want to see me, I don't necessarily feel like turning them away. I am a Scout but I don't think that I could do that all the time if I had to be completely cut off from my school friends."*

For a few young people, the requirement of regular participation in the frequent meetings and activities seems to weigh heavily, particularly at times when they feel tired due to school pressure and would prefer not to take on extra commitments in their "free time". In some cases, particularly amongst the youngest, the parents tend to push them towards regular attendance at Scout meetings. On the other hand, other members, who would like to spend as much time as possible on Scout activities, find that their parents try to limit the amount of time spent in Scouting due to the importance the parents attach to school work and academic results.

### 3. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S OPINIONS ON VARIOUS KINDS OF ACTIVITIES

#### 3.a Outdoor activities in general

Table 2

OUTDOORS ACTIVITIES	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
I like a lot	71% (10)	61% (11)	77% (10)
So-so	29% (4)	39% (7)	23% (3)
I don't really like that much	-	-	-
Total	(14)	(18)	(13)

Sports and other outdoor activities are greatly appreciated by the young people. Over two-thirds state that they like hiking and cycling excursions very much. Mountain bikes are now very popular as they enable the young people to discover new areas, and in the French group cycling is considered a means of transport which enables the young people to be more autonomous. The young people particularly like sports activities which also offer adventure. Rock climbing, rafting, kayaking, pot-holing, and discovering nature are often cited as examples. However, while opportunities for sports were an important factor in their decision to join Scouting as Cub Scouts or Scouts,



towards 14-15 years of age most of the young people feel that the opportunities to develop friendships are more important to them while still enjoying sports to keep fit.

*"I love running, wind surfing... outdoor activities, but I'm not in Scouting to play football. For me, that's not the aim. There are sports activities in Scouting, but I'm more attracted by the mental side. What I really enjoy are the meetings where we can all talk in the group."*

Those who are less attracted by the physical or outdoor side of activities find themselves carried along by the group, but some point out that there needs to be a minimum of interest in these aspects to be able to appreciate Scouting.

The weather also seems to have an influence on the appreciation of this kind of activity as most carry out these activities all year round, including in winter.

*"I'm not a sporty person... maybe we don't like it as much, but if we're in a group, with friends, it's okay."*

*"I love it... we're always outdoors. I think that if someone doesn't like being outdoors, he shouldn't be in Scouting."*

### 3.b Scout camps<sup>48</sup>

Table 3

CAMPS/ CAMPING	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
I like a lot	80% (12)	78% (14)	100% (13)
So-so	20% (3)	22% (4)	-
I don't really like that much	-	-	-
Total	(15)	(18)	(13)

<sup>48</sup> Originally, a Scout camp involved living and sleeping in nature to enable young people to discover the benefits of life in nature (e.g. understanding the lessons provided by nature, developing resourcefulness, interdependence, responsibility, group skills, spiritual awareness, etc.), and permitted the leader to ensure the application of the Scout method over a greater duration than an afternoon's activity. By extension, group activities lasting several days away from home and which generally take place outdoors, but during which the young people do not necessarily sleep in nature, have also come to be called Scout camps. For some of the older adolescents, "camps" can also refer to the implementation phase of their projects (as this phase is often carried out away from home).

The activity that the majority of young people enjoy the most, whatever their age, is Scout camps. They look forward to Scout camps all the more because they are not frequent events. The reasons given are slightly different according to age, the group and the frequency of camps during the year. Whatever the age, the young people's main interest is the activities which are all the more appreciated when there is an element of discovery or challenge.

Most of the young people feel that camping in nature is an inherent dimension of Scouting. Some of the young people discovered camping for the first time through Scouting, whereas others had already been on camping holidays with their families. As adolescents, however, many of them prefer to camp with Scouts or with friends their own age, rather than with the family. The level of appreciation of camping varies.

*"When it rains, I don't find it that enthralling, but when it doesn't rain, it's okay... if the tent is big enough, and we're not too crammed. Personally, sleeping in a tent is because we don't have any other solution, but otherwise if we could sleep sheltered from everything, I would rather sleep in a house. It's always more comfortable in a house. The only essential thing is to get to do the activities, where we sleep is less important... A camp always has one thing, it's discovering new things."*

The young people who have been in Scouting for a relatively long time no longer find camping in nature to be a major adventure in itself, but are better able to appreciate that the value of the experience goes beyond offering opportunities for adventure. Living in a tent in the middle of nature is an experience which they discover and learn to appreciate progressively. What they appreciate most about camping in nature is the feeling of freedom and autonomy that comes with it. Being in nature enables them to get away from the routine of daily life and get back to the essential values of life. They come face to face with themselves. While the leaders always insist on respecting the environment to the point where it becomes a reflex for the young people, the camping experience helps the young people to integrate this attitude more fully as the discovery of the beauties of nature makes them feel in greater communion with the natural environment and develops a deeper awareness of the need to avoid damaging or polluting it.

*"It wasn't really what attracted me, but it was sort of part of the folklore and I like it, it makes a change, it's fun. You're freer, and you come face to face with yourself more than in a building. I think that's important."*

*"I love it even when it's cold, it's different. Of course, in summer when it's warm, it's great, but it's good in winter too... I think it was in Guides that I got to like it. I have to be with friends to go camping, not*

*with my parents or in a camping ground, that really doesn't interest me. I like camping in nature, it makes me feel freer... You have to get away from the usual comforts, and deal with things... It's the holidays, freedom, the group... You feel safe... You really realise it afterwards."*

*"When I was in Scouts, I liked it... it was an interesting experience. I still like it, but not as much as before. It's important though, because you're really close to nature, and nature is essential... If you camp in a building, you're in contact with civilisation."*

Scout camps also provide opportunities for the young people to get to know others better through living with them on a daily basis and sharing meaningful experiences.

*"We waited for it for ten months, it's the big event. It's like when you eat sweets. When you eat them all year round, you don't appreciate them, but if you don't eat them often, when you get them at Easter, you appreciate them much more. It's like it marks the end of the year, a high point... It's meeting someone, living in camp with him, you realise the effort he makes, his personality, his qualities, his faults... A week-end camp is good too, you can see a lot changing in three days... There are a lot of kids who aren't too enthusiastic about things during the year, [although] I wasn't like that... but after a camp or a weekend camp everything starts looking up. They get going, they feel better and then they feel more motivated... It's good too to have your own tents, to be independent, to decide where you're going to go, to choose whether you're going to stay in the same place or have a change... It's symbolic, you're growing up, you're going to live in a tent... Personally, I prefer living in a tent to camping in a chalet or on a farm... It's adventure, too."*

Scout camps play an essential role in helping the young people to become, and feel, integrated into the group. The young people often point out that those who had not been able to take part in a particular camp and take part in the experience with the others felt left out, not because they felt rejected by the others, but because they had not shared that special closeness that had developed amongst the others who had been involved.

While the majority of young people enjoy taking part in organising and running their camps, some of the young people find that certain routine activities which they perceive as "chores" (e.g. cooking or washing up) take a lot of time and sometimes limit the possibilities for other activities. Depending on the way in which the groups operate and the nature of the camp, responsibilities for particular aspects of everyday group welfare are normally shared out amongst the members of a patrol or team, or are ensured by teams working on a rota basis. On occasion, however, catering has been arranged for the young people so that they have a greater amount of time for the more

“exciting” activities. It should be pointed out, however, that the fact that these young people differentiate between “activities” and “chores” may indicate that some of the original educational objectives of camps (such as developing resourcefulness, autonomy, interdependence, etc., through daily life as a group) are given less importance by the leaders than the objectives pursued through the “action-packed” activities.

*“I think that the only problem with our troop at normal camps is that you have to get up to make breakfast which takes a while and after you make it, you only have an hour to do another activity and then it is lunch time again. I think it would be better having our meals cooked for us, that way you could get more out of a camp.”*

### 3.c Games

Table 4

GAMES	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
I like a lot	50% (7)	22% (4)	77% (10)
So-so	43% (6)	67% (12)	23% (3)
I don't really like that much	7% (1)	11% (2)	–
Total	(14)	(18)	(13)

There is a distinct difference in the level of appreciation of games between the younger and older members.

The young people in the Scottish Scout troop very much enjoy games which constitute the bulk of their activities. In contrast, the young people in the Belgian and French Venture Scout units are much less enthusiastic. Whatever the initial response given to the statement on this subject, the explanatory comments made by the young people in the older groups indicate that the role of games has changed for them as they are no longer their major source of enjoyment, but have become a means of relaxation. Their major interest is now projects and more “constructive” activities which, they point out, also offer opportunities to have fun. They like games during campfire evenings or after a meeting, but on the whole most of them feel that games no longer seem appropriate at their age and find them boring. They also

point out that an increase in the number of games or “playing around” during a meeting is a sign that the main project of the unit is not going well or that the young people feel in a demotivated phase. The games most appreciated by the older members are sports.

*“In general, I like [games]. However, I think that the role they play in Guides is different to the one in Venture Scouts. At Guides, we played games to pass part of the time during meetings as the projects were less important, and we didn’t have to work as hard on them... Here, it’s to relax. When we have a project that’s going well, we might play one or two games to have a break, to relax, but if all we do is play games, it means that there’s a problem.”*

*“Sometimes at camp we play games to relax, have fun or if there is a bad atmosphere, they help to calm things down... Otherwise if we don’t have time, no one would miss them. At meetings, they’re not really important... After you’ve done an “extra-job”, it can be fun, but not everyone would like it. I’m going to put that I quite like games.”*

*“I don’t really like them. You need games to relax. I don’t see Venture Scouts as a group in which we never play games, but I prefer it when we work on something all together. At Scouts, I think it’s good to play games much of the time, but there was still the big project which gives opportunities to take initiative... I think that that is the right balance.”*

An important factor for the young people in all of the groups is the fact of being involved in deciding which games they play.

### 3.d Projects and travel

Projects and travel are often combined in the young people’s comments, particularly in the French and Belgian groups, as these aspects constitute the bulk of the year’s programme of activities. The Scottish group made relatively few comments, probably because as they are younger this aspect is less developed in their programme of activities.

It should be pointed out that the fact that the young people in the Belgian and French groups have a very positive opinion of projects may be influenced by the fact that the projects referred to were ones which had been successfully carried out. No example was given of a failed project.

- Projects in general

Table 5

CARRYING OUT PROJECTS	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
I like a lot	71% (10)	39% (7)	77% (10)
So-so	29% (4)	39% (7)	23% (3)
I don't really like that much	-	22% (4)	-
Total	(14)	(18)	(13)

Most of the young people in the French and Belgian groups feel that the projects are the driving force of the year's activities. The majority state that they like being able to choose their project, which they find a welcome change from the Scout age section. The preparation of the project is an important phase as it enables the young people to feel more involved and to feel personal satisfaction and pride when the project becomes a reality. They feel that they have contributed to the success of the project even more when they have also worked towards financing it.

The young people propose projects primarily according to their interests, but they are also influenced by the tradition and history of their unit. When their predecessors had been able to successfully carry out ambitious projects, the young people feel motivated to propose more demanding projects<sup>49</sup>. The leaders also influence the selection of projects in accordance with their educational objectives<sup>50</sup>.

The comments concerning the selection, planning and implementation of projects indicate that while the young people appreciate being involved, there are a number of difficulties to be overcome. When they prepare the project proposals to be voted upon, they find it difficult to come up with new ideas and ones which would enthuse both boys and girls. The fact of voting for a project means that they

---

<sup>49</sup> The history and traditions of the troop also appear to influence the young Scots, for example in their desire to beat the score of previous generations in district competitions.

<sup>50</sup> The young people's opinions concerning the leaders' influence in this area is treated in greater depth in Part II, Chapter VII : The young people's perceptions concerning their experiences of decision-making and responsibility in Scouting and their involvement in planning and evaluation.

have to accept that a project other than the one they had hoped for might be selected, although this does not seem to be a major problem. Once the project has been selected by the group, it can be quite an effort for each person to find his place in the project and to play a role.

What they tend to find difficult is the fact of following the project over a long period of time and maintaining everyone's participation and motivation. Each year there is a low point in their enthusiasm for the year's project, but there are usually a couple of motivated young people who carry on working and gradually re-enthuse the others. The adult leaders try to motivate everyone to get the activities underway, but they mainly make sure that each person carries out the responsibilities to which he had committed himself. Most of the remarks indicate their initial apprehension about being able to carry out the project successfully, but they also point out that they feel great satisfaction with the experience when they do manage to carry it out.

*"With the Venture Scouts projects, you have to invest a lot of yourself, that's the advantage... When we see the results, we are more proud than at school, because at school we are given a subject, it didn't come from our own imagination... whereas here we had to create it, make it happen, that's really interesting. It's part of Venture Scouting, I like it."*

*"I like carrying out projects when they're well planned. This year, things seem to be going slowly... There needs to be more of a rhythm... The leaders weren't happy because a number of missions weren't carried out, mine included... I hadn't thought of the props... I didn't have time. I should have taken the time to organise a meeting, it's my mistake... I got told off... I held a meeting... it took one and a half hours, but we got it sorted out."*

Working on projects can sometimes offer opportunities to discover new areas of interest, or possible careers, although most of the young people's comments emphasise the opportunities to develop personal aptitudes, to work together and hopefully pass on what they have learned to others. When they are invited to choose their role, the young people generally choose tasks for which they have already some level of the skills required, or which correspond to their personal interests. Working on a project also helps the young people to get to know each other better through working together and to become better integrated within the group.

*"Even if we don't always choose them... I didn't vote for the rickshaws, but I had a good time... Working during meetings is important because everyone mingles with everyone... you learn how to do something different. I already knew a bit about bicycles and mechanics, and I taught others just as others taught me... That's how I got to know Basile. Dominique taught me a lot too... I think it helps you to fit in... We teach the girls manual skills and everyone gets down to working."*

- Travel projects

Table 6

SEEING NEW PLACES	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
I like a lot	100% (14)	67% (12)	77% (10)
So-so	–	33% (6)	23% (3)
I don't really like that much	–	–	–
Total	(14)	(18)	(13)

While some projects may have an incidental component of travel (getting from A to B in order to carry out the project), in other cases, the project is an expedition with one or more objectives to be reached. For many of the young people in the Venture Scout groups, travelling is an essential part of Venture Scouting to them, particularly as they do not generally have this possibility in the Scout age section. For some of them it is a unique opportunity to discover the world if they have not had the possibility to do so with their families. The Scottish Scout troop has started organising camps abroad and the Scouts are enthusiastic about the experience.

Travel is seen as a learning experience and the fact that they are involved in selecting and organising the trip together as a project is important to them as it becomes “their” expedition, and it is up to them to make it happen. It also helps them to get to know themselves, to face difficulties and unforeseen events and to consolidate the relationships between the members of the group. Apart from the change of scenery and discovery of new places, many young people point out that the experience also helps them to get to know the world more concretely and objectively than through the media. What they look for in particular is to meet other cultures and ways of life, and to feel in direct contact with local life.

*“It’s the most important thing because that is when you learn something real, it’s exactly the opposite of being in front of the television and thinking how beautiful Spain is... I prefer to actually go there. I realise that I am lucky to be able to do that, but I also have to deal with things... Often when we go off on camps with the Venture Scouts, there’s an added dimension, it’s the group spirit... Everyone is*



*different, but we're still a group. In Romania, there were some difficult times, but we helped each other out and so the trip took on a different dimension. Alone or with someone else, I don't mind, but it's different. With the Venture Scouts it's once a year, you look forward to it, you prepare it, you dream about it, and when it happens... it's great... You can't take good things for granted otherwise it's not fun any more... Living all our lives as Venture Scouts travelling around the world would be fun but it's a bit unrealistic."*

*"I think it's indispensable. If we didn't travel, just stayed at home, I think something would be missing. You have to get away from home to see further... to grow up, to get to know yourself and other people a little better... and trips abroad make that easier."*

The fact of travelling with others in Scouting gives the young people the impression of getting more out of the experience than a trip organised with friends or a school trip. On this point, they often contrast Scout expeditions and "tourist holidays" with the family, school or through travel agencies. For them, the word "tourist" has a negative, even pejorative connotation. Most of them feel that family trips limit the possibilities for discovery, undertaking activities and for meeting other people.

*"I love travelling with Venture Scouts. We always have a good time, we do loads of things. When you're with your family, it's a bit limiting. It's the car, the beach, whereas with Venture Scouts, we'll go and put on a show, and we're the actors. If you're with your parents, you go to a show and you're a spectator."*

*"We didn't go to Greece this year because of the cost, I would have preferred to pay more, make an effort and go... I could check on prices in a travel agency, but you don't get the same thing out of it. With the Venture Scouts, I would have enjoyed it more and discovered more things, but spending two weeks in Greece as a tourist doesn't really grab me."*

*"I love to travel... the scenery, meeting people... You can only really meet people when you're with the Venture Scouts because if you travel with parents, you stay in your little hotel, you don't meet anyone... Last year, five of us went on a hike and we really got to know the local people. It was a bit by chance... when we walked by, people came to us, chatted, it was really meeting people."*

The few critical remarks made concern difficulties due to transport problems or various other difficulties encountered along the way. Some find the preparation phase difficult. Only one young person felt that he had less freedom due to having to make concessions to group life.

### 3.e Discussions

Table 7

DISCUSSIONS	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
I like a lot	36% (5)	17% (3)	31% (4)
So-so	43% (6)	56% (10)	69% (9)
I don't really like that much	21% (3)	28% (5)	-
Total	(14)	(18)	(13)

#### • Discussion versus action <sup>51</sup>

In the three groups, discussion takes up a variable amount of time in meetings. About one third of the young people interviewed (a little less in the French group) very much enjoy discussions. For the Venture Scouts, they are a novelty compared to the Scout age section. In the Scottish Scout troop, the senior members enjoy being amongst themselves to discuss their worries.

While the young people feel unanimously that discussions are very important to be able to plan, coordinate and evaluate their activities and sort out problems from time to time, the majority are more inclined towards action. On the whole the Venture Scouts feel that discussion is an essential part of the way in which their units work, and particularly enjoy the lively debates concerning the selection of projects and the discussions which take place during the evaluation sessions.

*"I quite like [discussion] because it's important even if sometimes it's boring... it's part of unit life. You have to discuss things to set things straight either between people or between the missions, to prepare the camp or a hike or a project... It's not always a wild time but it has to be done, it's part of what we usually do."*

Nearly all the young people feel that their level of interest depends on the subject being discussed and on who is involved. Most of the young people are rather reserved due to the difficulties of ensuring the conditions which would enable each person to be interested in

<sup>51</sup> See Part II, Chapter VII for the young people's perceptions concerning their involvement in decision-making.

the discussion and enable each person to express himself. Many of the comments show that one of the tasks that they find difficult is leading meetings. The problem seems more or less complex according to the number of people involved and the proportion of young people who are not used to structured interaction. The leaders have to intervene periodically to try to ensure that each young person can express his views and that the others do not dominate the discussions.

*"We waste time each meeting... The discussions go off in all directions and that's how it doesn't work, but step by step we manage to do something constructive... It's a bit hard to keep everyone in order... If they start shouting and the leaders aren't there, then it carries on... while the leaders have a way of bringing things back to order... For example when everyone's talking, the leaders shut up, they don't utter a word, they have their notebooks with what they have to say and they wait... Then everyone realises that they've disrupted the meeting... and once everyone has shut up, the leaders start again."*

The positive comments indicate the benefits for the young people and what they have learned through their discussions. Some feel that it has helped them to better express themselves and to find convincing arguments. They find that this has proved useful for school and has helped them to develop more self-assurance. Others point out that it has helped them to listen to others, to learn greater respect and tolerance for other people's opinions.

*"I like it, well actually it depends on the subject... I know that when I joined Scouting I was shy. Since I've been here I find it amazing how much easier I can communicate and express myself... It has really helped me at meetings and stuff... at school. Some people, for example, are really scared of talking in front of everyone... reading the lesson in Mass. I was like that in the first year, but now... it doesn't bother me at all to talk in front of people."*

*"Thirty people discussing, you only find that in Venture Scouting. I really like it a lot... It teaches us to respect other people and to listen. At Cub Scouts, it didn't exist at all. In Scouts, it started, but we were at a difficult age and shouted, mucked about and so the discussions often turned into a shouting match. I find them one of the main characteristics of Venture Scouts. You go from games in Cub Scouts to a mixture of games and discussion... It's not easy because you have an idea and you want more to share it with others than to listen to what someone else has to say, so it's a bit more respecting others rather than listening to what they say, and it's great fun..."*

*"Of course, it's a whole, games and the meeting, it's a whole, they follow each other, I like it just as much. Maybe I like the games a little more, because we're in a group for the discussions, you think about the*

*project, but you don't actually do very much. Since the beginning of the year, we're always discussing and nothing else, I'm starting to get a little tired of it."*

- Discussion evenings on selected topics

In the French group, as a preliminary phase to council meetings, the team leaders are requested to take turns to select and propose a theme for reflection and to lead a debate. They often choose subjects which interest them in current events, or social issues such as the evolution in the role of women in society, degradation of the urban environment, divorce, famine and the situation of children in the Third World, apartheid, AIDS, etc. The entire unit can also take part in debates of this kind as during camps, and periodically during the year, the unit leader integrates evenings on themes into the programme of activities on subjects that the young people propose themselves or choose amongst proposals offered.

While the young people are consulted on the choice of reflection themes and in certain cases they themselves propose the themes, it is not always easy to find a subject which will interest everyone and views are rather torn on this kind of activity. Some enjoy this kind of activity as it enables them to discuss news topics and enrich their knowledge through confronting different points of view, but others enjoy them less as they feel that the debates can end in arguments and feel that they are not always given room to express their opinions. Others also feel less enthusiastic when they do not have any particular opinion to express on a given subject and do not feel at ease in this type of situation.

*"When we have discussion evenings, it depends on the subject... One was on AIDS which I enjoyed. I did it, I had a book, it interested me and then we talked about it. There was also a text on women and work, I liked that too. You learn like that, it also helps to get to know different points of view and feel in tune with the world today. A lot of the discussions are about today's problems."*

*"Discussion evenings... we always get heated about the subjects... For example, at camp it was about nature, and it was a big shouting match about nitrates, whether the farmers should use them or not... Discussion evenings, I don't like them much, but it also depends on the subject... There are always two or three people who talk and you can't open your mouth... But the discussions on what we're going to do on the weekend, that's good... We talk to each other if we have a problem... There's always someone to help out... When we talked about the forms you gave us for the weekend, we had to put what we liked, what we'd done... then we were in [teams] and we discussed a lot... Everyone had to give his opinion."*

## 4. MOTIVATING FACTORS 4.a Challenge

Table 8

MEETING A CHALLENGE	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
I like a lot	50% (7)	39% (7)	92% (12)
So-so	36% (5)	50% (9)	8% (1)
I don't really like that much	14% (2)	11% (2)	–
Total	(14)	(18)	(13)

Challenge seems to be a major motivating factor for the young people. The Scottish Scouts associate challenge especially with the competitive games between patrols and troops. For the Venture Scouts, the projects selected often have a component of challenge which is considered by many to be important in making the group and each person progress.

Most of the young people state that challenge stimulates them to set a goal, test their limits and to try to go beyond daily routine. They all feel that challenges are positive provided that the ambitions are realistic, otherwise it becomes counterproductive if it is out of their reach or if it leads to failure. The comments also indicate that the young people like it less when the challenge comes from the leaders.

*"It's very important to push oneself further, because if you always stay within what you think your limits are, you never progress."*

*"Setting challenges for yourself, if you make it, you like it, but if it goes wrong, it's a bit stupid. The project is a challenge in itself because it's always much bigger [in Venture Scouts] compared to [projects in] Scouts, but it's nothing unusual in Venture Scouts... Even managing all the catering at camp, it can be a huge mess, it isn't easy."*

*"You shouldn't think too much about it, but do something to test yourself. You always have to set challenges for yourself at one time or another, otherwise life's boring, always the same thing and you never get out of it."*

*"If it is a huge challenge and there's no way you're going to be able to do it then it can be quite depressing, but if you reckon you can do it, it'll be great."*

*“Doing 650 kilometres by bike in the mountains in Corsica... who would have thought that I could do it... You don’t do that kind of thing every day... It wasn’t really a challenge, but I still I just had to do it. We’re not here to just back off from activities... You have to try and get into it, although I still wouldn’t try to cross the Atlantic or the Pacific by rowboat. I wouldn’t do that even if I do set myself challenges.”*

The group plays an important role in stimulating each young person to go beyond his limits as the young people encourage and help each other, which in turn helps to develop the cohesion of the group when they see that their efforts have been worthwhile. The fact of being in a group in which boys and girls are together also stimulates some of the young people to overcome their apprehension and to dare to take on challenges.

*“It’s what wakes us up as Venture Scouts... we do extraordinary things to have fun, to get to know each other... we live through experiences which bond us together, that’s vital. Going to Romania was a challenge but it is what has brought us closer together now. You have to be together to live through challenges, challenges which become reality... afterwards you feel satisfied. If we had not gone, we’d have been really disappointed.”*

*“I like them but I don’t always follow through, but I think you’re more likely to in Venture Scouts because there are plenty of people around to help you overcome things.”*

#### 4.b Having fun

Table 9

HAVING FUN	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
I like a lot	100% (14)	83% (15)	92% (12)
So-so	–	17% (3)	8% (1)
I don't really like that much	–	–	–
Total	(14)	(18)	(13)

Nearly all the young people interviewed state that they derive a lot of pleasure from Scout activities and have a lot of fun with their Scout friends. Many emphasise throughout the interviews that it was one of the factors that made them stay in Scouting. The young people consider this dimension essential for the group dynamics and to push themselves into action. It also contributes to maintaining the cohesion of the group. The young people enjoy getting together as they know each other well and like each other.

*"I admit that we're a bit selfish, especially from our social background. If we didn't have fun, we wouldn't go to Venture Scouts. Thinking of others, all that, I'm not sure we'd think about it [if we weren't in Scouting]. I think it's necessary, it's what's most important, even if we have an interesting project. I think it's thanks to being friends that we have fun, we have a good group and we know each other... If we didn't know each other well, if we didn't have the same mentality, there wouldn't be any Venture Scouts."*

A positive atmosphere within the group is important for maintaining the young people's level of motivation. Some of them point out that while they appreciate those who work to help achieve the group's objectives, they also appreciate those who have a talent for putting everyone into a good mood.

Some of the Venture Scouts mention that when they were the senior members in the younger age section they were starting to enjoy themselves less when they felt the difference in the level of maturity between themselves and the younger members.

*"At Guides, I felt I was too old, that annoyed me a bit. I like Venture Scouts because you're with other older people and we play games that we like more. At Guides, it was often the leaders who decided what we were going to do, and they chose activities more for the little ones than for the older kids... There were little girls who had a great time, but I was bored."*

A few point out that while life should not be taken too seriously, as one grows up one also has to think beyond simply having fun.

*"It's vital... it's not that I don't find times when I want to just have fun, but you can't just have fun all your life."*

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The young people in mid-adolescence face increased school work and increasing competition for the use of limited leisure time. Whether or not they choose to continue in Scouting depends on a number of factors, including the quality of friendships, a wider variety of experiences (or more meaningful ones) than they can find elsewhere, the level of difficulty they experience with their studies, etc. Some young people feel pressure from their parents to devote more

time to studies. While the parents interviewed<sup>52</sup> feel that Scouting has a beneficial effect on their children, it would be logical to assume that parents who attach great importance to academic results and who do not perceive Scouting as meeting important needs of their children would be even more inclined to discourage them from continuing.

Most of the activities on offer are highly rated, and are generally well adapted to the age and interests of the young people in each group. In the younger Scottish group where games are used as one of the primary means of education, the young people very much enjoy the approach, while in the older Belgian and French groups (in which projects take over as an educational tool), the young people prefer this approach, and would not like a greater proportion of games. The development of the young people's interest for more concrete and longer-term projects seems to be linked to their age. Those who have tried both systems feel that when they were the oldest members of the younger age section where games were the main activities, they started to get bored and to notice clear differences in the group between the youngest members who seemed to enjoy themselves and the older ones who would have liked something different.

The activities which the young people prefer and which they find the most meaningful are mainly the camps, travel projects and more or less long-term group projects. The young people, particularly those over 15 years, feel that these activities play an important role in strengthening the relationships and a feeling of closeness between the members.

Having fun and challenge are both considered to be important motivating factors for the young people. Many point out, however, that the challenges have to be within the scope of their capabilities to have a positive effect. Challenges appear to be less meaningful if they are set by others, for example the leaders, rather than by the young person himself.

---

<sup>52</sup> See also Part I, Chapter II: Scouting: The expectations and sources of motivation expressed by those interviewed.



## PART II, CHAPTER II

# THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF PEER RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE UNIT OR TROOP

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A basic element of the Scout method is the system of membership of small groups which aims at facilitating the integration of young people in social life; at providing opportunities to progressively accept responsibility and gain greater autonomy.

*"The small number of people, the lasting character of the relationship, the identification of all the members of the group with the objectives, the thorough knowledge of other persons in the group, the mutual appreciation within the group, together with the feeling of freedom and spontaneity and the fact that social control takes place informally - all this provides an ideal atmosphere for young people to undergo the process of their transformation into the adult stage."*<sup>53</sup>

The quality and nature of the relationships within the peer group is therefore a determining factor as to whether the group will have a constructive influence on the development of the young person.

This chapter deals with the aspect of integration into the group, the young people's perceptions concerning the relationships within the group, the relationships between the senior and junior members. It also examines the young people's views on the advantages and disadvantages of being in coeducated groups and their relationships with the other sex in the two coeducational Venture Scout units. This aspect was treated differently in the boys-only Scottish Scout troop, as they were asked what they thought about the idea of accepting girls into their troop.

### 2. INTEGRATION INTO THE GROUP

#### 2.a General

The composition of Scout groups, whatever the age section, is not static. Senior members leave, new (often younger) members arrive. The leaders in all three groups pay considerable attention to the process of integration of newcomers. For the newcomers, feeling welcome in the new group is a determining factor in their motivation to take an active part in the life of the unit or troop. For those already in the unit or troop, there is the risk that a newcomer who has difficulty in adapting to unit or troop life can disrupt the cohesion of the group.

#### 2.b The importance of knowing others in the group upon arrival

In the Belgian and Scottish groups most of the young people move up to the new age section with a few friends made in the last section. However, in the French group at least a third of the young joined the Venture Scout unit without any previous experience of Scouting. Some of these young people joined by themselves, while others joined with a few friends their own age. The newcomers with

---

<sup>53</sup> "Fundamental Principles", World Scout Bureau, Geneva, 1992.

brothers and sisters who had passed through the section in which they were arriving often felt that they had had an advantage over the others as they had already heard a lot about the life of the unit or the troop and sometimes already knew one or two of the senior members. Some of the young people felt that knowing other people had helped them to “fit in”.

*“I arrived alone, but I didn’t have any problems, I fitted in straight away as some of my best friends from Guides were there... But when you first start and you don’t know everyone, it’s a bit intimidating. I integrated well in the first year, but I was still a bit intimidated because I had been with [girls younger than me] at Guides and when I came to Venture Scouts I found that I was the youngest, it’s a strange feeling. Between 15 and 18, there is certainly a difference in maturity.”*

*“When you’re in Scouts, you look forward to moving up to Venture Scouts, it sounds more mature... it’s a bit intimidating and you don’t really know anyone, but it’s the same when you move from Cubs to Scouts... I found it quite easy to become part of the group as I already knew some people... Several of us had spent a few years together and that helped us, it pushes us, we’re not all alone, and we feel supported by the people who used to be with us. Those who... are discovering Scouting for the first time, are a bit lost at first. In the beginning, you’re kind of considered to be the new kids, and you stick to the others who’ve just arrived, but as you start going on camps you fit in fast. For me, at the first camp in Porquerolles, the adventures together, I think I fitted in well.”*

## 2.c The role of teams and senior members

In the beginning, the newer members and the more senior members tend to stay apart, but slowly they start to mingle and get to know each other. Most of those questioned (over 80%) said that, while they were a little intimidated at first, they felt completely at ease and part of the group after six months.

In the Belgian unit, the newcomers choose which team they wish to belong to, providing that the composition of the teams is balanced in terms of new and senior members, boys and girls. In the French unit, the newcomers may also choose their team and may change if they do not feel comfortable within it. In the Scottish Scout troop, if a new boy already knows someone in a particular patrol, the troop leader usually places him in that patrol for an initial period before assigning him a permanent patrol. The assignment of a patrol is made according to the leader’s assessment of his personality and any special needs, following discussions with the parents and the boy himself and with a view to ensuring a balanced number of young people in each patrol.

Some of them feel that the senior members helped them to become integrated into the group, particularly the team leaders and their assistants. For some of them, it was the people in the team that they got to know first, before going on to getting to know the others.

*"Teams are mainly for the camps... but they also help at the beginning to get to know the people you work with as a team... They were the first people I got to know as we had a team outing. They were the first people that I felt at ease with."*

## 2.d The role of camps, common activities and shared experiences

The vast majority of the young people feel that it is the experiences that they live through together over a period of time during camps or other activities, the responsibilities undertaken together, and a sustained personal effort that had the most significant impact on the development of relationships between the members and contributed to making them learn to live together, adapt to each other and feel part of the Scout community.

*"It's events, things we live through together, the more we live things together, the more integrated we feel, the better we know each other... It comes naturally... There are some people that we don't know as well, we may have preconceived ideas about them... but that ends up disappearing."*

*"I think you have to have lived through a camp to be able to say whether you like [Scouting] or not."*

In the Belgian and French groups, the leaders plan at least two camping weekends during the first six months of the year in order to facilitate the integration of new members. These camps are considered helpful by the young people.

*"In the beginning, you're considered the newcomer and you tend to stick to the other newcomers, but as soon as we go on camps we feel that we fit in better."*

In the Scottish group, it is mainly through taking part regularly in meetings and through work in patrols that the young people progressively feel they belong to the troop, as the first camp does not take place until May.

*"It didn't take long especially when you're playing team games and things, you can't not get involved."*

In order for the camps to be a success, the newcomers need to have been able to get to know the others beforehand through taking part regularly in meetings and activities throughout the year in order to establish the basis on which the relationships can be strengthened. In

all three groups, the leaders insist that anyone who has not been actively involved in the unit during the year is not allowed to go to camp. There have been a few exceptions in the French group, where attending a camp was for some young people their first experience of Scouting.

*"I think that it's important to go to Scouts and Venture Scouts during the year... You have to get into it... and the camp is the highlight of the year... Last year someone turned up to register his kids so that they could go to camp and the leader refused. I think that that was right, because you really need to be there during the year, you get to know each other and then the camp is really a high point."*

## 2.e The custom of "bizutage" (initiation rites)

Only the French group has kept the tradition of "bizutage" (initiation rites) as a symbolic way of integrating people into the group, but this seems to have evolved over the years. Opinions are somewhat ambivalent about this. Some of the newcomers find the custom amusing and do not find it difficult to undergo it in order to show their commitment to the group, but others simply submit to it. The latter feel that it is a way for the others to have a laugh at their expense. One of the young people mentioned a particular case where he felt that a few people were "having a go" at one newcomer in particular, and took pleasure in "teasing" him. Following a group discussion on the subject, rules were established as to the limits of this custom. It would seem that this custom's theoretical function of integration, considered a little "barbarous" by those who do not practice it, has lost some of its meaning even in the group in which it is still practised as it is one of the rare points on which the young people have trouble analysing why the tradition exists.

*"Some kids are afraid of "bizutage". It's silly... it's a custom, I found it funny. My team leader told me he had done it, and at the time I found it amusing... then when I thought about it, it was a little scary... but maybe it's a sign of belonging, to show that you're with the Venture Scouts, you have to show an effort. Some went quite willingly."*

*"There's Hervé, he complained because he had to go through the "bizutage" three times... He's a bit of a "tête de turc"<sup>54</sup> this year, because he's less mature, a little younger, but he's not a bad chap... Actually, it's not so much that we make them go through the "bizutage", we tease them, annoy them because they're annoying. No one tries to annoy me."*

---

<sup>54</sup> "Tête de turc" - a French expression meaning someone who is singled out for teasing.

## 2.f Some difficulties in adapting to a new group

For each group, integration is a permanent process as new members arrive and the senior ones leave each year, and the most crucial periods are those when young people move up into a new section. The transition is not always easy and those who have been through all the previous age sections said that they almost gave up Scouting, (particularly during the first year of the Scout age section for those who had previously been in the Cub Scout age section), because they found the transition from a known environment to a less familiar one relatively difficult and relationships more difficult to establish. A number of comments indicate that the transition from being a senior member of the previous group to being a junior member in the new group can take time to adjust to. Nonetheless, a few young people who have been in Scouting since Cub Scouts, feel that the fact of having had to learn to adapt to a new group several times before has helped them to feel less intimidated. A change in leadership style can also be disturbing for some of them.

*"You need time to get used to a group... time to adapt to the older ones and for them, too, to get used to you... It's not always easy because we don't always have the same ideas. At first, when I first went to Brownies<sup>55</sup>, I had trouble adapting to the others, because I was always being difficult. I often complained when we had to do something, but as time went by, moving from one group to another, I changed... You have to adapt, you need time to develop, to grow up... I realise that now because I remember what I was like."*

*"I was a bit hesitant about going to Venture Scouts, but not because of the work involved... I thought I wouldn't feel at home in the beginning. At Guides, it was a small closed world. [In Venture Scouts], I was going to be one of 30, a little lost. It took me time, but now it's fine, otherwise I wouldn't be here."*

Some of the young people mention the fact that it took relatively less time to feel at ease with the Venture Scout age section compared with the Scout age section.

*"The atmosphere was different when I arrived at Venture Scouts... It seems that in Cubs and Scouts, the older kids make you feel that they have been around a lot longer than you... In Venture Scouts, you really feel that they make an effort to make you feel welcome... but it still took 6 months... it comes slowly, not straight away. Everything seemed to change at the Easter camp... I think that it was a time when everyone was working, and that's when you discover each other, when you do something together. You learn to discover each other... I think that helps a lot."*

---

<sup>55</sup> Brownies is the equivalent of Cub Scouts in the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

*"In Scouts, [integration] is not as fast... you always feel scared when you go somewhere and you don't know quite what it's going to be like... Now I like it here... The longer you're here, the better you get to know people and make friends... It took me until the Porquerolles camp... it's during the camps that you get to know others better."*

*"I remember, I didn't like my first year in Scouts at all. It was the only year I didn't like because there were the little ones, the middle ones and the big ones... I felt like leaving, it would have been really stupid if I had. I got into it. Here in Venture Scouts, the main characteristic is that everyone fits in well, everyone contributes. That's what's good about it."*

### 3. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S OPINIONS ON THE PEER RELATIONSHIPS DEVELOPED THROUGH LIFE IN SCOUTING

#### 3.a The influence of social backgrounds on relationships

Table 1

*"Through Scouting, I know more kids who are like me and whose families are like mine"*

Interviewees	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
Agree	18% (2)	6% (1)	21% (3)
It depends	73% (8)	31% (5)	21% (3)
Not really	9% (1)	63% (10)	57% (8)
Total	(11)	(16)	(14)

Many of the young people interviewed express reservations in answer to the question *"Through Scouting, I know more kids who are like me and whose families are like mine"*. The young people in the French group find that they come from very different family and social environments. Even though most of the young people in the Belgian and Scottish groups tend to agree that they come from fairly similar family and social backgrounds, they (and the young people in the French group) point out that each person has a distinct personality, different from their own. They nonetheless find that they generally get on well together as the Scouting spirit and the code of living in their groups encourage them to act in solidarity and to take into account everyone's opinions.

*“Everyone has different ideas. It’s very varied. Their families are not like mine... There are those whose parents are divorced. On the whole we get on well even though we don’t have the same ideas. Even if we agree, not everyone thinks in the same way... But in Scouting we’re not selfish, we support each other.”*

### 3.b Comparison of friendships amongst Scouts and those made at school or elsewhere

In all three groups and whatever their age, nearly all of the Scouts and Venture Scouts state that they do not enjoy being on their own, and prefer to be with friends. They also state that they find it more stimulating to undertake activities within a group environment.

*“We know each other well, we can have fun, we can do things together. It’s better than when you’re all alone, because sometimes you get bored, or you don’t dare to do whatever it is, but in the group you have fun... In Venture Scouts, you live through things together, you spend time together... you have the same ideal... We all find ways to please other people, we don’t try to needle other people.”*

Table 2

BEING WITH A GROUP OF FRIENDS	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
I like a lot	93% (13)	83% (15)	92% (12)
So-so	7% (1)	17% (3)	8% (1)
I don't really like that much	–	–	–
Total	(14)	(18)	(13)

Most of the young people feel that they have a lot of friends. The comments of the Venture Scouts in particular indicate that it is with other Scouts that they have developed the most solid friendships, either with young people their own age or older. Around two-thirds of the Venture Scouts state that the friendships within Scouting are completely “different” from those at school and their comments tend to indicate that the friendships made through Scouting are stronger than those made through school.

*"At school, they're just casual friends, whereas here they're real friends, people I can really talk to, I know them. We can talk about things we've experienced and done together. At school it's a bit difficult to communicate because we don't really know each other... I've known [some] Venture Scouts since Cubs or Scouts... my best friends are here in the unit. I'm not a loner, I need to feel I have friends around."*

*"I know my friends outside [Scouting] have a whole group of friends... I have met a couple of them and I don't like them much... I am happy with the friends that I know through Scouts."*

*"I am often with Venture Scouts and I know that they're really true friends that I can count on... It's not that I don't like people at school, but they're more acquaintances than real friends. They're classmates, you can have fun with them, but I'm not sure I could really count on them... When I was in hospital, it was all the Venture Scouts who came to see me, not school friends... yet [the hospital] was closer to school."*

*"In Venture Scouts, there are people I get on with very well, and I would certainly talk more to them... It's where my best friends are because I have known them for a very long time... Of course, each camp brings us closer together... I think school has also had an influence recently, and I have turned to Venture Scouts because I had a lot of arguments with people... I didn't get on with them any longer, so I turned back to the Venture Scouts."*

*"You start to see the people in Venture Scouts in a different light compared to the people you meet at school. Besides, the relationships you have with Venture Scouts are completely different. I get on with two or three people at school, but the rest [of my friends] are in Venture Scouts... We see each other a lot, we go through a lot together, you get to know completely different aspects of people."*

The comments indicate that it is especially around 15 years old and older that the young people seek deeper communication and relationships with their peers. They are more sensitive to signs of attention and friendship and particularly appreciate friends whom they know they can count on in times of difficulty. For example, those who find that they have problems in relating to others at school or at home find that the Scout environment can help them to "let off steam", express their difficulties and regain confidence.

The comments of a few young people who used to find it difficult to make friends indicate that through Scouting they have been able to develop positive relationships with the members of the group which has then helped them to feel more comfortable with other people outside of Scouting.



*"In the beginning, my mother thought that I spent too much time alone... At school I didn't care much for group sports and all that. She wanted me to join a movement so that I would get on better with other people and to have confidence in other people... Everybody says that I've changed a lot... Now I have too many friends. Friendships in Venture Scouts are really strong, you feel more respected. A friend at school will play a joke on you, and he'll find it funny... whereas in Venture Scouts he'd think twice. You live more with Venture Scouts, you get to know their capacities, you get on better."*

The same young person mentions that the tension caused by competition in school tends to have a negative influence on relationships with classmates.

*"Friends at school, there's often such tension seeing as you're at school... whether it's about marks or whatever."*

### 3.c Factors enabling closer friendships through Scouting

The comments indicate several factors which make friendships made through the Scouting environment stronger than those made in a school environment.

- Some of the young people have developed close friendships with young people that they had originally met as fellow Cub Scouts or Scouts and have "grown up" with through shared experiences.
- The young person's relationships with others in Scouting develop through a wider variety of experiences, over a longer period of time (both in terms of frequency and in duration) than is usually possible in a school environment. Living through these experiences together enables the young person to better appreciate other people's strengths and weaknesses. Camps, for example, are often cited by the Venture Scouts as occasions for strengthening relationships.
- The values on which Scouting life is based seem to have a positive influence on the development of relationships and encourage each person to feel a strong bond with each of the others. In addition, many of the young people state that what they appreciate the most is the fact of being with others who share the same "values" and "mentality" and being able to undertake activities with them.
- The trust that the young people come to have in each other through the Scouting environment is an important factor in the relationships developed. Many of them point out that they feel that they communicate on a deeper level with others in Scouting, and confide in them, as they feel that they are more "mature" and that they think about things in a different way to the young people that they know outside of Scouting.

### 3.d The importance of maintaining the cohesion of the group

Even though feelings of friendship are naturally stronger for some people than for others, each person is expected to ensure that the stronger friendships formed within the Scout group do not lead to a formation of “cliques” which would endanger the cohesion of the group.

*“It’s always great... but it doesn’t split the unit up into little groups. Evidently there are people that you like to be with, people you always find yourself doing things with, but you still don’t push anybody else away.”*

### 3.e The young people’s opinions concerning tolerance and the resolution of conflicts in the Scout environment

Table 3

“I don’t mind so much when other kids don’t agree with me”

Interviewees	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
Agree	76% (13)	50% (8)	57% (8)
It depends	24% (4)	44% (7)	21% (3)
Not really	-	6% (1)	21% (3)
Total	(17)	(16)	(14)

The young people feel that it is not always easy to get on with everyone and feel that occasional friction is inevitable within groups composed of 30 or so young people.

Confronting and accepting ideas different from their own is part of group life and even though opinions vary in the French and Scottish groups, most young people agree on the fact that the group forces them to learn to be tolerant of other people’s views. Those who say that it does not bother them at all that others do not share their opinions point out that it is precisely the fact of sharing different points of view that they find interesting as this enriches the group and enables them to learn to know each other better. Each is free to have his own opinions and to express them within the group as they feel in a reassuring atmosphere amongst people who try to understand them.

*"I don't mind at all, I find it stupid to all think the same way... For that too, Venture Scouts brings us a lot because we live together... you learn to be tolerant, it's important in society... Scouts learn to be tolerant, I think they're more tolerant than my friends [outside of Scouting]."*

The young people who have reservations about their level of tolerance of other people's views feel that it is important to respect each person's views and to accept the decisions of the majority, but point out that it is not always easy depending on the subject being debated and according to the consequences involved. The character of each person also intervenes as those with strong characters and strong opinions have more difficulty in this area. Some point out that differences of opinion are more difficult to accept when they come from people to whom one feels particularly close and with whom one would like to share the same view.

*"It gets to me a little, but they have their opinion, I have mine. We're not going to fight because we don't have the same [opinion]. When you're in Scouts, you become more tolerant. When you have several projects and you vote, tolerance means respecting other people, or respecting what has been selected... You're not going to hold a grudge."*

A few young people find that the fact of having to accept that the interests of the group pass before their own is not always easy. In the groups where important decisions are made by vote, some describe occasions which they found difficult to accept, such as when they were not accorded the status which they felt they deserved, or when "their" project was rejected.

*"I was really shocked about the vote for team leaders. It's not the fact that I wasn't elected, but I thought that I would have got more votes, and I really felt let down. It made me feel terrible. A lot of the Scouts had said that I was difficult to get on with, but they didn't realise that I had changed. The vote this year really made me feel bad."*

The code of living within the group contributes to resolving potential "conflicts" and to enable each person to express his opinion. Council meetings provide opportunities to confront different points of view. Disagreements or difficulties are often first discussed with their "best friends" outside of the council sessions.

The young people sometimes feel that they can be "unfair" or "hard" on each other, particularly in the younger age sections, but the relationships tend to improve with time. In a few cases, the Venture Scouts point out that relationships change when they move from Scouts to Venture Scouts and they become more tolerant towards each other.

*"I remember that I wasn't very nice to Philippe... A lot of people didn't like him. I don't know why, in Scouts there is often a "tête de turc"... It*

*changes a lot in Venture Scouts, it's really different. You wonder how people can annoy others like that. Last year quite a few people were mean to Robert. In the beginning I was a bit like that, then I started thinking that there was no reason to be mean to him. Now a lot of people stick up for him... Now he's one of our best friends. It was when I saw that he did loads of things that I thought that there must have been a lot of gossip in the beginning."*

### 3.f Particular difficulties of certain young people in relating to others

In general, once the young people manage to find their niche and feel part of the group, they only leave the group if there is a problem of availability of time. A few young people, however, seem to be experiencing difficulties in communicating, or relating to others. It would seem that, at the time of the interviews, the Scout environment had not enabled them to overcome these difficulties.

*"I don't feel like it this year... My behaviour has changed, I have become more passive... it comes from me, I don't feel like talking and telling them that something's wrong... Last year, I would never have said that... I don't need anyone to help me, they wouldn't be able to give me any advice... The problem isn't to do with the mission, but it's my relationships with the others... I don't really see what I could have to say, what anyone could propose to make me feel better, I don't even know myself... I prefer to keep it to myself."*

Some of the older members, whose friends have already left the group and who find themselves with a majority of younger people, feel that they are no longer part of a peer group.

*"I think I'm going to leave next year. The longer you stay, the younger the group gets... They're different from us, without being too different. I like them, but the way they think, their jokes, it's not the same thing... It's a bit frustrating, there are only two of us senior members left in the team."*

A few young people say that they find it difficult to "confide" in others, or that they have difficulty in expressing disagreement in front of the group.

*"I can't trust just anyone, I'm like that... I'm unbearable. I don't trust people much, I would even say that I can't even trust my sister, we fight most of the time... I can say what I feel to Gérard<sup>56</sup>."*

*"Sometimes I get mad... up to now I have practically never got angry... I always said I agreed. Sometimes I get angry but I don't show it. When I don't appreciate their teasing... but in any case I never show when I'm angry... except at home."*

---

<sup>56</sup> The young person's best friend from Scouting.

*"Jacqueline is... a girl who gets easily annoyed. She has a problem in coming to the unit, she only comes every three months. It's not worth continuing when it's like that because you're no longer really part of the life of the unit. It's up to her to think about it, but she shouldn't take it badly."*

#### 4. RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SENIOR MEMBERS

##### 4.a General

In the French-speaking groups, the age difference between the youngest and the oldest is two or three years. In the Scottish group, there can be as much as five years difference in age. Only the oldest (13-15) in the Scottish troop were interviewed plus a few former troop members aged 17 and over.

##### 4.b The role of senior members

The senior members of the Scout troop and the Venture Scout units have a particular role to fulfil in their respective groups in motivating and stimulating the development of the younger ones.

The senior members are expected to guide the younger/newer members by: passing on their skills and experience; showing them how to go about projects or tasks; helping the newer members to become integrated into the group; and "showing them the ropes" of how the troop or unit operates, including ensuring that the code of living and rules are respected.

Positions of responsibility, such as team leader, assistant team leader and "mission" leader, are mainly recruited amongst the senior members of the group or at least amongst those who have been in the group for a minimum of a year.

##### 4.c The young people's views on the patrol/team leader's responsibilities and the qualities required

The young people view the responsibilities of leading a team in a similar way in the three groups. One young person explains:

*"You have to delegate, not all the time, but you have to delegate. You also have to listen to the different points of view of the other Scouts. You've got to be understanding and be able to organise things well. That's more the patrol leader's side. The assistant patrol leader has got to be ready to take over in case the patrol leader doesn't turn up."*

Those who have been in the Movement longer have had the opportunity to test out roles of responsibility relatively early and often several times as they move from one age section to the next. This nuances the general point of view when analysing the differences that they perceive at different ages. In the Venture Scout units, some of them

point out that the role of team leader is more complex and difficult to assume than that of patrol leader as they have to have more developed organisational skills and be able to take more initiatives than in the younger section where the adult leaders still take on a large proportion of the overall responsibility in this area.

*"It's more difficult... they have more responsibilities. When you were patrol leader the Scout leaders helped you, it wasn't too difficult yet. But when you're team leader in Venture Scouts, you have to know what you're doing, you have to want to do it. You mustn't do it to please the adult leaders, it's a choice you have to make... They have to have a greater experience of Scouting to be able to teach us things that we don't already know, and leaders like Marc, they demand more because we're older... But I think that when you've been in Venture Scouts for several years, you should be able to [lead a team]. I wouldn't mind, but I don't want to commit myself to that yet."*

*"I was a sixer<sup>57</sup> in Cubs, I was a patrol leader in Scouts... the best is to be assistant sixer, it's the most fun... but it's good to have responsibilities towards other people... Next year I'll propose myself to be a team leader. As a team leader, it's especially giving advice, I think it's mainly that, giving your opinion, not giving orders, it's more getting the team to debate [different views], balancing things out, it's more like that."*

Some of the Venture Scouts point out that an "authoritarian" attitude is not acceptable to young people of 14-15 years old and "those in charge" have to be diplomatic to obtain what they expect from the group. They have to avoid being in the limelight but must be able to lead their team and contribute to maintaining a good atmosphere in the group. Their role is closer to an adviser and coordinator than a "boss" even though they also have to be able ensure that the code of living is respected. They describe the team leader's profile as follows:

*"They have to have a sense of responsibility, they have to be able to set limits at times, but also they have to be able to deal with things themselves... They mustn't be too serious, they can't play little chiefs, but they have to have common sense and be able to lead the group."*

*"You have to give orders as little as possible. If they're not doing something right, you have to tell them, not shout at them... When you give advice, they listen to you, when you give orders, they clamp up, they become defensive, they may even not do their job at all."*

*"When we're together, the team leader isn't seen, he doesn't show that he's the team leader when we're amongst ourselves. It's just for meetings with the [adult] leaders to prepare projects, but I think that his main role is to make sure there's a good atmosphere within the team... to guide the Venture Scouts a little."*

---

<sup>57</sup> A sixer is a team leader in the Cub Scout age section.

The comments indicate that some team leaders or assistants find it more difficult to fulfil their role than others and are less successful in motivating the young people in their teams.

*"We have a team leader who shouts a lot... the others think so, too. It's not that he doesn't listen to us at meetings, but sometimes he's too authoritarian, and sometimes not enough. When Guy turns up late for meetings, he doesn't shout at him, but when Sylvie or Eliane start chatting he starts shouting, even though they haven't really done anything."*

*"Most of the Venture Scouts are against her, especially those who did the summer camp with her. She bosses people around... sometimes she really has a go at us."*

#### 4.d The senior members' view of their role

The majority of the senior members accept that they have to take on more responsibility and to guide the younger ones. The younger members generally seek advice from the senior members and tend to admire their "savoir-faire", thus potentially contributing to the self-confidence of the older adolescents. The benefits for both the younger and the senior members appear to be greatest, however, when the difference in age is small as otherwise the young people no longer feel part of a peer group.

One of the senior members remarks that the senior members do not have the same "prestige" as in the past.

*"We are still older. The new ones consider us as if we were the same age, and being older loses a bit of its charm... We can still teach them a thing or two - how you behave at a meeting, or when you go out. They don't want to learn, they just want to have fun. It sounds a bit odd, but they haven't quite made the transition from Scouts to Venture Scouts."*

#### 4.e The influence of senior members in decision-making

The influence of the senior members (particularly the team leaders or assistant team leaders) in the decision-making process seems to vary according to the age section (Scout troop or Venture Scout unit). The Scottish Scout troop feel that the patrol leaders tend to have considerable sway over decisions. The young people in the Venture Scout units in France and Belgium who had previously been in the Scout age section tend to agree that when they were in the Scout age section, the patrol leaders also tended to have considerable influence in this area. While the young people in both Venture Scout units feel that the senior members in their current age section do not exert an inordinate amount of influence in decision-making, it is particularly in the Belgian group that the young people feel that decision-making is made by the entire unit.

*“In Scouts, the patrol leader has a lot of responsibilities and he leads more. In Venture Scouts, he has responsibilities too, but he doesn’t decide... Here there’s much more symbiosis, and it’s the whole group which makes a decision, not the team leader. When we do an activity, there’s much more participation in Venture Scouts than in Scouts, the whole group is responsible.”*

#### 4.f Perceptions concerning the influence of senior members on the young people

While a certain amount of prestige is attached to the fact of being a senior member, and of being a patrol/team leader in particular, most of the younger members acknowledge that the senior members have considerable responsibilities and have a level of experience that they would like to acquire.

Table 4

“Knowing older kids through Scouting really helps me to see how I’d like to be later on”

Interviewees	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
Agree	33% (5)	38% (6)	79% (11)
It depends	33% (5)	19% (3)	14% (2)
Not really	33% (5)	44% (7)	7% (1)
Total	(15)	(16)	(14)

Whatever the initial answer option chosen, the comments of the majority of young people questioned on this aspect tend to converge on the perceived influence of the senior members on the younger members. The senior members in the Venture Scout units feel that, when they themselves were the junior members, their senior members had helped them to become integrated, to become familiar with how the unit functioned, to acquire skills and learn how to go about their tasks and projects. In the beginning, when they became senior members, some of them adopted, or took inspiration from, the ideas and techniques of their predecessors, but then developed their own style.



*"Of course we always base ourselves a little on the team leader because we've seen what he's like, he's been here for years... if he does something it's because it'll work... I don't do things exactly the way he does, but pretty much so for some things. You also watch how other people do things, you see if it works, then you do pretty much the same way, if it doesn't work, you don't do it."*

*"When you first join the unit, you don't know how to do things, you follow the example of others and you choose a path to follow, you learn things, and if you're good at what you're trying to do, then you carry on in that direction... I'm my own model."*

*"Each person has to find his own way... You have to experience things for yourself, but if there are others on the path you're following, then you can improve what you're doing by taking into account how they deal with things, perfect things... If the experience is someone else's, you can make use of the consequences to avoid making the same mistakes... but you have to try things out for yourself and it's through your own experiences that you learn."*

The older adolescents reject the idea that the senior members were a "model figure" for them, but feel that the fact of having been in close contact with older members who help to guide them has helped them to mature.

*"Perhaps some people did have an influence on me, but I never wanted to be like them."*

*"In the beginning, we were quite distant, but during the camp there was a lot of contact between the senior members and the new ones, it brought us a lot. They were people we didn't really know. The fact of discovering people three years older than us who already have a lot of Venture Scouting experience behind them, it brings us a lot in terms of experience, wisdom too, they know how things work and they can motivate the unit."*

*"I get on with older people... I feel comfortable. At school there isn't the same atmosphere. When you're the same age, you're pretty much alike... but when there's someone older, he teaches you things you couldn't have done. He makes us grow up a bit. The older ones teach us to grow faster when we're with them... through their behaviour maybe... it's maybe an example."*

*"You learn how things work by watching the Venture Scouts, but you're not in a mould."*

*"[Being with senior members] helps a little, but you still have to have your own ideas... you can't always count on the oldest person to determine your opinion on this or that. I didn't have a lot of ideas, but I didn't want to count on other people's, that's all."*

In the younger age group (the Scottish troop), many of the young people (particularly the youngest) feel that the senior members are a stimulating example, especially those who have won important competitions. While their comments indicate a desire to identify with the model projected by the senior members, it is mainly in the area of patrol leadership that they hope to reach the same level of performance as their seniors.

*"[The older Scouts] set a standard which we've got to live up to and which is quite hard because it is a high standard."*

*"I used to admire the older patrol leaders and felt that I'd like to be like them when I am older... like when they were patrol leaders."*

The young respondents do not feel that the senior members have influenced them in what they would like to become as adults. Some have strong personalities and do not consider that the senior members represent a model figure which they would like to follow. Others interpreted this question in terms of professional career and do not feel that the senior members have influenced them in this area. Others point out that it is more the influence of the entire group that they feel has contributed to their aspirations rather than the influence of anyone in particular.

*"For me, really being someone later in life is being well-known in your profession. In the Scout group it isn't like that. I would like to be a lawyer later... or a judge... and Venture Scouts haven't influenced me in that."*

#### 4.g Perceptions concerning the relationship between younger and senior members

The views concerning the relationships between the senior and junior members are varied. It seems that in most cases strong friendships are more easily developed between young people of the same age. A few of the senior members point out that as they grow older and as more younger people arrive in the troop or unit, they sometimes feel the age difference and the fact that they have less in common with the younger members. Many of the younger members, however, appreciate the company of the senior members as they find that they learn more, or find that the senior members are more apt to listen and help them resolve their problems.

*"Monique<sup>58</sup> is really great... I wasn't in her team, but she was really good with people, she listened to them. When one of us had a problem, we could go to her and talk about it and then you felt better. I have often had problems and we talked about them. She didn't interfere, but she listened when you had a problem."*

*"If there's any problem, I just talk to my patrol leader or people in my patrol because I get on pretty well with them. It helps because I have always been in the same patrol."*

*"I liked my patrol leader, he listened to you. He was serious but good fun as well. I thought sometimes he got a bit "stropky" but all the patrol [leaders] and assistant patrol leaders do."*

*"Through having done activities together... we've got to know each other. He's nice. He's a good team leader because he really puts a lot into it, I like that. He does everything he can to help us. He helped me with the promise... there he really helped us. I chose this team because I like it, it's the one that suits me the best."*

A few of the young people interviewed (less than 10%) state that while they have not always managed to get on with their team leader when they changed team or patrol, they have always been able to turn to the assistant or to one of the team or patrol members. In the Scottish group, the youngest point out that despite the fact that sometimes they do not feel much affinity to some of the patrol leaders, they nonetheless have considerable respect for them due to the difference in age and because of their skills and experience.

*"I respected them because they were big and I was small. My first patrol leader I didn't get on with very well, but the others were good. They taught me everything they knew."*

#### 4.h Complementarity between senior members and adults

Many of the comments, especially in the Belgian group, point out the complementarity of the senior members and the adult leaders in motivating the young people, creating group dynamics and instilling the group spirit in the newcomers.

*"The leaders are very important, but they're a bit distant... well not distant but there are a lot less of them, so we have less contact with them, the leaders have their role but they have to be assisted by the senior members."*

---

<sup>58</sup> A team leader.

## 5. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING COEDUCATION IN SCOUTING

### 5.a Coeducation in Scouting

In Scouting, a clear distinction is made between coeducation and education in a "mixed" setting. Coeducation is defined as the process of:

*"Educating persons of both sexes together to achieve an ultimate goal in which the relationship between males and females is one of equality and complementarity, characterised by equal opportunity, mutual acceptance, understanding, respect and enrichment, based on partnership, co-responsibility and empowerment."*

*"Simply putting girls and boys together in an educational setting does not guarantee equal treatment, equal access or equal opportunity - and certainly does not constitute coeducation."*<sup>59</sup>

The World Organization of the Scout Movement is open to both female and male members, although it is up to each national Scout organization to decide whether it serves one or both sexes. Within national Scout associations that have decided to offer a coeducational programme, it is not usually compulsory at local level, but is rather an option which local troops and units may choose to adopt.

*"Coeducation in Scouting is not a method; it is a particular form of education applicable in certain circumstances."*<sup>60</sup>

In the Belgian and French Scout associations to which the young people interviewed belong, coeducation was introduced in the 1970's. Both Venture Scout units in question started to accept girls at around this time and continue to do so.

In the Belgian unit, the decision was made after in-depth consideration involving the unit, parents and the chaplain. Parents originally rejected the idea due to the risk of sexual experimentation, but later agreed when guidelines and rules concerning conduct, facilities, etc. were clearly established. These rules have been transmitted from generation to generation and continue to apply in the unit, even though the majority of young people are not aware that they date from the introduction of coeducation in the unit.

In the French unit, the fact that girls became members of the unit was more by chance than by a conscious effort on the part of the unit to offer a coeducational programme. In this unit a few girls originally asked if they could join and were accepted by the unit and the leader (who still runs the unit today) on an experimental basis before coeducation was officially an option at national level. The unit thereafter continued to be coeducational. The leader believes that

---

<sup>59</sup> Extract from "Coeducation - Guidelines for Scout Associations", World Scout Bureau, Geneva, 1992.

<sup>60</sup> Idem.

coeducation does not require fundamental changes, but that it does require making sure that the activities on offer take into account the interests and capabilities of each person. In his opinion, it also requires basic ground rules of behaviour and the ability to anticipate delicate situations in advance, although he feels that the Scouting environment tends to reduce the likelihood of “unacceptable” behaviour.

In The Scout Association (the United Kingdom Scout association to which the Scottish Scout troop belongs), coeducation has only officially been an option at national level for all age sections since 1991. The Scout troop interviewed has remained boys-only.

The young people in the Venture Scout units (coeducational) were questioned on the advantages and disadvantages they found about being in a coeducated group. Those interviewed (aged 13-14) in the boys-only Scottish Scout troop were asked what they thought about the idea of having girls in their troop.

#### 5.b Extent of exposure of the young people to a mixed or coeducational environment

In the Belgian Venture Scout unit, over one third of the members are girls. In the Scout Group to which the Belgian unit belongs, coeducation is only available in the Venture Scout unit, and therefore the Venture Scouts had not experienced coeducation in the Scout age section. In the French unit, some of the young people had already had some experience of being in a Scout troop in which there were a couple of girls prior to joining Venture Scouts. However, girls have always been a minority in the unit and at the time of the interviews, the unit was composed of 5 girls and 24 boys (i.e. 17% girls).

While the boys in the Scottish Scout troop are not familiar with a coeducational setting in Scouting, some are familiar with a mixed environment through school.

#### 5.c The coeducational units: the young people’s views

- Differences perceived between being in a mixed environment at school compared to a coeducational environment in Scouting

While mixed education at school is common in Belgium and France, the young people’s comments indicate that coeducation in Scouting is an opportunity to develop friendships with the opposite sex. They feel that this is more difficult to achieve in a school environment. At school many tend to stay with a small group of friends of their own sex. Many of them point out that what contrasts with school is the fact that in Scouting they share meaningful experiences with a small group of peers where the emphasis is placed on getting to know each person.

*"We know each other much better [in Venture Scouts]. At school this year in sports, they organised mixed groups for the jumps. The teachers called us to present ourselves and without doing it on purpose, all the girls went to one side and all the boys went to the other... and the teacher said 'So much for mixed groups!'."*

*"It wasn't a great revolution [as it was for] our parents as we are already mixed in school, but perhaps what we experience at school is less fascinating, less close than here. [At school] you do less, simply follow classes. I know the girl Venture Scouts better than girls at school, but in general [I know] the boy Venture Scouts better too because we really live together, it's really enriching."*

*"It's easier to express yourself with [girls in the unit] than with girls at school, you get on better."*

*"At school, you know a few people, but there are a lot that you don't know. Here we have more contact with girls."*

*"I would say that outside you're more selective, more choosy. But here we live together and we learn to get to know each other, and it's thanks to that we learn to become more tolerant."*

#### • Views on coeducation in Scouting

All of the young people in the coeducational groups affirm that, if they had the choice between being in a coeducational unit or being in a single-sex unit, they would choose to be in a coeducational unit. Some state that the idea of a coeducational group constituted an additional motivation to move up to the next age section. A few state that if the opportunity to be in a coeducational environment did not exist, some young people might even leave Scouting.

*"If there are only boys after a while it would be boring, and some would even drop Scouting."*

*"I think it's good, it brings something to community life, there's no segregation. It's mixed everywhere... there's no reason why it shouldn't be mixed here. As we're a small group, we have more contact with each other."*

*"I find it good to be mixed, there aren't more activities for boys than for girls. I find it's good, if you're a mixed group, you have to be mixed all the time. The activities have to be mixed too, otherwise it doesn't make sense. It teaches us to get to know the boys, not just the girls."*

What the young people seem to enjoy the most about being in a coeducational unit is the fact that they find the atmosphere more stimulating when boys and girls are together in the same small group, whatever the activity. All of them feel that the opportunity to

exchange different points of view and get to know other ways of thinking is mutually enriching. They feel that this justifies the effort to adapt to each other.

*"It's an advantage. It's completely different in a boys-only unit. Boys and girls are different and [being together] adds something different, it's a big advantage. All the different personalities... it's much more enriching to be in a mixed unit."*

*"We talk more to each other. When there are girls, there is a difference, it's not the same [as between boys]. We don't think in the same way."*

*"The atmosphere wouldn't be the same [in a single-sex environment], the enthusiasm wouldn't be the same."*

*"It's good. In the same team or not, it brings us something extra. [The girls] say what they think, they do things differently. They see things differently, which is good."*

*"It's different. You tell yourself you're going to discover something different. The fact that we're in a mixed group isn't a problem at all. I find it fun, because the boys have different ways of having fun. So I'm glad [coeducational groups] exist. I had no trouble fitting in because all my girlfriends were there."*

Some feel that the stimulating atmosphere is useful to improve the organisation and implementation of their activities, while others find that the fact of being with the opposite sex is an incentive to help them overcome their apprehension over certain activities, or to stretch their limits.

*"It's a bit silly not to include girls, especially for the activities, for their way of thinking."*

*"It brings more. It's not the same when there are just boys. When there are girls, it's better. You can have better ideas, they see things from a different angle."*

*"I think that if a girl is working hard, it can motivate a boy. This summer, for example, when we went rafting, we were a bit scared the first time. The guys who hadn't yet done any abseiling, when they saw that a girl could do it, even if they were a bit scared, they'd do it."*

*"It's well known that when you have a class of boys and girls, the standard is much higher than when there are just boys in the class."*

Most of the young people find that the coeducational atmosphere is particularly important in helping them to feel at ease with each other and in fostering the development of communication on a deeper level and of more meaningful relationships with their peers of the opposite sex. It seems that this aspect is particularly important to them at around 15 years of age.

*"Some of them feel better in a mixed group, it's hard to explain."*

*"When you have someone to support you for something, the guys prefer it when you're supported by a girl than by a leader or the other guys."*

*"My sister was in Guides... it was difficult because she was shy. She's certainly less shy because when she's with Venture Scouts we have a good time, we talk more, we feel more at ease. We get on better with the girls in Venture Scouts."*

*"Now we're at an age where we get on well with girls, it's different."*

*"It's now we can get to know boys in a different way, it's important for later."*

*"We're with boys and girls and we learn to get to know each other... I find that more important. When we were at Guides, we thought Scouts, yuk, we couldn't stand them. Here we learn to live together."*

It would seem that, despite a few concessions, many of the older members in particular do not feel that there is any restriction in the activities that they enjoy doing due to the fact of being in a coeducational group, and do not consider that whatever differences there may be as being of major importance. The fact that each person can choose which tasks or activities according to his or her interests within the framework of the global project is an advantage. Some of the young people point out that they do not attribute particular interests or abilities as being characteristic of one gender or of the other, while most others remark on the complementarity between boys and girls in a coeducational setting.

*"When boys and girls live together there are concessions to be made... Obviously you can't do what a group of boys would do, but then on the other hand, it's more enriching. We always work things out to make sure everyone is OK. I'm not sure that's it's a question of what sex you are, I think it's more to do with each person's capabilities... What's important is not what you do, but it's everything that is gained by being mixed because you experience things differently, but the activities are the same."*

*"Samantha came and worked on the mechanics... I said that it wasn't just for boys and she joined in."*

*"A film is more abstract, it's more for girls... as there's nothing manual, you imagine more boys doing manual work, and girls doing less physical things. I see it like that... It was the boys who built the tower, the girls did the weaving. I don't mean that boys can't do mental work, but they're more likely to build something."*



They all state that they are satisfied with living together, including at team level, and would not like to see teams of only boys or only girls. When numbers permit, when working out the composition of the teams, one of the criteria that the young people apply tacitly is an even mix of girls and boys.

*"I think it's better to have girls and boys together in the teams because you're better integrated [when you're in a team with boys]. If we were a team of girls, we'd just stick together, I think the atmosphere wouldn't be as good."*

A couple of young people mention difficulties concerning community life on a daily basis.

*"Going to the toilet which is locked, they went four at a time and so the guys ended up having to do all the washing up."*

A couple of young people mention that they had felt a certain amount of apprehension at the idea of being in a mixed group as to them it was having to discover the unknown. However, having experienced it, they now appreciate being mixed as it has enabled them to overcome their fear and shyness and to learn to communicate.

*"Before I joined Venture Scouts, I was scared [of being in a mixed group], and I even thought about going to another group, because I thought that with girls around there were going to be stories and secrets, and stuff. But actually, there was nothing like that. I got to know girls at Venture Scouts and for me it was progress. The atmosphere of being together has taught me to see things differently. When you're in Scouts you're with boys and now here with girls. There are rules to follow, how to behave, I've learned things like that. Now I'm really happy to be with girls, I prefer to be in a mixed group than in a single-sex group."*

*"In primary school I was with boys only until secondary school, I'm sure you don't have the same relationships with girls in the beginning if you haven't been in class with them."*

• Spontaneous comments from young people in coeducational units on the formation of couples within Scouting

A couple of young people in both the older groups mention that they have found their "kindred spirit" thanks to Scouting, but they are very anxious to keep it quiet because of the code of living in the unit and the feeling of solidarity and respect for others. In the Belgian unit, it is the young people themselves who insist that if special friendships develop, it should be kept private so as not to damage the cohesion of the group. Some of the young people point out that they have observed that some other coeducational units do not uphold this rule and they feel that group life and camps in those units suffer as a consequence. This observation has helped them to better integrate their code of living in this respect and in general.

- Difference in views between the young people in the Belgian and the French units

There appears to be a slight difference between the views of the young people in the Belgian unit compared to the French unit concerning the level to which they feel that the activities are balanced in accordance with the interests and abilities of each person.

In the Belgian unit, in which the choice of activities is determined by vote by the whole group, (according to guidelines which stipulate that each person must have a role to play in accordance with their interests and abilities) and in which there is a high proportion of girls (35%), most feel that the activities proposed are balanced and that everyone's interests are taken into account.

On the other hand, in the French group where girls are a small minority (17%), and where the leader has a greater influence over the choice of projects, even though he tries to balance the activities to suit everyone, a couple of the boys wondered if the girls' preferences for activities sometimes tended to be overruled by the preferences of the boys.

*"Whenever we do something, it's always more. I was going to say masculine. At the regional weekend, there were 95% boys and practically no girls."*

*"We do games that the boys like, sometimes we like it, sometimes not.. You have to find things that are both for girls and boys. It's the same for work."*

*"I don't mind having girls if they can keep up. They're in the minority, maybe it's them who mind. There aren't any advantages or disadvantages, they're just like the boys."*

- Views of Venture Scouts who had come from single-sex Scout troops on coeducation in younger age sections

The boys in the Venture Scout units who had not known a coeducational environment in the Scout age section found it difficult to imagine having girls in the younger age section. Some feel that it might have "slowed down" the troop and might have led to restrictions in the range of activities. They feel that the Scout programme would have seemed less attractive to them.

#### 5.d The single-sex Scout troop: the young people's views

In the Scottish Scout troop, where the young people had not had any experience of a coeducational environment in Scouting, nearly all the boys express reticence to a greater or lesser degree at the idea of having girls in the troop. The main reason given is that they feel that the girls would not be interested in their favourite activities, particularly sports, and they would therefore feel restricted.

*"I wouldn't like girls in the troop because they wouldn't really like to do the same activities as us like rock climbing... Well, I don't know, but I wouldn't think that they'd want to do that sort of thing... It would be OK for some things, but it might restrict some of the activities which are good fun."*

*"I think that in some ways mixing would be a disadvantage. I think that there's always going to be girls that are slower which will slow the troop down."*

*"It would be good that you meet more people... Things like camp and stuff would be different. I'd probably get used to it, but it would be strange at first. It [will be] different in Venture Scouts, there's not so much discipline."*

#### 5.e General opinion on coeducation for the Venture Scout age section

In all three groups, the young people interviewed, boys and girls aged 14 or older, are unanimously in favour of coeducation in the Venture Scout age section.

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Feeling at ease with a new group of people and feeling that one belongs to that group can often be a source of difficulty for the young people. A continuous effort has to be made as the group's composition is not static. The views on what factors helped the young people to feel that they belonged to the group vary. Some of the factors mentioned are: knowing others upon arrival, getting to know a small group (patrol/team) first, or being helped by the senior members. The factor most often mentioned is the fact of sharing a wide variety of experiences with others over a period of time. Camps and the regularity of meetings appear to play an important role in this respect. Some found it easier to feel integrated in Venture Scouts than in Scouts.

Around two-thirds of the Venture Scouts feel that the friendships made through Scouting are deeper than with school friends. Contributing factors are the fact that they have "grown up" together, the fact of having got to know each other through a wide variety of situations over time, the feeling of sharing the same values or outlook on life, including an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. As the young people interviewed had already been in the groups for a year, it is possible that those who found it difficult to adapt to group life had already left. A couple of young people were thinking of leaving, for a variety of reasons.

The constructive atmosphere and quality of the relationships appear to be an important factor in helping young people to develop through their Scout experiences as there is a synergy created by the dynamic interaction between the progressive acquisition of skills, attitudes, etc.

and the development of relationships and a sense of belonging. In other words, the feeling of security, self-esteem and motivation are enhanced through the relationships developed, which encourage the young people to progress in their skills and undertake more ambitious projects, responsibilities, etc., which also contribute to their self-esteem and confidence. Through the meaningful experiences undertaken together, the relationships are reinforced; the young people can explore with others the meaning and value of those experiences and relationships, and so on.

The senior members play an important role in helping to “show the ropes” to the younger members, helping them to feel part of the group, respecting the code of living and sharing the skills and experience that they have gained. The senior members are also expected to assume a greater level of responsibility. Some comments indicate that the senior members help the younger ones to “mature”. The younger members look up to the senior members, as they have experience and skills that they wish to acquire, but do not consider them as role models or as examples to follow. In the older age groups, there appears to be a greater awareness of the qualities required to be a good team leader, and not all team leaders are appreciated to the same degree, particularly those with an “authoritarian” attitude. Stronger friendships tend to develop between young people of approximately the same age. In some cases, the senior members become aware of the difference in the level of “maturity” between the youngest members and themselves and feel less satisfaction with group life.

The young people in the boys-only Scottish Scout troop (and the leader) and some of the Venture Scouts are more or less reserved about introducing coeducation in the Scout age section. The majority of the comments indicate that they feel that girls would “slow down” the troop, or that girls would not enjoy the same kind of activities and therefore the scope of activities would be restricted. Nonetheless, these young people are in favour of coeducation in the Venture Scout age section.

All of the young people in the coeducated Venture Scout units express positive views about being in a coeducational unit. The advantages described indicate a complementarity in approaching situations and problems; within the context of a project approach, each person can choose aspects of activities in accordance with their personal talents and interests; the relationship of trust developed through the coeducational context helps some young people to overcome apprehension about undertaking challenges, to feel greater confidence in expressing themselves, etc. They also point out that the relationships developed and their understanding of each other are more positive than in the school context. There is nonetheless a higher level of appreciation expressed by the young people in the group in which over a third of the group is composed of girls, compared to the other in which girls are much more in the minority.

## PART II, CHAPTER III

# PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF THE ADULT LEADERS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As the desire and need for greater autonomy grows, adolescents seek reference points other than parents. Changes in society are making it increasingly difficult for adolescents to find the kind of reference points that used to be provided by the extended family, community life, and other sources. Adults whom they perceive as imposing authority, whether parents, school teachers or others, tend to be rejected.

In Scouting, adult leaders have a crucial and highly demanding role to play. Baden-Powell wrote of the Scout leader's role<sup>61</sup>:

*"... The Scoutmaster has to be neither schoolmaster, nor commanding officer, nor pastor, nor instructor..."*

*"... He has got to put himself on the level of the older brother, that is, to see things from the boy's point of view, and to lead and to guide and give enthusiasm in the right direction."*

This chapter is therefore intended to explore the role played by the adult leaders, the different facets of the relationships developed between the young people and the leaders, the qualities deemed important and any perceived influence on the development of young people.

The young people were presented with a series of role images and asked to indicate to what degree they thought that the various roles proposed corresponded to their leaders. They were also asked what they expected from the leaders, and were encouraged to talk about their relationships with them.

The role images presented were: "older brother/sister", "friend", "teacher", "figure of authority", "adviser", "confidant", "organiser", a "model or example to follow", "guide". In addition, the role image of "parent" was presented to the Venture Scouts. Similarly, the role image of "idol" was presented to the Scottish Scouts. The leaders and parents were also presented with these role images and asked to comment on the subject to determine the differences in perception.

### 2. THE LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THEIR ROLES

In the three groups, the definition that the leaders give of their role and a number of points that they raise are similar, although they each put an emphasis on different aspects according to their personalities and experience.

They all consider that their role implies being an adviser and guide, ensuring that the young people are as self-sufficient as possible. They find it important to encourage the group and each young person to be as ambitious in their undertakings as possible, and to maintain the level of "excellence" that established the "reputation" of the troop or unit. Talking about his role vis-à-vis the team leaders of his group, one of the leaders states:

*"I see it more as a sort of guide, just sort of showing them what kind of things they can do and what they can achieve."*

---

<sup>61</sup> "Aids to Scoutmastership", R. Baden-Powell, World Brotherhood Edition, Canada, 1945.

Despite the fact that the leaders in the different groups agree on the role images of “guide” and “adviser”, they nonetheless view these roles from different perspectives. The Belgian leaders feel that this involves mainly coordination, whereas the French and Scottish unit/ troop leaders see this more from the point of view of organising activities and teaching practical skills. In accordance with these different perspectives, the French and Scottish leaders attach great importance to their personal involvement in organising and preparing activities and they spend nearly all their leisure time doing this. In the Belgian group, the tasks are more spread out amongst the leadership team and the leaders try to delegate as much as possible of the organization to the young people.

They all feel that it is important to get to know and understand the young people, and to be able to communicate with them.

The notion of leader implies maintaining a balance between authority to ensure that the code of living of the group is respected, and being close to the young people to motivate them. The balance is different in the three groups.

### 3. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S REACTIONS TO THE ROLE IMAGES

Table 1a

Scout leader's role : Young people's perceptions

	Role perceived	Friend	Adviser	Organiser	Model	Guide
BELGIUM	Yes	100% (7)	86% (6)	-	14% (1)	67% (4)
	More or less	-	14% (1)	50% (3)	71% (5)	33% (2)
	No	-	-	50% (3)	14% (1)	-
FRANCE	Yes	50% (8)	81% (13)	69% (11)	31% (5)	79% (11)
	More or less	31% (5)	12% (2)	25% (4)	69% (11)	7% (1)
	No	19% (3)	6% (1)	6% (1)	-	14% (2)
SCOTLAND	Yes	20% (2)	100% (8)	100% (8)	88% (7)	100% (6)
	More or less	30% (3)	-	-	-	-
	No	50% (5)	-	-	12% (1)	-

Table 1b

Scout leader's role : Young people's perceptions

	Role perceived	Confident	Authority- /Figure	Big Brother	Parent	Teacher	Idol
BELGIUM	Yes	67% (4)	29% (2)	33% (2)	14% (1)	17% (1)	N/A <sup>62</sup>
	More or less	33% (2)	71% (5)	50% (3)	-	17% (1)	
	No	-	-	17% (1)	86% (6)	66% (4)	
FRANCE	Yes	20% (3)	63% (10)	-	6% (1)	13% (2)	N/A
	More or less	27% (4)	25% (4)	14% (2)	50% (8)	31% (5)	
	No	53% (8)	12% (2)	87% (13)	44% (7)	56% (9)	
SCOTLAND	Yes	22% (2)	80% (8)	-	N/A	80% (8)	11% (1)
	More or less	11% (1)	10% (1)	10% (1)		10% (1)	11% (1)
	No	67% (6)	10% (1)	90% (9)		10% (1)	78% (7)

### 3.a "Guide" and "adviser"

The role images selected by the young people interviewed in the three groups on this aspect which appear as the greatest common denominator are "adviser" (81% - 100%), and by extension, "guide" (67% - 100%). These two role images coincide with those chosen by the leaders.

According to the young people's comments, the role of adviser and guide is mainly associated with the Scouting context (help with difficulties arising with activities or skill-learning), and does not normally extend beyond this context. In the event of personal problems, they would normally confide in or consult friends of the same age, or others with whom they have established a very close relationship.

*"Maybe [a leader] is kind of an adviser, but you have to get on well with him, more for [help] with doing things or thinking of camp activities, to*

<sup>62</sup> Not applicable: The option was not offered in the Belgian or French groups.

*give ideas, but not necessarily in my private life or in studies. Maybe if we have problems with our parents, we could ask their advice but it's not the specific role of a Scout leader, I'd rather do that with someone else... More with friends or someone in the family."*

### 3.b "Older brother"

The image of "older brother" did not seem to be a close definition of the leaders' role as it was only chosen in the Belgian group, and by only a third of the respondents. The leaders and the majority of parents did not find that this image corresponded either. Nonetheless, the qualities that the majority of young people mention as being important in a Scout leader and the kind of relationship they seek tend to correspond to the concept of "older brother" described by Baden-Powell.

### 3.c "Teacher"

- The members of the Venture Scout units

The young respondents in the Venture Scout units clearly reject the role image of "teacher". For them, "teacher" is associated with someone who imposes authority and is very cold and distant. Only a couple of young people mention an example of a teacher whom they felt was understanding and willing to talk with them.

*"Teaching is a profession, it's his job. He's paid to do it. Whereas a Scout leader, he's the one who wants to do it. It's a wish, it's a choice, not an obligation. The teacher might well not like us."*

*"No, a teacher is really someone behind a desk, and that's not my image of Scouting. The teacher tells us about things, whereas the leader takes part in what we do, he's really with us. The teacher is a complete outsider, he's not really a friend, he's not close to us at all."*

*"If someone annoys a teacher, he'll make him do extra hours after school, it's always that way. A Scout leader isn't like that."*

Several leaders who lead other Scout units in the area and who have both an experience of leading a Scout unit and of teaching in school agree with the young people's view that the relationships developed in the school context are much more distant than in Scouting.

In addition, the young people find that what their school teachers teach is generally very abstract, far from the daily worries and personal interests of the young people. The majority of the young people find learning through observation and practical experience much more efficient than the theory-based teaching in school. The leaders accompany the young people in the learning process by



guiding and advising them, but also by showing them concretely how to go about various tasks.

*"Everything [the leader] asks us to do, he explains what needs to be done, and then if you can't manage it, he comes and does it with you, and like that the next time you can do it."*

While this method is sometimes used in formal education, the main difference is that, in Scouting, the leaders are not the only people who "know", as they rely considerably on the senior members of the group to pass on their know-how to the young people.

- The members of the Scottish Scout troop

In contrast, 80% of the young respondents in the Scottish troop, their parents and leader mention the role image of "teacher" in connection with the troop leader. Their comments indicate that this is because the leader teaches them practical skills. The main difference between their school teachers and the Scout leader is that the leader's main objective is to develop the skills of the senior members so that they can take over leading some of the activities.

*"He's got to keep control all the time... At the same time he's got to be a good teacher and approachable. Teaching is one of the main things that he does, even if it's just teaching patrol leaders how to look after the younger Scouts. You therefore don't have to control everything yourself, you can let the patrol leaders control the patrols which probably happens in [our troop] so it doesn't all land on the leader."*

### 3.d "Model or example to follow"

Baden-Powell believed that the Scout leader could have an influential impact on the development of the young person. In his writings he warns Scout leaders of their responsibility to set a personal example to the young people whose attitudes and behaviour were likely to be inspired by, or modelled on, those of the leader.

*"It is easy to become the hero as well as the elder brother of the boy... The Scoutmaster who is a hero to his boys holds a powerful lever to their development, but at the same time brings a great responsibility on himself... His mannerisms become theirs, the amount of courtesy he shows, his irritations, his sunny happiness, or his impatient glower, his willing self-discipline or his occasional moral lapses - all are not only noticed, but adopted by his followers<sup>63</sup>."*

---

<sup>63</sup> "Aids to Scoutmastership", R. Baden-Powell, World Brotherhood Edition, Canada, 1945.

- The members of the Venture Scout units

Whether or not the young people of Baden-Powell's day ever really did consider their Scout leader as a hero, the comments of the young people interviewed in the Venture Scout units indicate clearly that they reject the idea of modelling themselves on their leaders<sup>64</sup>. Only one person in the Belgian group and a third of the respondents in the French group agree with the role image of a "model or example to follow". The majority in both groups chose "more or less" as they considered the idea from several angles.

Many of them reject this role image precisely because they strongly associate it with the idea of hero worship or of following or imitating someone blindly. To them, to do so is an indication of immaturity. The older members (16 years and older), point out that the awareness that they have developed of their own capacities to a certain degree leads to a demystification of adults and of hierarchic structures.

In the Belgian group the role image appears to have less negative connotations, although the majority still reject the idea that it applies to them. They point out that the image of an example to follow would seem more appropriate in the younger age sections (Cub Scouts, Scouts), indicating that it may have applied to them when they were younger. It is probable that when younger, the leader is, to a certain extent, a parent substitute when away from home. The leaders also feel that the role image is more appropriate in the Cub Scout and Scout age sections.

*"I find it less important to be a role model for Venture Scouts... that's my feeling. It's important at Scout age, or Cub Scout age, because when you're a Scout or a Cub Scout, away from your family, the Scout leader is a bit your only model, the only point of reference. In adolescence, they can find others around them and the leader is not necessarily the model, there are others... It also depends on the Venture Scout. Some find that they're okay the way they are, you have to leave them to it, and others who do need a model to imitate... but they quickly associate model with hero."*

For others, the idea does not appear to have negative connotations. They nonetheless point out that the model or example would not necessarily be the leader. As they become older, the circle of adults that they know increases and therefore the choice is wider.

*"You can choose the examples you want, but it's not necessarily the leader, I think it's up to each person to choose."*

Some feel that they would not want their leaders to be a model (implying a distant figure) as they feel that it is important that the leaders take part in their adventures with them.

---

<sup>64</sup> Their views on the influence of the team/patrol leaders in this area are treated in Part II, Chapter II.

*"I think that in Venture Scouts... the leader becomes part of the group and so works like the other Venture Scouts, even if he isn't in the missions. It's normal when you do an activity, he takes part like a Venture Scout."*

While they have respect for their leaders and admire their experience and skills, they seem also conscious of the fact that their leaders are human beings with their own strengths and weaknesses. They feel that the role image of a model implies a degree of perfection which they find unrealistic to expect.

*"No one is perfect. It's not easy to be a model. In any case, he has a right to make mistakes too."*

Although the young people accept that their leaders can make mistakes, they point out that the leaders must themselves observe the restrictions and rules that they ask the young people to respect, or else not seek to impose them.

Despite their general rejection of the idea of hero worship or of wishing to resemble their leaders, it appears that it is nonetheless the leaders who ensure that the young people respect the code of living and the values of the group. According to the young person quoted below, the leader reinforces this aspect in the young people's minds through personal example.

*"The Venture Scout leader, his job isn't to be a model, we shouldn't all be like him... it's to make sure that the unit works well, and to encourage a spirit. I think it's mainly them who manage to set the tone... all the time... through direct contact with the young people... through a multitude of little things, reactions to problems, how they react in certain circumstances."*

Their comments also indicate that the opportunity to be in contact with different points of reference appears to correspond to a need in the adolescents and they feel that it is important for them to be able to observe the behaviour and attitudes of their leaders and others, listen to their views and try to understand them, and then decide for themselves which aspects seem interesting or meaningful, and which aspects they reject. In this sense, therefore, it is possible that the leaders (amongst others) serve as a sounding-board in the construction of their identity.

*"Examples... not really... people who do good things... We can take inspiration, but as we have become aware of our own values, we know what we can and want to do. So we try not to be like someone else... well, I hope so, because everyone is different."*

*"Of course there are people you admire, you think, 'wow, that's great', but whatever people do that's good or not, it still has to be [filtered] by us, [taken into consideration if it fits with] what we really are. You*

*realise that people are not always what they seem to be either, not everything is perfect. There are things people do, people that I admire a lot, but my goal in life is not to be a second 'them'. I don't want to do things based on that, but you can take inspiration from experiences, find books or ideas that are interesting... there are people that I admire, but all that goes through my own coding system. You want to live your own life."*

- The members of the Scottish Scout troop

In contrast to the Venture Scout units, over three-quarters of the young people in the Scottish Scout troop interviewed on this aspect agreed with the role images of "model" and "idol" as pertaining to their troop leader. However, the comments show clearly that it is only in the area of skills and leadership that the young Scots consider their leader as a model or as an example. They admire his ability to develop a group spirit to help his members get the best score during regional competitions. They also admire his ability to discipline and lead the group and hope to match his standards when leading their patrols. They would not, however, like to resemble him.

### 3.e "Figure of authority"

The young people interviewed in all three groups believe that the leaders have to have authority and exercise it from time to time to maintain order and a well-run group. Full agreement with the role image of "figure of authority" was predominant in the French and Scottish groups, mainly in reference to their troop/unit leader. The majority of the young people in these two groups make a distinction between the role of the leaders in general and the role of the unit/troop leader, to whom they also attribute the role image of "organiser". While the young people in the Belgian group also agree that their leaders have to have authority, many do not consider this to be a major role. This view reflects the background role of the leaders<sup>65</sup>.

The young people who have a fairly long experience of Scouting notice considerable differences in the leadership style between the younger and older age sections. While the majority of young people believe that the Scout leaders have to be able to instil respect and are the guarantors of the code of living and Scout values, the exercise of authority has to be more and more subtle and discreet as the young people get older. It appears that it is especially with the youngest (under 13 years old) that the leaders show their authority to maintain order, but that after that age they are able to obtain more from the young people by getting them to assume responsibility and by appealing to their common sense.

---

<sup>65</sup> In the same vein, it is in this group that all of the young people considered that "friend" was an appropriate role image.

It is interesting to note that the young people's analysis of the exercise of authority in the relationships between adults and adolescents tallies with studies<sup>66</sup> on the exercise of parental authority. In the early stages of adolescence, the majority of parents can still influence their children's behaviour through a direct affirmation of power (threats, punishments, or promises of rewards). As the young people grow up, however, many parents find that a direct affirmation of power no longer obtains the desired results, and have to reason with their youngsters and explain the reasons underlying the requests for a change of behaviour. The efficiency of parental control depends then on their aptitude to discuss and negotiate, on the degree to which the family's values have been internalised by the young people, on the legitimacy that the adolescents attribute to parental authority and on the moment at which the adult intervenes. In this respect, there is a very clear parallel with the change in Scout leaders' exercise of authority according to the different age sections.

*"In Cub Scouts, because we're a bit silly, you have to establish order. In Scouts, we still need it, but in Venture Scouts not much. Well placed remarks make us think and understand."*

*"In Venture Scouts, you only see authority when it's needed. In Scouts, you always have to shout. In Cub Scouts, you don't even realise, you obey. In Venture Scouts, it's more the councils."*

This parallel also seems to extend to the impact of concrete rewards. In the Scottish group, progression is recognised by badges and awards. While this practice seems fairly motivating, one of the assistant leaders remarks that badges tend to motivate the young people less and less as they get older. When they first arrive in the troop, some of them will make a considerable effort to be awarded a badge and try to accumulate as many as possible. However, in the majority of cases, their interest dies down as time goes by and the leaders have to find other ways of motivating them<sup>67</sup>.

While the leaders' authority is seen as a necessary element to face problems and calm things down when the need is felt, as the young people mature, behaviour is also regulated by the group. In the older age sections, the young people become more autonomous and develop self-discipline which makes the use of authority less necessary. The young people all admit that the leaders must have authority, but insist that it is only useful when exercised sparingly. The young people's comments indicate that if they listen to their leaders and senior members, it is primarily because they sense mutual respect. The young people respect the experience and skill of their elders and themselves feel listened to and respected as individuals.

---

<sup>66</sup> "Adolescents facing the Future" (unpublished), L. Huberman, M. Tra Bach, WOSM Research & Development Committee, Geneva, 1990.

<sup>67</sup> Badges do not appear to be a major incentive in the older French group either, and are not used at all in the Belgian group.

*"No, I don't think that the leader should be a figure of authority. If he orders people about, after a while the Venture Scouts will get fed up with it. When they say something, it's justified, something needed to be said. If a leader thinks that something would be better done this or that way, there's a reason, but we can still express our own ideas."*

*"Authority... it depends. We respect the senior members and the leaders, and the senior members respect the newcomers, it's all in the group. But if the leader couldn't make himself listened to, there's no use in being a leader. Authority is necessary, even if just a little."*

They clearly differentiate between the control exercised by their Scout leaders and that exercised at school or by parents as they feel that their leaders are less protective than their parents and more open to negotiation than either their parents or school teachers.

It is particularly in the Scottish group that the notion of discipline is highly valued. The majority of young people and their parents strongly approve of this characteristic which, in their opinion, is one of the reasons for the success of their troop.

*"I think he is a very strict leader. He knows what he's doing and he does what he's meant to be doing. I'd miss the discipline that he imposes on us... I think we're lucky to have such a well-disciplined troop."*

*"He's got to keep control all the time. He's got to be quite strict. You can see other troops in this district who completely muck around and are no good and they don't get anything out of it."*

At the same time, the assistant leaders in the Scottish group point out that encouragement and friendship are an essential part of their role in order to maintain the long-term motivation of the young people.

*"I suppose another [characteristic of our work] that you could give to Jeremy and myself is encouragement, perhaps, because everybody goes through points where they get a bit fed up and you need somebody to talk to."*

### 3.f "Organiser"

In the French and Scottish groups a number of young people attribute the role image of "organiser" to their unit/troop leaders as they do most of the work concerning the organization and launching of activities and projects.

Nonetheless, the majority of young people in all three groups feel that there is a real sharing of tasks and feel involved in decision-making. They feel that their leaders are helping them to develop and put into practice their own ideas.

*"Organization is what we do in the council, it's not just with the leaders, it's with everyone. Of course Marc has loads of contacts, it's thanks to him that we can do things. He's involved for 95%, but the little we do is valuable, because without him we couldn't do it, but without us, he wouldn't do anything."*

*"It's often Marc who has the ideas, but from his ideas we have other ideas which come to us and then we put all our ideas together. He makes us develop our ideas. What I appreciate the most is his patience, he always listens to us. When we don't agree, he listens to us. He has an idea about what should be done, but at the same time as having his idea, he wants to get our ideas and he tries to talk them through because, really, he's there for us, he's not there for himself. A leader, especially in Scouting, he's there to please the kids, he brings the basic idea, but most of the time we add our own ideas and if his main idea doesn't appeal to us we cross it off."*

The majority point out that as they get older they have more and more margin for initiative and feel that they are given more responsibility.

*"They're more facilitators than leaders. We're more autonomous, we have more of a say, we're each responsible for the others. We're more independent, the leaders are there to advise us, and not to tell us what we have to do, so we try to find what we have to take care of."*

In the Belgian group, where the young people do a considerable proportion of the work in organising their projects and running the group, a few young people remark at a different point in the interviews that the extent of responsibility that they have to shoulder can sometimes be overwhelming for them.

### 3.g "Parent"

According to a number of young people in the Venture Scout units, the role image of parent would seem to a certain extent to be valid for the junior sections (Cub Scout, Scout), but primarily as a responsible adult to turn to and in the sense of ensuring their security.

*"In Cub Scouts, for security, don't put your hands in electrical sockets and all that, otherwise, I'd say not really."*

Even though the educational values developed in the Scout environment are very close to those in their family environment, the young people in the Belgian and French groups point out that the relationship with their leaders is very different from the relationships with their parents.

*"It's different, they don't act as parents. They are closer to us, they're there to put the breaks on when it's needed, so that things don't go too*

*far. Their role isn't at all that of parents, but the education is never really opposed to that of our parents."*

They tend to feel that their leaders are less protective and more open to negotiation than their parents. They thus feel that they have more opportunities to develop and enjoy a greater level of autonomy than at home. The comments also indicate that they feel that the leaders listen more to them and consider that they receive a greater level of support and understanding from them.

*"I wouldn't like to have my parents as Scout leaders, it would be a pain. I would like my parents to let me have a bit of freedom, grow up a bit by myself, launch me into independence, you know... because always having your parents right behind you, when you grow up, it's a bit of a pain."*

#### 4. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR LEADERS

##### 4.a Differences in relationships

The comments indicate that the relationships developed between the young people and the leaders are different in the three groups. The majority of the young people who perceive their relationships with their leaders as being close are those whose leaders are relatively close in age to the young people. It is particularly in the Belgian group where the difference in age between the whole of the leadership team and the young people is little that the leaders are unanimously considered as friends and even in some cases as confidants. In the groups where the unit/troop leader is older, the young people tend to feel closer to the senior youth members (patrol/team leaders and their assistants) and the youngest adults (assistant leaders), as the older leaders seem fairly intimidating particularly in the beginning.

However, although there initially appears to be a correlation between age and closeness of relationship, a number of other factors, or a combination of them, may also contribute: personality, leadership style and ways of working. The ways of working in the French and Scottish groups are similar in the fact that the groups operate according to a hierarchic structure in which the team/patrol leaders play a role of intermediaries between the members and the unit/troop leaders. It is also in these two groups that the role image of "organiser" and "figure of authority" were mentioned by some of the young people referring to the leader in charge. Another indicator that age is not the only factor is the fact that the young people in the Belgian and French groups feel very close to their chaplains who are considerably older than the young people (one is aged 50, and the other 40).



#### 4.b Development of relationships over time

The majority of the young people interviewed feel that the relationship with their unit/troop leaders has become closer through activities undertaken together over time and the greater contact thus developed. They have the impression that their leaders have got to know them fairly well, and get on well with them. Those who at first felt intimidated no longer hesitate in asking them for help or for their advice.

*"I know him better than at the beginning of the year, I'm less scared to ask him things than before."*

*"Originally when I went into the troop, Alex was very much made out to be a figure, and you only went up to him with good reason. But as I sort of progressed up through the troop and met him and started to see him outside the troop meetings, I got to know what he was like, so my ideas changed an awful lot. I think he changed a wee bit. He finds it easier to talk to the Scouts now. In addition I think you find it easier to talk to Alex as you get older in the troop because you just meet him anyway. Now I think he's really great."*

*"He knows everyone. He puts everything in its right place. He manages to get to know us by observing us during the activities and meetings. He sees how we behave, he analyses it, he sees our character... We<sup>68</sup> give him additional information, it adds to his analysis... it can also come from the other team members."*

For the young people aged 13-14 and above, what they appreciate the most is the fact that they feel listened to and supported by their leaders. The senior members find that the relationship with their leaders tends to become more on an equal footing, especially those who are involved in helping to run the group.

#### 5. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE LEADERS' LEVEL OF EXPECTATIONS

Compared to the other Scout troops or units that they know, the young people feel that the leaders have relatively high expectations of what their troop or unit can achieve. Nevertheless, the majority of young people feel that the expectations of the leaders are adapted to each young person and that they contribute to stimulating each person to progress and to become more and more personally involved in the life of the groups. In this perspective, the senior members of the troop or unit who have more experience are expected to participate much more to help the younger members to develop the skills that they themselves have been able to acquire. The leaders are also more demanding of those who are in a position of responsibility, but in compensation they have much closer relationships. Even though the patrol/team leaders and assistants have relatively privileged relationships

---

<sup>68</sup> "We" refers to team leaders/assistant team leaders.

with their leaders, the other members of the group do not seem to consider this as a sign of favouritism.

*"He is definitely more demanding. Everything we do, he always wants it to be done better. It has to be practically perfect. It's normal, we're older."*

*"They ask more of the senior members than of the newer members because they are experienced in Venture Scouting. Otherwise we're all treated more or less the same."*

## 6. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS CONCERNING THE IDEAL LEADER PROFILE

### 6.a Guidance and support

The young people's comments indicate that the leaders have an important role to play in helping them to develop through accompanying them in the various experiences of life that they encounter through Scouting and helping them to make sense of those experiences. They see the leader as someone who stimulates the group, helps each person to discover or pursue talents and interests, to set themselves individual and group challenges and goals and to help them to acquire the skills to achieve those goals.

*"He teaches us to live as a group. He helps us, but, well, he's not so much an example [in the sense that] we want to be like him. He helps us to be what we want to be."*

*"It's not the leader who necessarily knows everything. In fact his role is to go further with everyone, and to try to understand what is going on in the group, solve problems so that everyone is at their best in the activities. He talks to make ideas come forth."*

### 6.b A balance between friendship and authority

The young people believe that the leaders have to be close to the young people and support them with their projects while maintaining sufficient authority to be respected and listened to. The remarks indicate that the essential role of the leaders is to motivate the group while ensuring that the code of living and values are respected, but that the right balance has to be found. The leaders have to keep a hold on the group without being too strict. The ideal is considered to be above all a "friend" as it is especially the closeness that helps to motivate them, to help them internalise the group's values, to become completely involved in the projects and to push the young people to achieve more.

*"First of all they're people who are in the same boat as us. They're friends who are there to make sure everyone's rowing in the same direction. There has to be some distance, but the shorter the better. Obviously, if it's too short, it won't work."*

*"I see the leader as someone really close to the Venture Scouts. But I don't think that's the case in all the units. I think that if I had to sum up how I see the leader, I'd see him as someone who points out the direction, who motivates the group and as someone really close. I think that's the ideal."*

*"I think he should be kind but not too soft, fairly strict and understanding. He should know how to handle the Scouts otherwise meetings will just end as rabble."*

*"They have to be at every meeting, not too strict, easy-going but not too much. If things get out of hand, they say so. I find them easy-going but not too much. They dot the 'i's when necessary, if they didn't the project would flop."*

*"Sort of in between authority and a friend. Authority when necessary. He's got to respect Scouts. He doesn't want to give orders without doing anything himself."*

According to the comments made by the majority of the young people, an essential characteristic of a good leader is the desire to understand them, and the ability to listen and communicate with them as equals.

*"You have to be able to understand others, know each person's character, know how he will react, be able to listen to others and then help them. You can't give too many orders."*

*"To be a good leader, you have to be able to listen to others, you can't take decisions all alone. You also have to make yourself heard, because if you don't have any authority, the team members will just do as they please, it can be chaos."*

The leaders fully agree with this point of view. The Scottish leader, for example, feels that his relationship with the young people has evolved over time as he realised that his attitude used to be sometimes too severe and distant and that he always achieved better results when he was more flexible and friendly. He attaches great importance to self-discipline but he has become more tolerant and understanding. He tries to take into account as far as possible the particular difficulties of the young people as he has realised that misbehaviour or signs of rebellion are often the sign of a need for attention.

*"I think it has to be a balance between respect and wanting to share their company. The Scout leader has to be fun and has to be respected, and that is the sort of balance that took me 15 years to learn. I think when you understand why the boys are behaving badly, you can tolerate it and you can try to handle things differently. Usually the simplest way is just showing a little more interest in the boys and they can change very quickly."*

## 6.c Partnership

Many of the comments made by the young people, particularly by the senior members, indicate that they seek a sense of partnership with their leaders. They appreciate feeling that everyone in the group is working towards achieving the goals and several comments indicate that they enjoy the fact that their leaders join in their adventures with them.

They also seek a sense of partnership with their leaders in making decisions, planning and organising their projects and activities, and in the running of their groups.

In all three groups, the majority of the senior members have developed an awareness of the active role that they have to play in assisting the leaders to maintain the “spirit” of the group and to encourage the younger ones to understand and adhere to the group’s values and the code of living.

*“Sharing [an ideal]... is more all of us together when we’ve acquired a certain outlook and we try to experience things together, but it’s not really like handing over power... Each person takes his share of responsibility, the leaders have their role to fulfil, but they have to be seconded by the senior members.”*

## 7. A FEW CRITICISMS OF THE LEADERS

The majority of the young people’s comments describe the characteristics that they appreciate the most in their leaders and the positive relationship that they have with them. Like the parents, the young people talk much less about the aspects they like less. The majority do not seem to have a problem in “getting on” with their leaders, although they admit feeling closer to some rather than others.

In the three groups, the most frequent reproach concerns what they feel to be too much of a tip in the balance of the relationships towards the use of authority. While they unanimously recognise the legitimacy of their leaders’ authority, some feel that their troop or unit leader tends to be too severe or too demanding concerning discipline. This characteristic is seen as both negative and positive by the young people at different points in the interviews. In one group, for example, some young people state that what they appreciate the most is their leader’s capacity to discipline the troop as it enables them to achieve better results during district competitions, but they also reproach the fact that he is strict. The comments indicate that most of the time, the young people do not notice this ambivalence, but in some cases they are perfectly conscious of it and admit that their reactions to some of their leaders reflect fairly contradictory feelings. On the one hand, they appreciate the leaders’ “toughness” with them as they feel that the leaders stimulate them to react and to develop their personal potential, but sometimes they find it difficult to accept.

*"Sometimes Marc is a bit annoying with me, sometimes I detest him, but I think that if he does that, it's also to train me a little, then I learn to react, I'm a bit more lively than before. If he were too kind, I would like him, but I wouldn't progress."*

While the majority of young people state that their leaders give them a relatively large margin of autonomy and initiative and feel that their opinions are taken into account, some of the senior members (particularly in the groups with a hierarchical structure) feel that the leaders have too great a control over the organization of the group. They also feel that they have less say in the final decisions and would like a greater margin for initiative. This reproach is mainly expressed by the young people who have responsibilities in the group and are reaching the end of the cycle.

*"He's a 'hyper-boss'. I feel that he does too much and he doesn't let the others do enough. When you feel like taking initiative, the brakes are put on. Good ideas, he takes them and he manages them, but some people don't particularly seek to take initiative. When I was under him, I just went along with most things."*

In the groups where the leaders are more demanding, particularly concerning the intensity of personal commitment and punctual, regular attendance at meetings, the young people tend to feel a certain lassitude and want more time to be able to do things other than Scouting.

A few of them (2 or 3 in each group) left the Movement. Some left because they found it difficult to invest the amount of time and energy expected, especially as they were finding school work difficult and their parents were either pressuring them to devote themselves totally to their studies or to find a leisure activity that required a lesser time commitment. According to some comments, others left because of conflicts of personality with their leaders. The disagreements were most often connected to discipline and what was experienced did not correspond to the personality or expectations of the young people.

## 8. OVERALL APPRECIATION OF THE LEADERS

In the three groups, the young people unanimously consider that they have high quality leadership teams. The motivation they have developed for the activities and the long-term commitment to Scouting is largely due to the quality of the leaders they have known. Even though through time, the young people take an increasing amount of responsibility for their projects and activities, the leaders' involvement seems important to them, as it is thanks to their availability, experience, ability to mobilise and to channel the groups' energy that they have been able to set themselves more and more ambitious objectives and to overcome obstacles with more efficiency. It is especially in the French and Scottish groups that the young people see their unit/troop leaders as essential cogs and almost irreplaceable. It is thanks to their

very great personal involvement, their ability to organise, their experience, their devotion to the young people and for Scouting that the reputation of their Scout unit/troop has developed and has been maintained for a number of years. Their succession seems very difficult to assure and everyone (parents, young people and other members of the leadership team) point out that the troop or unit would change profile if the leaders left.

*"It's true that if I like Scouting it's partly because of the leaders. If they had been leaders who led us blind-folded, I think I would have left a long time ago."*

*"[If the leader were to leave] I think [the troop] would go way downhill because we probably wouldn't get a leader as good."*

*"We don't think Marc does everything, but sometimes between us Venture Scouts, we think that if Marc weren't there, it wouldn't be the same thing. We'd do activities once a month or once every six months, it wouldn't be the same. I wonder what would happen to us if there were a different leader for activities. Without him, I find it difficult to imagine, it wouldn't be as well known. People like Marc don't grow on trees. It's true that a lot are just so-so."*

*"We run the unit, but not completely. If Marc weren't in the unit, it wouldn't work at all. He's an essential piece of the unit. If he weren't there, there would be a lot of things that would change, discipline, organization. He knows people, we can get to do loads of things through him, he has a lot of contacts, it makes the challenges easier."*

*"When he speaks, it does something to people, it's not what he says, but it's his personality, we could never replace him."*

## 9. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS

### 9.a General

On the whole, the parents' perceptions concerning the leaders' role and the main characteristics with which they agree and those they reject tally with those mentioned by the young people.

In the Scottish group, the main roles on which both the young people and the parents agree are "organiser", "authority" and "teacher", whereas in the Belgian group the predominant role images selected by both are "friend", "guide" and "adviser".

On the other hand, in the French group, the parents selected mainly the role images of "adviser" and "figure of authority", whereas their children had chosen "figure of authority" to a lesser extent than "adviser", "guide" and "organiser".

The main role images rejected are “older brother” particularly in the French and Scottish groups, the roles of “parents” in all three groups and “teacher” in the Belgian and French groups.

Table 2a

Scout leader's role : Parents' perceptions

	Role perceived	Friend	Adviser	Organiser	Model	Guide
BELGIUM	Yes	92% (11)	63% (5)	38% (3)	45% (5)	38% (3)
	More or less	-	25% (2)	13% (1)	45% (5)	50% (4)
	No	8% (1)	13% (1)	50% (4)	9% (1)	13% (1)
FRANCE	Yes	20% (2)	44% (4)	33% (3)	22% (2)	38% (3)
	More or less	30% (3)	22% (2)	44% (4)	78% (7)	50% (4)
	No	50% (5)	33% (3)	22% (2)	-	13% (1)
SCOTLAND	Yes	40% (8)	45% (9)	100% (20)	45% (9)	56% (9)
	More or less	15% (3)	30% (6)	-	25% (5)	25% (4)
	No	45% (9)	25% (5)	-	30% (6)	19% (3)

Table 2b

## Scout leader's role : Parents' perceptions

	Role perceived	Confidant	Authority- /Figure	Big Brother	Parent	Teacher	Idol
BELGIUM	Yes	11% (1)	42% (5)	40% (4)	14% (1)	13% (1)	-
	More or less	11% (1)	42% (5)	30% (3)	-	13% (1)	16% (1)
	No	11% <sup>69</sup> (1)	16% (2)	30% (3)	86% (6)	75% (6)	84% (5)
FRANCE	Yes	38% (3)	60% (6)	-	6% (1)	-	-
	More or less	12% (1)	20% (2)	-	50% (8)	30% (3)	12% (1)
	No	50% (4)	12% (1)	100% (9)	44% (7)	70% (7)	88% (7)
SCOTLAND	Yes	-	100% (20)	-	N/A <sup>70</sup>	67% (12)	15% (3)
	More or less	33% (6)	-	-		22% (4)	10% (2)
	No	67% (12)	-	100% (20)		11% (2)	75% (15)

## 9.b Diverging perceptions between parents and young people

- “Figure of authority” (all three groups)

Concerning the role of “figure of authority”, it would seem that the parents in all three groups attribute more importance to this aspect than the young people who tend to point out mainly the roles of “adviser” and “guide”.

- “Model or example to follow” (Belgian and Scottish groups)

In the Belgian group, a greater proportion of parents (45% against 14% of the young people questioned) attribute a role of “model” to the leaders, whereas the situation is reversed in the Scottish group (88% of

<sup>69</sup> 66% of the Belgian parents replied “don't know” to this question.

<sup>70</sup> Not applicable: This was not offered as an option.



the young people compared to 45% of the parents). Nonetheless, the comments indicate a convergence of opinion as to the fact that the young people do not seek to base their behaviour on that of their Scout leaders.

The parents who offered comments to support their views feel that the leaders exemplify the “Scout values” that are being promoted in the groups. On the other hand, they also believe that while the young people have respect for the leaders due to the experience that they have of life and the Scout environment, they are rarely models that the young people would like to identify themselves with completely.

The parents also point out other factors of the Scout environment which have an influence on the young people. They see the peer group as a motivating element in encouraging the young people to act and take part in the life of the group. The senior members of the group play an important role in transmitting the code of living and in integrating the young people into the structure. In Scouting, it is also the senior members to whom the youngest members would be most likely to go to when they need help or to confide in someone.

- Parents’ perceptions concerning the influence of the leaders

Some parents point out that the influence of the leaders is important in the lives of their children. They consider that this influence tends to reinforce family values. At the same time, when relations are tense between parents and their youngsters, a few examples indicate that the Scout environment can be helpful to both parents and the young people. A few young people have found that, in difficult times, they have found a listening ear in the Scout environment. On the whole, this kind of situation is relatively rare amongst those interviewed, but some parents point out the positive influence of the leaders when they wanted to discuss problems concerning their children with them. The leaders’ perception of their children has sometimes led them to have a more positive image of their children, and to see some difficulties in a new light.

The parents do not, however, perceive this aspect as one of the essential roles of the troop/unit leaders. The young people and the parents both appreciate being able to talk to the leaders, and have on occasion discussed personal or family problems, but in most cases they would probably confide in someone else.

- Parents’ perceptions concerning the leaders as a factor in the success of the groups

The parents feel that the leaders are one of the key factors in the success of the group and in the young people’s interest in Scouting. The parents also point out that, with time, each of the groups has developed a specific educational approach which is often enriched by new elements while maintaining a certain continuity. These characteristics also contribute to the reputation and the popularity of these three groups. The leaders also feel that continuity is a key element in

the development of the Movement. Beyond the continuity offered in their own troop or unit, they also believe that the continuity offered by the framework of the Scout Group is an important factor in meeting the needs of young people.

#### 10. INFLUENCE OF THE LEADERS ON THE YOUNG PEOPLE

While neither an “agony aunt”, nor a hero, the leaders appear as an important figure in the world of the young people. They are adults who help the young people to develop and exercise their autonomy in a way that the young people often find difficult to achieve either at home or at school. At the same time, they are reassuring figures to the parents who entrust their children to them, both in terms of security and in the values that they themselves are trying to promote.

While it would be impossible to determine whether any aspects of the leaders’ personality or behaviour would actually be adopted by the young people in years to come, and despite the fact that the young people would not like to resemble the leaders, a certain number of characteristics appear to have an influence on the young people. It is the leaders who “set the tone” of what the young people experience, both individually and as a group. The high level of motivation, enthusiasm and dynamism shown by the leaders certainly contributes to motivating and enthusing the young people. The encouragement and support provided contribute to helping them to try harder and go further. The fact that they feel that, on the whole, their leaders listen to them, try to understand them, act fairly, etc., may stimulate them to try to treat others in the same way, as seen in the encouragement and support of the senior members towards the younger ones. On the other hand, it is difficult to discern whether the senior members (particularly the team/patrol leaders) help the younger members to progress or succeed in a task because they have adopted the perceived attitude of their leaders, and/or because the younger members are part of “their” team, and thus part of their success as a team/patrol leader is in ensuring that their team has an acceptable standard of achievement.

The leader’s influence also appears to be indirect. For example, while the leaders may not unanimously be considered as “friends”, the fact that most of the young people feel that they have developed close friendships amongst peers in Scouting may, in part, be facilitated by the fact that the leader has helped to develop a constructive climate in which the young people are able to develop such relationships.

Perhaps one of the keys to the influence of the leaders in these groups is summed up by one of the young people in the Venture Scout units quoted above:

*“He helps us to be what we want to be.”*

## 11. INFLUENCE OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE LEADERS

The influence of the relationships developed between the leaders and the young people on behaviour and attitudes is not limited to the young people. The most obvious impact on the leaders is the day by day readjustment to maintain communication with the young people. In certain cases the impact can be much more considerable. The Scottish troop leader, for example, points out that his leadership style and his relationships with the young people have evolved over the last ten years as a result of some of the young people.

*"When I was younger, I was much harder on the boys, much more difficult for them to deal with, much stricter, less sociable with them. Gradually over the last ten years, I've become more relaxed and less dictatorial. I actually put it down to the boys changing me rather than me changing the boys. Matt and all his friends who were patrol leaders were a very good bunch to get on with. They were totally different and they seemed to be making a point of trying to be friends with me at a very young age."*

## 12. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In all three groups, the leaders play a crucial role in ensuring that the peer group functions. In other words, the leaders ensure that the peer group operates within a structured framework within which each person is encouraged to take on a progressively greater amount of responsibility for the functioning of the group, the achievement of activities, and for helping the younger ones to progress; the leaders ensure that there is a regular flow of activities (whether set primarily by the leaders or developed by the whole group) with an educational content; they ensure that the activities are safe yet progressively widen their horizons, and are challenging and fun; they seek to motivate the young people to take part in Scouting life and the activities through a variety of means; they ensure that the code of living (which may be formal or informal) is respected; they seek to ensure that the young people cooperate and develop a feeling of belonging to the group and solidarity, respect and friendship for each other.

Despite a number of differences in personality and ways of working in the three groups, the greatest common denominator in terms of role images attributed by the leaders and the young people is "guide" and by extension "adviser". A number of the other role images chosen reflect the leader's personality and the ways of working. For example, "figure of authority" and "organiser" were chosen more frequently in the two more hierarchically structured groups, whereas "friend" and "confidant" appeared more frequently in the group in which the leaders interact with all of the young people in the unit.

The young people perceive their relationship with the leaders to be different to their relationship with their parents or teachers. They find that their leaders are less protective than their parents and more open to negotiation than either their parents or teachers. They find, however, that the basic values held to be important in their groups (i.e. being promoted by the leaders) are very similar to those of their parents.

It is especially in the older groups that the young people react strongly against the role image of “teacher”. They perceive the relationship with their leaders to be much closer whereas they find their school teachers distant and cold, uninterested in their worries or in them as individuals, and are not open to negotiation<sup>71</sup>. They find that what the leaders help them to learn and the way in which they help them is different to their school experience. They find that what they learn is based on their interests, is more concrete, has more to do with dealing with everyday life and is more enjoyable than at school. While they find that the leaders help them to learn, and give advice about how to go about the various tasks if necessary, the leaders primarily provide the framework and the opportunities for the young people to learn amongst themselves through their own experiences.

The young people’s comments indicate that although the leaders seem intimidating when the young people first arrive, the relationships with the leaders become closer through the activities undertaken together over time. Camps are often mentioned as occasions when the young people and the leaders start to get to know each other on more of a one-to-one basis.

In all three groups, the young people very much appreciate their leaders’ devotion to the group and their availability. Many express a certain admiration of their experience and *“savoir-faire”*. They find that they take into account their leaders’ views and take inspiration from the way they work, but at the same time strongly express the need to experience life for themselves and construct their own identity and reject the idea of hero-worship or of seeking to imitate their leaders in their personal lives<sup>72</sup>. For those in mid-adolescence and older, following a model has connotations of immaturity.

It is evidently beyond the scope of this study to determine whether or not the young people will eventually adopt their leaders’ values or attitudes to life. However, as the way in which Scouting is construed by the leader and presented to the young people reflects, to a certain extent, the leader’s own value system, and the vast majority of young people describe one or more “values” when asked what they believe that they have gained from Scouting, it is therefore possible that the leader does have an indirect influence in this area<sup>73</sup>.

For both the leaders and the young people, the ideal relationship between the leaders and the young people involves maintaining a balance between authority to ensure that the code of living is respected and a certain closeness to the young people and an openness to dialogue. The few criticisms concerning the leaders concern what the young people perceive to be a tip in the balance towards an excess of authority.

---

<sup>71</sup> Even though the role of teacher was chosen by a large majority in the younger Scottish group, their comments indicate that this was primarily because the leader helps them to acquire concrete skills.

<sup>72</sup> A large majority of the members of the younger group chose “model” as a role image, but their comments indicate that this primarily concerned their admiration for the leader’s ability to lead to the group and their desire to acquire the same ability.

<sup>73</sup> It should be pointed out that numerous other factors are also likely to contribute: socio-economic background, family values, personality, level of maturity, etc.

PART II, CHAPTER IV  
THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
PERCEPTIONS  
CONCERNING THE  
SCOUT PROMISE

1. INTRODUCTION

Scouting is based on principles relating to spiritual, social and personal dimensions and which represent a code of conduct to which all members of the Movement must adhere. The basic tool for the formulation of these principles in a way that is understandable to young people is a promise and law.

*"Through the promise and law, a young person makes, of his own free will, a personal commitment to a given code of behaviour and he accepts, before a group of peers, the responsibility to be faithful to the given word. The permanent identification with these ethical values, and the sustained effort to live up to those ideals to the best of his ability ("I will do my best") are therefore a most powerful instrument in the development of young people."*<sup>74</sup>

In addition, in theory at least, it can be a meaningful opportunity for the young person to become acquainted with the process of decision-making as it implies discovery (observing and experimenting with a setting in which the code of living is operational); freedom to consider options (to stay or to leave); and to accept the consequences of one's decision (adherence to the code of living or leaving). In practice, of course, there may be a number of factors which may limit the educational impact of the promise, such as peer or parental pressure, difficulties for the leader in judging how to make the promise meaningful to young people with different personalities and at different stages of maturation, etc.

The expression of the promise is adapted to the various age groups. The promise is not only made by the young person who joins Scouting for the first time, but also if and when he or she joins the next age section.

This chapter is intended as an examination, not of the ethical principles themselves, but of the role of the promise and law as part of Scouting's educational method, as seen through the eyes of the young people.

During the interviews with the young people, the question on this subject also dealt with the spiritual dimension, but the young people were requested to explain their opinions on these two subjects in turn. The Scottish group only commented on the second half of the question related to religious practice<sup>75</sup>. The leaders were also asked how important they felt these aspects to be.

---

<sup>74</sup> "Fundamental Principles", World Scout Bureau, Geneva, 1992.

<sup>75</sup> See Part II, Chapter V: The young people's views on the spiritual dimension in Scouting.

## 2. GENERAL POINTS CONCERNING THE PROMISE IN THE THREE GROUPS

In the three groups, the promise is made by each newcomer to the age section, once they have had time to become familiar with Scouting's principles and code of living through their application in everyday life in the group, and once they have been able to think about the meaning of each element with the help of their leaders and feel ready to commit themselves. The promise is often made at the end of a camp during the first year. A formal ceremony marks the occasion in the Venture Scout units, whereas it is less formal in the Scottish Scout troop.

The young people are helped to prepare themselves to make the promise in all three groups. The way in which they are helped is similar in the Venture Scout units. The young people are helped in a different way in the Scout troop as the young people are not quite 11 years old when they join.

## 3. PREPARING TO MAKE A COMMITMENT

### 3.a In the Belgian and French Venture Scout units

In the Venture Scout units, each person prepares himself/herself to make this commitment with the help of the chaplain, the leaders and the senior members of the group. Each young person is encouraged to think about the meaning of the principles and code of living in the light of his personal experiences and relationships with others and thus to determine areas for personal development.

While several young people may decide to make their promise at the same time, there is no pressure on the young person as to when this should be done as the leaders insist on the fact that it is up to each person to determine when he feels ready. When a young person does feel ready, he prepares a short text which is read out to the unit.

The Scout chaplain plays an important role in helping the young people through the process of reflection in both units. The young people in both groups feel close to their chaplains. In particular, the young people appreciate their availability and their ability to listen to them, an aptitude which some of the young people feel is not always the case in other units. In the Belgian group, the chaplain spends a day with the young people during a camp. In the French group, the chaplain holds regular meetings with the young people.

*"He was a really good chaplain. We really talked a lot with him. It helped us to think about things even more. He had time for us and if we wanted to discuss things with him, we could talk for hours."*

The senior members of the groups also assist the young people. Drafting their texts is often difficult for them and the senior members are often asked for help on what to say and how to say it. The older ones try to make them feel at ease so that they can express what they like and do not like, how they feel towards the rest of the group, etc., but they do not try to influence them.

*"It's a custom, you have to think of something to say. It's often the same thing, it's not easy to think of something original. You can't promise something that's too easy... They come to see you to ask your advice, they worry about the quality of what they're going to promise. I tell them to do it the way they feel. It's simply saying what you think of the unit, what you like, what you don't like, your problems, how you feel, rather than promising something that doesn't happen... Maybe it's the ceremony side of the promise that scares them a little."*

### 3.b In the Scottish Scout troop

The troop leader interviews each young person when he arrives to ensure that he understands the Scout law. He explains the meaning of each element through concrete examples and points out the fact that it is a serious commitment to a code of living which each Scout must do his best to respect.

## 4. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROMISE

Those interviewed in the younger Scottish troop did not offer any opinions on this subject.

The majority of the young people in the French-speaking groups (73% of the Belgian group, and 60% of the French group) consider that the promise is important for them personally and for the group. For them, making the promise means that they have decided to continue in Scouting and adhere to the code of living experienced through being in the group. They also feel that it symbolises their attachment to the group and their desire to be recognised as a fully-fledged member.

*"I did it because I felt like it - first of all because I like being in Venture Scouts."*

*"It's a commitment to yourself, the others and the group. I love promise evenings, but it's very serious."*

*"When you promise something, people count on you, they trust you, I like that."*

*"The promise is useful in the sense that you really feel part of the group once you've made it, it's a bit like an official gesture that you belong to the group, you're really with the others, I think it's important to make a point of that step, it's necessary."*

However, for about a third of the Venture Scouts, the promise is perceived more as a tradition to which they submit themselves in order to do as everyone else does and to feel accepted, rather than through personal conviction. This would indicate that, in their cases, making the promise does not seem to have fully fulfilled its educational aim.

*"I did it because everyone does it... but it's still an opportunity to think about why you're here."*

*"It wouldn't have bothered me if I hadn't made my promise. I did it because it's one of things you do, it's like a tradition... otherwise you're not really admitted into the group, it means that I've committed myself to being a Scout."*

*"I think we make the promise a bit because we feel we have to... it's just a ritual that you repeat, but you don't really think about what you're saying. You do it and then you forget about it. I think you can become part of the group anyway, you don't need the ceremony."*

## 5. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PREPARATORY PHASE

Preparing to make a commitment takes on more meaning for the older members and the comments indicate that it is in the Venture Scout age section (14-18 years) that the young people start to become aware of the importance of the promise and its implications on their personal development.

*"We accept it better in Venture Scouts because we're older, we start to become more mature, we start to realise things a bit more than when we were younger. It helps us to try and improve. Our attitudes change - I learned to take my role and activities more seriously."*

*"The promise is necessary...everything seems different. I think it must be personal. You feel that it's more important than at Scouts, you prepare it more seriously."*

Those for whom making the promise was a "significant" moment point out the importance of having had the time to discover and familiarise themselves with the way of life within the group, and the importance of having developed relationships with the members of the group through meaningful discoveries and experiences with the others. They feel that this time for experiencing life in Scouting was important as it stimulated them to think about the meaning of their experiences with others in the group, their relationships with others, and to think about why they wanted to commit themselves to Scouting and its way of life. Opportunities to discuss their thoughts with others while preparing to make the commitment enabled them to go further in their analysis, and to get to know themselves better.

*"At first, I didn't think [preparation] helped, but in fact it makes us think, it shows us things we wouldn't have thought about. It makes us discover the world of other people a little, it makes us think about certain questions from the point of view of other people and that opens our horizons. It's to make us grow up a bit, to try to change us."*



*"We spend a whole day thinking, we try to look inside ourselves... You have to try to realise who you are. It's good to do it after a year, as you realise your capacities, it's not just for Venture Scouts, it goes way beyond Venture Scouts."*

## 6. THE INFLUENCE OF THE PROMISE ON THE YOUNG PEOPLE

The majority (73% of the Belgian group, 60% of the French group) of the young people who have made their promise feel that it is a confirmation of a personal commitment and consider this step as a turning point. They were encouraged to think about themselves, to take their responsibilities more seriously and to feel more concern for others. However, the young people do not consider it as a culminating point, but rather as a starting point which stimulates personal development. They describe the promise as a step, a "bridge", "a door which you open", which suggests the idea of progress and development.

*"The promise is indispensable, it's a step in Venture Scout life... you can't gloss over it, it's a confirmation, it's a commitment in Venture Scout life."*

*"The promise is something you really think about a lot, you take a look at yourself, you really think about what's inside you and you tell others, it's important."*

*"I remember it well... When we made our promise. You understand better later. It's like a bridge, you cross a bridge to go higher."*

*"The promise is important. Before you don't know, you discover, and then you know what it is. You make a promise to stay, it means you're really here... it's like a door that you open and then you're really a Venture Scout."*

These attitudes are often more perceptible in their Scouting life, although some point out that the influence goes well beyond their life in Venture Scouting.

*"It influenced me, for example, in the promise it says that you have to help others and I do in Scouting, and outside it. I think more about it since I made my promise - not all the time, but often."*

*"It's important because it teaches the new kids to know themselves a little better, to think about yourself and the group. You think about who you are... and question yourself. You keep a lot to yourself, you try to make an effort."*

However, many admit that it is not always easy to follow the resolutions that they adopted and that after a certain time, they tend to become diluted.

*"Everyone has his faults... you try to be more careful, especially in the beginning, then it dies down."*

In this respect, as the leaders point out, council meetings play an important role through providing opportunities for the young person to take a fresh look at his development and to get off to a new start each time.

In some cases, self-examination becomes a regular practice. Self-analysis and the search for one's identity seems to correspond to a deep need in adolescents of 14-15 years and older, although in the case of the young person quoted below, it is probably also part of his character. Nevertheless, what he says underlines that Scouting life and the relationships developed within it have provided a jumping board for greater self-analysis through the opportunities for a wider experience of life.

*"You discover a little about your inner garden, it's really personal... I am sure that there are adults who don't know themselves very well. Perhaps it's the Scout experience. It's something that came quite naturally to me a few years ago, and with the Venture Scouts, I have had opportunities to put things into practice, to teach myself, to discover myself... It's an everyday thing, you can also do it in everyday life, and during Scout meetings and camps. When you're face to face with others, you get to what's real. You feel stripped of everything that's artificial, you reach your real depth, your deepest being, and that's when you get to know yourself better."*

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

While one-third of the Venture Scouts consider the promise mainly as a tradition, for the other two-thirds it symbolises their commitment to the group and to the code of living and generates a greater awareness of their personal development.

The preparation of the promise, and the fact of being accompanied during this phase both by adults and peers, is important as it often "sparks off" a process of inner reflection during which the young person is encouraged to consider the meaning and value of their experiences and relationships. Self-analysis and the search for identity appear to be particularly important to the young people aged 14-15 and older.

The fact of being in the unit for a while before preparing the promise appears to be an important element to enable them to build up the substance in terms of experiences and relationships on which to reflect.

The comments indicate that in many cases the promise (and its preparation) helps the young person to discover and better understand himself and others, and thus stimulates a desire to reflect this greater understanding in one's actions and attitudes towards oneself and others (e.g. greater tolerance). However, this tendency can be short-lived unless there are other opportunities to further stimulate reflection.

PART II, CHAPTER V

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
VIEWS ON THE  
SPIRITUAL DIMENSION  
IN SCOUTING

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental principles to which every Scout adheres is a "duty to God" which is defined as:

*"Adherence to spiritual principles, loyalty to the religion that expresses them, and acceptance of the duties resulting therefrom."*<sup>76</sup>

*"The spiritual dimension is integral to human life. It is man's search, reaching out beyond himself and his immediate experiences, towards the Transcendent, the Absolute, God. It is the appreciation of a depth of meaning and of values that is reached within and through our experiences in life."*<sup>77</sup>

In all three groups, the young people are encouraged to seek spiritual values, both through informal reflection and through religious practice.

2. APPROACHES TO THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

2.a Inner reflection

In the Belgian and French Venture Scout units, the chaplains are instrumental in helping the young people to develop their capacity for inner reflection, especially through the preparation to make their promise, and also through the Scout services<sup>78</sup> they hold. The young people's perceptions concerning the importance of the promise are treated in more depth in Part II, Chapter IV.

In the Scottish Scout troop, it is primarily the leader who, through informal discussions with the young people, encourages them to reflect on spiritual values.

2.b Religious practice in the three groups

• In the French Venture Scout unit

In the French Venture Scout unit, a Scout service is held once a month on a Friday. Working on a rota system, each young person prepares the service with the chaplain.

In addition and whenever feasible, the young people precede their weekend activities by Mass in the church of the parish where their activities are scheduled.

---

<sup>76</sup> "Constitution and By-Laws of the World Organization of the Scout Movement", World Scout Bureau, Geneva, 1990.

<sup>77</sup> "Elements for a Scout Programme," World Scout Bureau, Geneva, 1985.

<sup>78</sup> A Scout service, often called "Scouts' Own", is "a gathering of Scouts for the worship of God and to promote fuller realisation of the Scout law and promise" - "Aids to Scout-mastership", R.Baden-Powell, World Brotherhood Edition, Canada, 1945.

The young people also help out their parish church in a number of ways, particularly during the Christmas period, for example by assembling the nativity scene, collecting people to attend Christmas Mass, etc. A number of activities for the underprivileged are also organised during this period, such as an entertainment show in a home for the handicapped.

- In the Belgian Venture Scout unit

In the Belgian Venture Scout unit, a Scout service is organised with the chaplain during camps.

- In the Scottish Scout troop

Within the parish to which the Scottish Scout troop belongs, the young people take part once or twice a year in church parades, but there are no particular church services or structures aimed at spiritual reflection designed especially for Scouts.

- Church attendance outside the Scouting context

Many of the young people attend or used to attend church with their families. In some cases, religious practice within the family is on the decline.

### 3. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS

#### 3.a The young people and the quest for a spiritual meaning to life

In the Belgian and French Venture Scout units, the comments of the majority of the young people indicate a spiritual quest and a search for individual identity which is strongly rooted in the concrete experiences of everyday life.

The young people are attracted by opportunities to exchange views with others who help them to put their own experience into perspective and help them to make sense out of it. In this respect, the young people feel that they have a warm, personalised relationship with their respective chaplains, and appreciate their availability to discuss matters of importance to them.

*“The chaplain is great, he’s not at all old-fashioned. He knows what adolescents are like... He’s not a priest who comes to talk about God. We talk to him about our problems, our joys, what we got out of camp. It’s a need, but it’s more a search for yourself, concentrating to try to think.”*

In these groups, the search for a spiritual meaning to life seems to be stimulated by the process of reflection undertaken as they prepare to make their promise which, with the help of their chaplain, helps them to examine the deeper meaning of their everyday discoveries, experiences and relationships, as well as a self-examination of their attitudes, values and beliefs.

A number of the young people find that camping in nature offers opportunities for reflection and self-examination.

*"You're freer, and you come face to face with yourself more than in a building. I think that's important."*

*"You have to get away from the usual comforts, and deal with things..."*

*"[Camping's] important... because you're really close to nature, and nature is essential... If you camp in a building, you're in contact with civilisation."*

### 3.b The young people's views on church services and the observance of religious rites

While the comments of the young people in the Venture Scout units indicate that they attach importance to the spiritual dimension, the young people in all three groups express relatively little interest for church services and are rather negative about the observance of religious rites. The comments show a progressive disenchantment with religious practice in adolescence. What they criticise most frequently is the lack of an active role that they can play, the lack of dialogue between the participants and the officiating priest or minister, and a lack of coherence that they perceive between the moral precepts taught and the young people's observations and experiences of life.

*"Just being at a service, sitting on the benches, getting up, sitting down again... It's not as if praying's easy."*

*"It's passive, I went to yet another baptism, I was so bored."*

*"You often have to keep quiet, and it's always so silly to just sit in your chair and listen... I can't say it's the kind of thing that attracts me."*

*"Scout services, that's okay. It's the services outside of Scouting that I don't like... They're often nondescript, they don't put people in contact with each other and that's not good."*

*"All those rituals, I find it inept and old-fashioned. I prefer to think by myself. I do think about it. You think about such things with your best friend or someone you know really well."*

*"I feel rather that, throughout the centuries, religion has often created problems... religious wars."*

*"I used to go to Mass more before... but now I go less and less. When you grow up there are dramatic things that happen in your family... ups and downs which influence your life as a Christian... It's true that*

*today's society isn't the same as it was 20 or 30 years ago. It's not that it's completely useless... but I'd say that it bores me a little."*

*"It becomes a sort of ritual, so you just don't think about it any more."*

A couple of young people express a personal interest in religious practice, and in their case, it seems to come from a deeper personal conviction.

*"I like preparing the service. It makes a big change from all the rest... I know that I can go in a bad mood and come out very calm... I'm able to think about everything I need to think about."*

Although most of the young people tend to put in question regular church attendance and the religious principles taught as they get older, the majority seem to keep a feeling of belonging to their religious community and accept the "duty" to take part in church services, particularly when they have received religious education at school and when church attendance is a custom within the family.

*"I used to like it, I went to Mass every Sunday with my family or with the Scouts... but now it doesn't interest me any more. I don't like it much, but I still go. It's not that I'm forced to, but it's to please other people, to show that I'm there."*

*"It's more boring outside Venture Scouting. Once a month is reasonable, maybe once every two months wouldn't be enough for a movement like ours."*

*"As a Scout, I feel involved... If I hadn't been a Christian, I wouldn't have joined Catholic Scouting. You have to go, but... it bores me. I find it boring more than anything else."*

### 3.c Scout services

A little under half (47%) of the French-speaking Venture Scouts have a more positive view of Scout services when they are seen as an extension of meaningful moments spent together, and as an experience which enables them to share and communicate with others. They appreciate their chaplain's services as they have developed a way of expressing their reflections on religion using examples of the experiences that the young people have lived through together and which put an accent on the group's values. The young people feel involved as they have got to know the chaplains personally and also because the young people are actively involved in preparing the services.

*"It depends on the priests who do it... I like our chaplain, maybe because he's closer to us, maybe also because I've known him for a long time."*

*"I find [Scout services] interesting when they make you think. I remember we once had a communion like that... It was at the end of the day and everyone got together. It's sharing something."*

*"I like it when we take part in it... It's not just to read a text. It's when we do something and it's given value in the service. When we take an active part in it, then it's interesting."*

*"I think it's good that we all get together to worship God. I prefer it when we get to prepare it, everyone does something... I don't think we have too much of it."*

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

For the majority of young people who expressed their views on the spiritual dimension (mainly the Venture Scouts), the Scout experience appears to have encouraged them to develop a spiritual awareness by providing them with opportunities to seek the deeper meaning and essential values of their experiences. The chaplains play an important role in this respect.

While many of the young people accept to go to church as they feel it is an obligation, as they get older they increasingly dislike formal religious practice as they experience it. They dislike feeling passive and also feel that religious practice should help them with the questions they ask themselves as a result of their personal experiences. The younger Scottish Scouts mainly associate religious practice in Scouting with the church parades that they take part in on occasion and which are not amongst their favourite activities.

The older adolescents' comments tally with the analysis of the French social researcher, Olivier Galland<sup>79</sup>, concerning the changing attitudes towards religion in France. Galland describes the fact that religious beliefs used to be transmitted without question from one generation to the next, whereas the tendency now is that people not only want to be free to choose to adhere to a religion, but they also seek to practise it in a personalised way.

Whether or not attitudes are really changing, many of the young people's comments show the limitations of formal religious instruction and practice as a means to awaken the young person's desire to seek a spiritual dimension to life. In this respect, it is important to note that Baden-Powell's own views (expressed nearly a century ago) show that, while he believed that young people should practise their religion, he felt strongly that the first step was to capitalize on the natural curiosity and energy of the young person to guide him towards discovering a spiritual reality and essential values for himself thereby giving him *"the better foundation for that faith by encouraging in him perceptions which are understandable by him"*<sup>80</sup>.

---

<sup>79</sup> "Sociologie de la Jeunesse", O. Galland, Armand Colin Editeur, Paris, 1991.

*"The natural form in religion is so simple that a child can understand it... It comes from within, from conscience, from observation, from love, for use in all that he does. It is not a formality or a dogmatic dressing donned from outside, put on for Sunday wear. It is, therefore, a true part of his character, a development of soul, and not a veneer that may peel off.*

*Once the true body is there it can be dressed in the clothing best suited to it, but clothing without the body is a mere scarecrow - a camouflage.*

*I do not mean that by this we want to divert a boy from the faith of his father; far from it.*

*The aim is to give him the better foundation for that faith by encouraging in him perceptions which are understandable by him.*

*Too often we forget when presenting religion to the boy that he sees it all from a very different point of view from that of the grown-up." <sup>81</sup>*

Beyond the fact that Baden-Powell believed that nature was a physically healthier environment for young people than the smoky cities, he also firmly believed that spiritual awareness and reflection on essential values could be developed through the discovery of the beauties and wonders of nature and through the lessons that life in nature can provide.

*"The wonder to me of all wonders is how some teachers have neglected Nature study, this easy and unfailing means of education, and have struggled to impose Biblical instruction as the first step towards getting a restless, full-spirited boy to think of higher things." <sup>82</sup>*

It appears, however, that using nature as an educational tool to help young people to establish contact with a spiritual dimension implies more than simply any activity which takes place outside of a building.

Nature is not, however, the only means by which young people can be stimulated to reflect on spiritual values. The older adolescents interviewed often mention opportunities to analyse their experiences and relationships as having made them reflect on a deeper meaning to life and try to integrate their discoveries into everyday life.

---

<sup>80</sup> "B.P.'s Outlook", C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd. London, 1941.

<sup>81</sup> "B.P.'s Outlook", C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd. London, 1941.

<sup>82</sup> "Aids to Scoutmastership", R. Baden-Powell, World Brotherhood Edition, Canada, 1945.



PART II, CHAPTER VI  
THE YOUNG  
PEOPLE'S VIEWS  
ON HELPING OTHERS,  
COMMUNITY SERVICE  
AND CONTACT WITH  
THEIR COMMUNITY

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental principles of Scouting is a "duty to others" which groups a number of basic precepts of the Movement dealing with a person's responsibility towards society in its different dimensions. This principle is included in the formulation of the promise and law to which every Scout must do his best to adhere.

One of the aspects of "duty to others" relates to the idea of a young person learning to become an active participant in the development of society and encompasses the notion of service to others. Originally, service to others was expressed through the Good Turn, a personal, spontaneous gesture to help out someone else, intended as a practical way for the young person to integrate this concept into his system of values.

In addition to, and as an extension of, the individual gesture, community service as a collective action in favour of a group in the local or international community has become commonplace. In most Scout associations today, community service activities are incorporated into the Scout programme.

The young people were asked their opinions on the concept of "helping others" and on community service activities at different points in the interviews to determine, on the one hand, their attitude towards the concept of helping others in general and in Scouting and, on the other hand, their level of interest for service activities. Their opinions do not vary from one part of the interview to the next. Whatever initial answer option chosen, the explanations and comments made during the interviews indicate very similar views in the three groups. The young people were also asked several open questions concerning their level of contact, and level of well-being in their contacts, with the community.

2. "HELPING OTHERS" –  
A SCOUT "VALUE"

2.a General

Most of the young people state that offering their services to others is one of the basic values of Scouting to which they must adhere if they are to consider themselves Scouts. The young people who started Scouting in Cub Scouts (8-11) have been familiar with the idea since they were very young. Some remark that helping others is also considered an important value in their families. For many, it is a "moral obligation" to which one becomes more sensitive as one grows up. Some regret that the attitude of mutual assistance is not more developed and integrated into school education.

Table 1

HELPING OTHERS	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
I like a lot	40% (6)	50% (9)	85% (11)
So-so	47% (7)	50% (9)	15% (2)
I don't really like that much	–	–	–
We have to do that	13% (2)	–	–
Total	(15)	(18)	(13)

Table 2

DOING A GOOD TURN	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
I like a lot	21% (3)	33% (6)	15% (2)
So-so	71% (10)	67% (12)	85% (11)
I don't really like that much	7% (1)	–	–
Total	(14)	(18)	(13)

Many young people feel that an attitude of solidarity, a willingness to offer and receive assistance in times of need and the contact that is thus created between people is important to break down barriers of mistrust in a world they often perceive as cold and uncaring.

*"It's necessary... If you help others, others will help you, and that's really what brings people together, because we're in a world today where people don't really like each other, they don't trust each other, and that's the only way to bring people together."*

However, some of them admit that the idea of offering a helping hand does not always come as spontaneously to mind when they are with their families, or with people that they do not know, as it does in their Scouting environment.

## 2.b Helping others within the Scout community

Although in different ways, the young people in all three groups are encouraged to help each other. In the Venture Scout units, the concept is put into practice through daily life in the units, and through activities to help out the other age sections in their Scout Group. In the Scottish Scout troop, at the encouragement of the leader, the senior members are very conscious of the need to help the younger ones. The young people seem to have integrated the need to help others in general especially as a result of first-hand meaningful experiences within the small community of their troop or unit. The young people have become more aware of the positive effects that cooperation and mutual assistance within the troop/unit have on the group as a whole, on relationships within the group and on themselves as individuals. Some young people point out that irrespective of whether they enjoy the tasks involved in helping others or not, they consider that doing so is an essential aspect of community life.

*"It's important when you're in a group, you can't just think of yourself. In general in my life, I rarely force myself to do things that I don't like... but in a group, it's different. There are things you don't like at all and that you have to do, but it's fun to help others when you like the work. Anyhow, whatever you've done to help is better when you're motivated... It's easier when everyone helps each other."*

*"I like helping out... it's essential to be able to form your values. It teaches you the essential things of life... Helping others is essential in life, if you don't there are conflicts... Personally, I enjoy helping others. In the street, I don't often think about it, but sometimes it suddenly occurs to me... I like to see people happy. Nowadays, everyone's crouched in their little corner, wary of everyone."*

*"If a Venture Scout in the unit has a problem, it's kind of our role to help as he's part of the group... especially when you know him well. You have to help, it's normal, he'll appreciate it and later he'll return the favour. I like it a lot, if you don't help each other, there's no point in being in a group."*

## 3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND SERVICE IN THE THREE GROUPS

In the Belgian and French Venture Scout units, reflection on social issues, involvement in community life and services to the community constitute an important part of the programme of activities. When selecting the year's project in the Belgian group, the leaders guide the young people towards projects which will enable them to gain a greater awareness of social issues and become involved in meeting community needs. Service activities are also organised on an ad hoc basis in response to requests for assistance. In the French Venture Scout unit, numerous activities are organised throughout the year, some of which are aimed at taking an active part in community life, such as public entertainment shows; others are service activities in

response to local requests, such as helping out local charity organisations or the parish church, or in response to national appeals for various causes. Discussion evenings on various social issues with guest speakers are also organised.

In the Scottish Scout troop some service activities are organised during the year. However, the leader does not feel the need to further strengthen this dimension as the young people also have opportunities to become involved in service activities through school. On occasion, activities are organised which combine both personal challenge and service, as when four of the older Scouts in the troop (aged 15) climbed three mountains and reached three peaks on the same day to raise funds to buy the material and equipment necessary in order to make the district Scout centre accessible to handicapped youngsters.

In addition to ad hoc activities, all three groups are involved in particular service activities which have become a tradition in their respective groups. The Belgian and Scottish groups are also involved in activities to support or assist young people in the other age sections in their Scout Group<sup>83</sup>.

#### 4. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON SERVICE ACTIVITIES

##### 4.a General

Table 3

“Service to the community is not my favourite Scout activity”

Interviewees	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
Agree	6% (1)	–	50% (7)
It depends	75% (12)	56% (9)	43% (6)
Not really	19% (3)	44% (7)	7% (1)
Total	(16)	(16)	(14)

Most of the young people have reservations about the community services that they are requested to carry out. The majority admit, however, that this dimension should be in the programme of activities, but that the programme should be well balanced and the

<sup>83</sup> Further details are included in Part I, Chapter III: An overview of the activities and ways of working in each group.

activities varied so as not to only do service activities all year long. It would seem that many of the young people accept service activities largely because they are an expression of one of the values to which they promised to do their best to adhere. In this respect, some point out that others in the group might disapprove of those who do not want to take part.

*"I'm not against service activities, I'm rather in favour, but you can't do just that all day long. It's good to offer your services, but it's a bit boring... Things should be varied. Some services are pleasant, and others much less so."*

*"It's kind of the role of Scouts to help other people... If you're in Scouts, you've accepted that. If some of them didn't want to do it, we wouldn't reject them, but maybe they would be disapproved of... At Scouts, it was more amongst ourselves, at Venture Scouts there are quite a few occasions to help people when you do an "extra-job" or [when you do something] for a charity."*

A few comments indicate that individual personality may influence the level to which service activities are enjoyed.

*"I like helping people. I have a generous character... but anyway it's something you learn when you're in Scouts."*

Some point out that service activities are one of the ways of contributing to a quality public image of Scouting.

A few comments made in the younger group indicate that the main motivation to take part in such activities was to obtain a badge.

*"We washed dishes once a week for three months which was a drag, but we did it for the badge."*

In all three groups, it is the group dynamics which contribute to stimulating the young people to make an effort to provide services to the community, as many of them would not have had the opportunity or the motivation to do so if they had to take the initiative on their own.

*"Every person in the troop is from a different part of the area and we all get together if there is something to be done or whatever. You would be more likely to do it if you are in a troop than if you are on your own. You would probably not bother."*

#### 4.b Reservations concerning service activities

The young people explain their reservations concerning service activities very clearly. For many, "service" has a negative connotation of "gratuity". Many of the activities seem to be chores (cleaning, maintenance, etc.) which are seen as boring and tiresome. However, the major lack of motivation is not so much what they are asked to do, but rather the fact that many of the activities do not enable the

young people to see the direct usefulness of their action and in many cases they feel that their contribution does not seem to be appreciated, or that they are exploited.

*"It's good to offer your services, but people have to realise what we do. They can't take it for granted because we're Scouts and so it's normal to do community service. They have to appreciate what we do. I think some people have an image of Scouts that help an old lady to cross the street, and find it quite logical, and they don't even thank us any more... Otherwise, it's okay, it's part of Scouting. But that's not a reason to take it for granted."*

It is for these reasons that they particularly dislike activities such as operations aimed at collecting funds for various causes. They find that often the people they approach either in the street or through door-to-door visits tend to be cold with them, and even when they have collected the money, it is sent off and they cannot directly see the use of their work.

*"[If you just give] money, you don't realise what good it has done... I prefer going to Romania... There wasn't any money at stake... It's more direct... Going somewhere and doing something for them without talking about money, that's the best thing you can do. You see the results and I like that a lot."*

The same young person remarks that Scouting should not be confused with a charity organisation as it is not the essential function of the unit or of the Movement, which he feels is more to do with getting to know others.

*"On the other hand, collecting money and sending it... We're not a charity organisation, it's not our aim, there are other organisations that do that... but that's not Venture Scouts, it's more getting to know people."*

#### 4.c Service activities as an opportunity to establish a feeling of mutual understanding and appreciation

The Venture Scouts are much more positive about services which enable them to come into direct contact with the people they are helping, and whereby they can establish a mutual feeling of camaraderie and exchange and see the positive effects of their contribution. In these instances, they seem to find the same positive aspects in services for the outside community that they appreciate and find meaningful when they help each other in their Scout community.

*"In Romania, we were amazed, it was they who taught us so many things. We'd gone there to help them, they were really receptive, really pleased... They taught us a lot, it was much more an exchange of services than a service rendered... It was an exchange, it brought each one of us a lot."*

The Scottish Scout troop did not often bring up this aspect, probably due to the difference in experience and age, and also because these activities do not constitute a major part of their programme of activities.

## 5. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON THEIR CONTACT WITH THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY

It appears that towards 14 years of age, young people tend to seek greater contact and friendship with people outside their immediate environment. Scouting seems to respond fairly well to this need amongst the young people interviewed.

Table 4

"My friends outside Scouts know more people in our neighbourhood than I do"

Interviewees	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
Agree	–	–	7% (1)
It depends	37% (6)	19% (3)	29% (4)
Not really	63% (10)	81% (13)	64% (9)
Total	(16)	(16)	(14)

Around two-thirds of those interviewed (over 80% of the French group) disagree with the statement that it would be easier for young people who are not in Scouting to develop contacts with the community in which they live. They do not feel that being in Scouting stops them from meeting people, and many of the comments point out that, on the contrary, the Scout activities offer opportunities for contact with a wide variety of people and enable the young people to get to know people and experience situations that they would otherwise not be able to do.

On the other hand, they feel that the personality of each person and the spirit and mentality of each group will influence the extent and quality of the contact established. They feel that, for young people who are not in youth movements, some would tend to stay in front of the television, while others may feel like meeting others, but may find it more difficult to go towards other people and talk to people that they do not know.

*"It's a bit between the two, because when you're not a Scout, you hesitate more in going to people that you don't know, but in Scouts, you*

*have to go. You have more contact or more possibilities of seeing people. When you're in Scouts, you see different kinds of people, old people, handicapped people. When you're abroad, you have more contact, you're really with people, you go to see them, you chat."*

The young people, particularly in the Belgian and French groups, who are also involved in many non-service activities which put them in regular contact with the local community, enjoy the contact and the feeling of belonging.

*"I think that we fuse well with the environment... in our town, we take part in it. I don't think that we're a community that does our own little thing in a corner... There are the "extra-jobs", we go to work with the Printemps de Bourges<sup>84</sup> with the town, so I think we're well integrated. Venture Scouts are more active in the town."*

The majority point out that simply through being in Scouting they have had the opportunity to meet new people through their unit or troop, as the young people did not know each other before joining. They have thus been able to enlarge their circle of acquaintances and to develop strong friendships. In the three groups, what they appreciate the most is to be with friends who share the same attitudes and the same "values".

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The majority of young people have internalised Scouting's principles of mutual help, solidarity and cooperation, mainly through positive experiences within their unit or troop. As a result of these experiences, they feel that cooperation and mutual support are essential in strengthening the relationships between the members and the cohesion of the group.

A number of comments made by the older adolescents indicate that they feel concerned at living in a world where they perceive relations between people to be cold and uncaring.

Concerning their views on the various service activities that they are expected to carry out, the majority of the young people have a number of reservations. They tend to be very negative about activities in which there is no opportunity to see the direct usefulness of their effort, and when they feel that their contribution is taken for granted.

On the other hand, the Venture Scouts<sup>85</sup> tend to be much more positive about service activities through which they are able to develop a feeling of camaraderie and mutual appreciation with the people that they are helping. General activities which offer opportunities to be in contact with the local community are also appreciated as they contribute to a feeling of belonging.

---

<sup>84</sup> An annual music festival in their town.

<sup>85</sup> The Venture Scouts explained their views in more detail than the young people in the Scout troop.



## PART II, CHAPTER VII

# THE YOUNG PEOPLES' PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THEIR EXPERIENCES OF DECISION-MAKING AND RESPONSIBILITY IN SCOUTING AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING AND EVALUATION

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Two closely related, inherent dimensions of Scouting's educational philosophy are to help the young person to learn to make rational decisions and to develop a sense of responsibility. In theory, through Scouting's method of experiential, progressive learning ("learning by doing"), the young person learns to make rational decisions through taking part in the decision-making process on a progressively greater sphere of matters which affect him. Likewise, he learns to develop a sense of responsibility through being given opportunities to exercise progressively greater concrete responsibilities within the group.

Scouting thereby aims to help the young person to develop autonomy through learning to become conscious that one's decisions and actions (or lack of them) may have repercussions on oneself and on others, to bear these in mind (e.g. by revising or consciously maintaining the original decision), and to accept the consequences. It also aims at contributing to the young person's self-esteem through having carried out the responsibilities to the best of one's ability.

In practice, however, it is not always easy for the leaders to know how to dose the appropriate level of the young people's participation in decision-making and responsibilities so that each person feels involved and active in the process, while maintaining a "well-run" group.

This chapter is intended as an examination of these aspects from the young people's perspective. In this respect, several questions were put to the young people aimed at measuring the level to which they felt involved in the decision-making process and to what degree they felt comfortable with the choices and decisions to be made; the nature and degree of motivation in taking on responsibility; and determining the influence of the Scout experience on the capacity to assume responsibility. In addition to these specific questions, a number of spontaneous comments related to these two aspects as well as comments concerning evaluation were made by the young people during the course of the interviews.

## 2. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION- MAKING AND THE EXERCISE OF RESPONSIBILITY IN THE THREE GROUPS

### 2.a General

The nature and extent of the young people's participation in the decision-making process and the responsibilities exercised differ in the three groups according to the age and experience of the young people in the groups, the educational approach, leadership style and ways of working<sup>86</sup>.

### 2.b In the Belgian Venture Scout unit

The young people are directly involved in the decision-making process concerning their programme of activities and in the

---

<sup>86</sup> See Part I, Chapter III: An overview of the activities and ways of working in each group.

functioning of their unit. They assume most of the responsibilities involved through a mission (task force) system, under the guidance of the adult leaders and in accordance with their guidelines. The extent of the individual responsibilities undertaken depends largely on the young person and the extent of experience within the unit.

## 2.c In the French Venture Scout unit

The team leaders in this unit are relatively more involved in the decision-making process than their team members. The team leaders and their assistants are responsible for coordinating the work of their teams throughout the year and for assisting their team members to progress. They also take part in the preparation of the activities with the adult leaders during council meetings. The team leaders act as intermediaries between the leaders and the team members.

The young people can submit ideas for activities that they are interested in and give their opinions on activities proposed by the council<sup>87</sup>. While they take part in preparing camps, they have relatively little responsibility for the general planning and organising of activities, except during team outings and camps.

Within the teams, each young person chooses one or more roles<sup>88</sup> which he fulfils throughout the year and a number of additional tasks which need to be carried out. Each young person selects and signs up for the activities he wishes to take part in within the framework of the projects proposed. The young people have the opportunity to work with young people from other teams during the summer camp and other activities undertaken as a unit, and during weekend activities which are not team activities.

## 2.d In the Scottish Scout troop

The patrol leaders and their assistants take part more directly in the decision-making process as the choice of activities stems mainly from the consensus of the patrol leaders and assistant patrol leaders based on activities proposed by the leaders and the wishes expressed by the patrol members. The patrol members' views are transmitted to the leaders, primarily through the patrol leaders. The patrol leaders are responsible for coordinating their patrols and for helping each of their patrol members to progress. For the patrol members, decision-making and the exercise of responsibility take place mainly within the patrols in terms of coordinating each person's participation in the activities and in a number of duties to be carried out.

---

<sup>87</sup> A meeting of the adult leaders, team leaders and assistants.

<sup>88</sup> For example, Caterer, Reporter, etc.

While the patrol members can talk directly to the troop leader during the weekly meetings, weekend activities or camps, the youngest members (aged 10 1/2) or newcomers tend to be daunted in the beginning and are more likely to discuss their ideas or problems first with the assistant patrol leader, patrol leader or a younger (more apparently accessible) adult leader.

### 3. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THEIR LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN THE THREE GROUPS

#### 3.a In the Belgian Venture Scout unit

All the young people feel fairly free to submit proposals when they have an idea. They generally share their ideas or points of concern with their best friends before submitting it to the whole group.

Important decisions are made by secret ballot by all of the young people (the only exception is that newcomers do not vote for the team leaders). However, the senior members and the leaders can contribute to swaying the votes in one direction or another as the votes are always preceded by discussions in which the leaders and the senior members can develop arguments to support their point of view. They often rely on their own past experience or on the experiences that they have heard about from others to orient the direction, and the newcomers in the unit generally respect their opinions due to the experience that the others have of being in the group.

The young people who would like to become team leaders submit their candidacy at the beginning of the year. The entire unit (with the exception of the newcomers) votes on this subject according to each person's perception of the experience, involvement and skills of the candidates. Being elected team leader is a sign of popularity, an acknowledgement of the capacity of the young person to fulfil this role and is also an acknowledgement of having reached the status of senior member. It does not, however, give them power or authority over the others as is sometimes the case for patrol leaders in the younger age section of their Scout Group.

#### 3.b In the French Venture Scout unit

In the French group, the team leaders and assistants are the spokesmen of their team and can bring proposals to the council meetings which discusses the matter and decides on any follow-up. It is however fairly rare that this happens as the variety of activities on offer is very wide. In fact, the majority of the young people find it somewhat difficult to find time to undertake all the activities already on offer due to school obligations and other non-Scout activities.

The team leaders and their assistants are consulted concerning the programme of activities during the council meeting which precedes each team meeting, but some feel that this consultation is pure formality and that it is not possible to go against some of the decisions

that have been already taken. This view is especially felt by those who have the greatest experience within the group and would like to have more margin for initiative in decision-making. It is especially within the framework of activities within the teams (such as team camps) that the team leaders and assistants have the greatest margin for initiative and can organise camp life and activities by themselves.

### 3.c In the Scottish Scout troop

It is mainly the young people who are patrol leaders or assistant patrol leaders who take part in the decisions through the patrol leaders' council<sup>89</sup>. Within this framework, the patrol leaders, their assistants and the troop leader discuss the organization of activities, the level of progress made by each young person within their patrols and discuss the operational problems of each patrol. Those who have difficulties with their patrols can seek help from the other patrol leaders and the troop leader.

*"Cyril is still quite annoying, it's a bit better, but what can you do?... Move him to another patrol or give him more responsibilities by making him first Scout, or second in the patrol... I think he's making progress, let's wait and see. If he makes more progress, we could give him more responsibility."*

The patrol leaders are also the spokesmen of their patrols. Their assistants and the patrol members can give them ideas to transmit and to discuss in the council. The patrol leaders are chosen and nominated by the troop leader, but they can choose their assistant. The patrol members are also associated in the choice of activities for the troop, but it is especially within their patrols that they have the greatest margin for initiative and decisions to take.

The youngest members of the troop (those under 13) were not interviewed in any depth and therefore their views are not available.

### 3.d In all three groups

The young people in all three groups have a certain latitude in the choices to be made concerning their personal progression.

It should also be noted that while not every young person takes part in the decision-making process of the larger group (unit or troop) to the same extent, they are encouraged to operate as autonomously as possible within their teams or patrols.

---

<sup>89</sup> The patrol leaders' council is composed of the troop leader and the patrol leaders. The assistant patrol leaders are sometimes also present.

4. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR ABILITY TO MAKE DECISIONS

Table 1  
"I'm better now at making decisions"

Interviewees	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
Agree	28% (5)	31% (5)	43% (6)
It depends	72% (13)	38% (6)	29% (4)
Not really	–	31% (5)	21% (3)
Missing case	–	–	7% (1)
Total	(18)	(16)	(14)

According to the initial answers given by the young people, it would appear that the young people in the Venture Scout units are on the whole more reserved about the development of their capacity to make decisions than the young people in the Scout troop. However, the majority of the young people in the Scout troop did not elaborate on their points of view, whereas the Venture Scouts gave much more detailed explanations.

Despite the more positive initial replies, the ensuing comments made by the young Scots who did elaborate on this point tend to indicate that they too find decision-making difficult. As one of the patrol leaders points out:

*"I was terrible about making decisions. No, I usually opt out. When you've got to choose who is going to do what... like last week when I had to give a Scout for each activity, I find that hard because I always want to do them myself. There is usually one activity that no one wants to do and there are two people wanting to do one. I usually give the young ones what they want."*

Many of the comments of those who express reservations on this subject in all three groups indicate that they feel that, although the operating structure of their group forces them to make choices, what they find particularly difficult is to have to assume the consequences.

*"[Making decisions] is new, in Scouts we didn't really work like that. Things were proposed to us, if we didn't like it, it changed. But here, we do our project, we were asked to find a project to do. I wasn't too*

*sure how to go about it, I went to see my team leader who explained. I had thought of doing the Mont Blanc, but that's difficult. I wanted to go right to the top of it. It's a dream, but then the project has to be carried out."*

Some feel that they have not really developed a greater capacity to make decisions because as they mature the decisions to be made become more complex. Others feel that they have always been relatively self-assured, have always known what they wanted and continue to do so, but still find that making decisions and assuming the consequences is difficult.

Some point out factors which they feel have helped them to learn to make decisions. The main factors mentioned include:

- the fact that the way in which the group operates forces them to make choices;
- the climate of trust within the group helps them to feel less shy and to make them less afraid of possible mistakes or of having to defend their personal opinion;

*"Yes, if you make a wrong decision, here no one is going to laugh at you, people help you, you can talk."*

- the natural process of maturation helps them to gain self-assurance and, as they mature, they also tend to reflect more on the potential consequences of their choices;

*"In Scouting, you learn to make decisions, but it may also be to do with age as well, you think more about what you do."*

*"I already have objectives. It helps a little but there are always things that you can't make up your mind about. I think the fact of having been in Venture Scouting has helped."*

- some of the young people in the Scottish troop feel that it is the experience of making decisions as patrol leader that has helped them to feel more at ease in this area;
- some of the young people in the Belgian and French groups, who can compare the level of involvement in decision-making between different age sections, are aware of the progressive way in which they are involved in the decision-making and feel that it has helped them to build up confidence.

5. THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE CONCERNING THE EXERCISE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Table 2

TAKING ON RESPONSIBILITY	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
I like a lot	36% (5)	28% (5)	77% (10)
So-so	64% (9)	61% (11)	23% (3)
I don't really like that much	–	11% (2)	–
Total	(14)	(18)	(13)

5.a The members of the Venture Scout units

The comments of the young people in these groups clearly indicate that they have internalised the need to take on responsibility as it is the basis on which the units function. Camp life and projects appear to play an important role in helping young people to realise the importance of assuming one's responsibilities as failure to do so is likely to have repercussions on others. They also perceive responsibility as a dimension inherent in adulthood and consider that it is necessary to prepare themselves to face it.

*"It's a characteristic of Venture Scouts. When you do a camp, you have to assume responsibilities. When you're in a mission, it's a responsibility. If someone doesn't [assume his responsibilities] when you're at camp, it's the group that suffers the consequences."*

*"It's important, someone has to take responsibilities... There is a certain satisfaction, for your pride and for everyone... it has repercussions on yourself and on the others. The scope of the responsibilities is much greater in Venture Scouts... All the atmosphere of the camp depends on it."*

Several comments indicate that the young people are aware that they are progressively learning to take on greater and greater responsibilities.

*"In Scouts you have a few responsibilities. It's the advancement of group life, Scout life. It'll be greatest in Rovers<sup>90</sup> ... you're together, and*

---

<sup>90</sup> Translation of "routier" - the age section for young people aged between 18-21 and over in some countries. "Routier" and "Rover" Scouting do not necessarily imply the same educational approach.

*you have take on all the responsibilities. Here [in Venture Scouts] we still have leaders, in Rover Scouts we're just amongst ourselves and each person assumes his responsibilities. It's a whole progression. You don't really think about it, it's something you do naturally. I think we do it unconsciously and we take on greater and greater responsibilities."*

While being entrusted with responsibility is felt as a sign of the confidence that the others have in the young person and in his capabilities, only one third of the young people expressed enthusiasm at taking on responsibilities and often remark that assuming responsibility is not always easy or pleasant. Through personal experience and through observing the experiences of others in the group, they consider more carefully the implications of the responsibilities and the quantity of them that they are considering undertaking.

*"I quite like it because, on the one hand, it needs to be done... and if you do it you're happy... I'm not the first to lift my hand, I think about it... Some of them take on a lot of responsibilities, I don't too much, well average."*

Many young people feel that the nature and extent of the responsibilities chosen cannot be based on personal interest and the desire for a challenge alone, but must also take into account a number of factors, including an estimation of one's potential and limits, experience, and availability of time. If they have substantially overestimated their capabilities, and/or have underestimated the difficulties inherent in the responsibilities, not only are they likely to feel personal dissatisfaction, but they are also likely to face criticism from the group. The young people also point out the importance of taking time to watch others with more experience and prepare themselves to take on greater responsibility.

*"It's good to learn [to take on responsibilities]. In the beginning in Scouts, you already know a bit about it... I find it important in Venture Scouts. Anyway, you have to when you're grown-up. You know how to deal with something, and you're given the opportunity to do so. It's good, they propose things to us, and we learn how to deal with it, they have confidence in us. When you opt for a mission, you have to take one that you know you can handle, you have to feel capable of doing it. I was in the First Aid mission, I didn't want to be the mission leader straight away. I started to watch how the others dealt with things. I told myself that if they could do it, then so could I, and it worked. There's also the case where the mission leader does nothing. One had six missions, and went crying in a corner because everyone was telling her off because she kept getting mad all the time. I think that she didn't fully assume her responsibilities. You have to know if you're capable of handling it."*



## 5.b The members of the Scottish Scout troop

Three quarters of the young people interviewed in the Scottish troop express enthusiasm at taking on responsibility which, for them, is strongly associated with the position of patrol leader or assistant patrol leader.

As patrol leaders or assistants, they are expected to be in charge of their patrols, coordinate their work and help the younger ones to progress. Being appointed assistant or patrol leader is a sign of recognition of the progress made and the technical skills acquired. For many, however, the position is associated with a number of advantages, such as no longer having to do certain chores, and feeling part of the “top brass”. The advantages are pointed out by a number of young people, both by those who do not hold such a position and the ones who do.

*“You don’t get bossed about by people higher than you in your patrol.”*

*“[The advantages are] seniority really, being top brass in the troop, sort of thing. A lot of power compared to say first Scout<sup>91</sup>.”*

On the other hand, most of the young people who are promoted to a position of responsibility tend to change their perception of the role when they assume it, and find the work challenging and sometimes difficult. Some sense that the position of patrol leader implies greater accountability than that of assistant.

*“I liked being an APL<sup>92</sup>, because you didn’t have all the responsibility, just some of it.”*

*“If I made a mistake, I wouldn’t like it to all be blamed on me.”*

*“It’s much better being an APL, because you don’t get all the dirty jobs.”*

*“[I] was only APL for a few months before being a PL. It was just a bit of a shock, I wasn’t used to it at all.”*

It should be pointed out that only those aged 13 and over were interviewed in the troop, many of whom were in the position of patrol leader or assistant patrol leader. While the views of the youngest members are therefore not part of this report, some of the older Scouts discuss their views from their present perspective and also recall their experience of having been junior members.

---

<sup>91</sup> Patrol leaders would normally have reached “1st Scout” level before being appointed. However, not all “1st Scouts” in a troop will necessarily become patrol leaders.

<sup>92</sup> Assistant Patrol Leader.

A contribution to an edition of the troop's magazine<sup>93</sup> made by one of the young people describes the position of "4th Scout"<sup>94</sup>. This young person describes half-jokingly the kinds of menial tasks (in his opinion) which are assigned by the patrol leaders and their assistants to the "4th Scouts", i.e. the lowest rank in the troop. The tasks assigned to the youngest members or newcomers include bringing in wood, emptying the waste bins, etc., intimating that these were tasks which the older members did not want to do. When those interviewed (the senior members) were asked their opinion as to how far this corresponded to reality, the initial reaction was laughter. Some felt that there was some truth in it, others felt that it did not really correspond to troop life.

### 5.c Differences and similarities in perception and in the level of motivation to take on responsibilities

The notion of responsibility in the Venture Scout units is associated with the capacity to take care of oneself and to assume the tasks which they had committed themselves to, while in the Scottish group, it is especially learning to take charge of the younger ones.

The young people who indicate less enthusiasm for responsibilities are those who can stand back from the experience and who have personally experienced or observed the difficulties involved. This ability is probably linked to age, maturity, extent of experience, and may partly explain why three quarters of the young people in the Scout troop state that they are interested in taking on responsibilities, as opposed to those in the other groups where only a third expressed enthusiasm. The Scottish Scout troop's educational approach of motivating and preparing the young people to experience leading others and the perceived advantages associated with the position may also be contributing factors.

In all three groups, the majority of the senior members are much more aware of the need to play a more active role in assuming the responsibilities of the functioning of their troop or unit and feel personally involved.

---

<sup>93</sup> The magazine is known as the Reef Notes. It is written by the senior members, with help from the troop leader. It describes the main events of the year in the troop in a style designed to amuse the readers.

<sup>94</sup> A non-existent position as the first promotion recognising achievement in the troop is "3rd Scout", but refers to the newcomers, or the youngest in the troop who have not yet been promoted.

## 5.d The young people’s perceptions concerning the development of their ability to assume responsibility

Table 3

“Some of my friends outside Scouting seem to find it easier to accept responsibilities than I do”

Interviewees	BELGIUM	FRANCE	SCOTLAND
Agree	–	–	–
It depends	6% (1)	25% (4)	21% (3)
Not really	94% (17)	75% (12)	79% (11)
Total	(18)	(16)	(14)

In the three groups, the vast majority questioned on this aspect disagree with the idea that young people outside of Scouting accept responsibilities more easily. The comments indicate that they feel that other young people they know outside of Scouting would be more likely to flee from them. Some feel that while the personality of each person and the family context can play a role in making it easier to accept responsibilities, the Scout experience nonetheless makes a considerable contribution to developing a sense of responsibility.

*“I’d really like to see that. Scouting’s been defined as a school of life. So responsibility in all kinds of areas. And those who are not in Scouting already find it difficult to be responsible. For me, everything completely changed from the first year to the last... Each time we had a council session, we’re always talking about responsibilities taken or not taken. When you write your name on the board, when you put a big cross and your name, you have to stick to it, it’s a basic responsibility to keep your commitments. Dealing with the magazine is quite a big responsibility.”*

Many of the young people’s comments indicate that it is through progressively learning to take on greater responsibilities that they have been helped to gain self-confidence. Those whose personality does not bring them naturally to seek out responsibilities will not be the first to propose themselves spontaneously and will take on a little less, but they are aware that they cannot totally avoid this dimension in Scouting.

As a result of their experience in exercising responsibilities in Scouting, some of the young people have felt motivated to take on responsibilities in school, such as class delegate. They point out, however, that the responsibilities undertaken in Scouting offer many more learning opportunities and is a greater source of satisfaction than being a class delegate. The reasons expressed are that the role of class delegate is not felt to be important to the class, and the job does not have a real weight on school boards.

While the young Scots did not mention the following point in reply to the question concerning their ability to assume responsibility, they spontaneously ensure the welfare of a young blind boy in the troop. While their concern for his welfare might, in part, be due to their family upbringing, it may also be reinforced by the fact that the leader involved the whole troop in deciding whether or not to accept the boy as a member<sup>95</sup>.

## 6. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING AND EVALUATION AND THE BENEFITS THEY PERCEIVE

### 6.a General

In each of the three groups, meetings are held to select, plan, define objectives, distribute responsibilities, prepare, coordinate, refocus and evaluate the activities, camps and projects. The activities and projects in which the young people take part and group life provide opportunities for their personal development. After an activity or a project has been completed an evaluation is carried out not only on the success of the activity but also on the achievement and progress of each individual member.

As has been described in the previous sections, the extent and way in which the young people are involved in this process differs from group to group.

In the Belgian Venture Scout unit, all of the young people take part with the leaders in weekly meetings during which the advancement of the projects and related problems are discussed. The meetings are also an occasion for the leaders to remind the young people if necessary of the objectives to be achieved and of the guidelines and values to be respected.

A global evaluation takes place involving everyone once the project has been completed. During the meeting, the degree to which the objectives of the project have been achieved, the level of involvement of each person in the project and in unit life, the degree to which the personal advancement objectives of each person have been achieved, the mistakes made and the lessons learned are evaluated and discussed. The resulting implications for the future in terms of organising activities, unit life and new personal advancement objectives are determined.

---

<sup>95</sup> See Part I, Chapter IV: The leaders' educational approaches.

In the French Venture Scout unit, weekly meetings are also held to plan, determine progress and reorient the way in which the activities and unit life are being run, if needed. These weekly meetings involve the adult leaders, the team leaders and their assistants. A major evaluation meeting takes place, generally after a camp or a major project. The entire unit is invited and anyone may opt to speak, but it is the team leaders who report to the leaders on behalf of their teams. The adult leaders discuss the evaluation of tasks, activities and any problems with the young people as teams.

Similarly, in the Scottish Scout troop a meeting is held each week with the troop leader, the patrol leaders and their assistants. The main evaluation meeting also takes place after a camp. During the evaluation, the patrol leaders report on the progress of their patrols and on problems encountered. The leader comments on how the patrol leaders are leading their patrols, the skills that they need to practise, the skills that the patrol members need help with and any problems observed. The troop leader then helps the patrol leaders and their assistants to find solutions to problems or to practise skills.

In all three groups, all of the young people are involved in planning, organising and coordinating activities and tasks within their teams.

The young people's perceptions as to the importance they attach to these aspects were explored through the interviews when the young people were asked to describe how they operated and to give their opinions on the usefulness that they attributed to time spent in discussion in their groups<sup>96</sup>.

## 6.b The young people's perceptions

While all of the young people interviewed feel that it is important to plan and coordinate their activities and sort out problems from time to time, they generally prefer action.

While not all those who take part enjoy the sessions to the same extent, those who take part all agree that the evaluation sessions are useful and enable the group and each member to progress. It is also an opportunity to discuss what they appreciate and what they dislike about their Scouting experience.

Only one young person amongst all those interviewed who takes part in these sessions feels that they have been of no use. However, he has not been in the unit for long and has difficulty in expressing himself. It is possible that he meant that the sessions have not helped him to express himself better.

---

<sup>96</sup> As the question was deliberately left open, some of the young people interpreted the question to mean discussion in terms of planning, sorting out problems and evaluation, while others referred to discussion as an activity (debates, etc.). Their opinions on discussions in general are treated in Part II, Chapter I of this report.

For the Venture Scouts, evaluation meetings are solemn occasions. The newcomers tend to find them intimidating at first. In the beginning, they mainly observe, as the majority hesitate to express themselves during their first council. The senior members sometimes speak on behalf of the newcomers if they feel too shy to express their own point of view.

The senior members feel more at ease in expressing themselves. They recognise that the councils enable different perspectives to be confronted and stimulate self-analysis. Some feel, however, that formal evaluations are less useful at their level as they have already learned to regularly evaluate their performance by themselves and discuss matters in their teams.

*"When you've been here for a while, it's like automatic. You're used to it. You do your evaluation all by yourself, but for the team members, it's different. It's new, you don't think about asking yourself if you're doing things right, or what you did during the camp... For the older members, there are things you don't think about... Sometimes it enables you to add things and think about things. It's good after a camp."*

*"It's not much fun to hear that you're not doing things too well, but it's good in one way because they're things that haven't even crossed your mind. You think you're doing things well and the others point out that that is not quite the case. So you think about it. Everyone knows that the unit councils are there to remind us of our qualities and bad points too... We know that it's not to be mean, it's not to attack or hurt anyone."*

*"We work out the good things, the less good things, we sort these things out to try to improve the team members. We often talk about individual members, it can influence the person put in question. Some take it very seriously, others more lightly, it depends on the individual. You can see an evolution in Venture Scouts, it's thanks to all that that you can see progress a bit throughout the year. But taking each case to the letter is a bit hard because there are a lot of us, and looking after each person is impossible."*

*"It's absolutely necessary if you want to know where you are with the team or unit. I've always found it really necessary. Not simply now because I'm a team leader but even in my first year. It's to help you know where you are - you've lived something when you've done a camp. It's really interesting because that's where you discover the team atmosphere, how they felt about the camp, how they dealt with things."*

It is when the accent is strongly on self- and mutual evaluation that the young people seem to have developed a greater personal awareness of what they should be trying to improve. A number of remarks point out that the evaluation sessions should serve to improve the functioning of the group and to determine the level to which objectives are achieved, but that it is not a judgement and it is up to each person to see what he wants to make of the remarks addressed to him. Although the observations expressed about each other during the sessions tend to show up the negative points, the majority of young people nonetheless feel that the sessions are on the whole positive and constructive, both for themselves personally and in terms of improving what the young people experience as a group through ironing out problems.

*"For me, it has an influence on what happens after... If someone makes a justified criticism to me, I find it important to change either your behaviour, or do whatever it was that you haven't done. The unit council doesn't have a judging role... You can put things back in their place. And you can also get positive points out of it... Maybe there are a lot of negative points brought up in the unit council, but what comes out of it must be positive... When someone remarked that the film wasn't advancing, for example, we talked about it a lot two weeks ago... I felt concerned about it. I told myself that I hadn't done anything about it yet. It got me going."*

*"You learn things about yourself that you don't necessarily notice. You're shocked at first, but it helps us... to be more part of the group. It helps the group because you can say what you think of everyone."*

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The young people in all three groups have a number of decisions to make and responsibilities to undertake. In each group, the nature and extent of the decisions and responsibilities that a particular young person will be involved in becomes progressively greater as he gains experience, develops interests and capabilities although the sphere of matters on which the young people as a whole make decisions and the level of responsibility undertaken concerning the activities and group life are different in the three groups.

While the young people appear to have internalised the need to undertake responsibilities and to make decisions, they tend to find this aspect unpleasant. The comments indicate that this is because they find it difficult to assume the consequences. This would seem to indicate that they have understood that the process of decision-making goes beyond simply making a choice. The younger Scots, on the other hand, express enthusiasm at taking on responsibility as for them the notion is strongly associated with being appointed to what

they perceive as a position of prestige, namely patrol leader or assistant patrol leader.

In the French and Scottish groups, it is primarily the senior members who are more directly involved in planning and evaluation. The other members are involved more informally within their teams or patrol. In the Belgian group, the entire unit is directly involved in evaluating the projects undertaken and group life. Each person evaluates his own performance or contribution and receives feedback from the others. Personal progression objectives are set by the young person himself based on the outcome of the evaluation process. It is in this group that the majority of young people seem particularly aware of areas in which they would like to, or feel that they should, improve.



PART III, CHAPTER I

THE INFLUENCE OF THE  
SCOUT EXPERIENCE ON  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
THE YOUNG PERSON

1. INTRODUCTION

1.a General

The determination of whether or not Scouting has had an impact on the development of the young people interviewed - and if so, in which areas - is evidently one of the primary aims of this research.

Several open questions were asked of the young people, leaders and parents at different points in the interviews to discover their perceptions concerning what the young people had gained through Scouting. The young people and their parents were also asked to comment on a series of statements presenting different facets of skills and attitudes attributed to Scouting that might have been acquired by the young people through their Scout experience. The following chapter presents a synthesis of the perceptions of those interviewed.

1.b The extent to which the parents perceive Scouting as having an educational role

The majority of parents interviewed had initially sent their children to Scouting because they expected it to be an educational experience for them. In a few cases, their children had been encouraged to change groups when they considered that what the young people were experiencing in the former groups did not correspond to the parents' expectations.

In each of the three case studies there is an evident harmony between family values, the values of the socio-cultural environment to which the young people's families belong and the educational objectives sought within the Scout groups<sup>97</sup>. The parents, leaders and young people interviewed during the course of the case studies, whatever the socio-cultural background, emphasise that Scouting complements the education received at school and at home. They believe that the changes observed in the young people over their time in Scouting are the result of both family education and their Scout experience, and that these two dimensions tend to reinforce each other.

It is especially in the Belgian and French case studies, where the young people are at an age where they face an increasing load of school work and exams likely to determine their future employment prospects, that some of the parents have strongly encouraged their children to either reduce the number of leisure-time activities or to reduce the amount of time spent on such activities<sup>98</sup>. Most of the parents, however, are not inclined to discourage their children from Scouting due, on the one hand, to the educational benefits they

---

<sup>97</sup> As only those young people (and their families) with over a year's experience in the group were interviewed, it is possible that any children whose parents strongly disagreed with the leader's objectives had already left the group during the course of their first year.

<sup>98</sup> It should also be said that many of the young people themselves in these groups felt concerned by their employment prospects in an uncertain economic climate.

perceive and, on the other, to the enjoyment that their children derive from the experiences and the relationships.

According to the young people's comments, parental pressure to devote more effort to improving apparently inadequate academic results may have been the reason for the departure of a few young people in these groups prior to the interviews<sup>99</sup>. While some still manage to attend once in a while, comments indicate that sporadic attendance can eventually make the young person feel excluded from the group. Whether or not these parents found Scouting to be an educational experience for their children, it would appear that obtaining positive academic results was the priority.

The level of importance attached by the parents to the educational objectives being pursued in the groups may therefore create pressure on the young people to stay or to leave. It may also influence the educational impact of the Scout experience on some young people as, according to some parents, the effects of Scouting were relatively short-lived on those young people whose parents considered Scouting to be simply a leisure-time occupation.

#### 1.c The level to which the young people interviewed are conscious of their development and able to analyse how, if at all, Scouting has contributed

While the great majority of the young people interviewed (93%-100%) state that they have gained a lot from the Scout experience, it is mainly the older adolescents who are able to offer detailed explanations as to how they feel that they have developed and how they feel that Scouting has contributed. The leaders and the senior youth members of the three groups point out that it is especially around 15 years of age and over that, as a result of the process of maturation, the young people become more conscious of Scouting's educational role, and become better able and more inclined to evaluate their individual progress, to analyse their experiences and develop greater self-awareness. Some young people also point out the need to have been in Scouting over a period of time to fully perceive the effects on personal development, and will probably still not be able to do so until they have left the group and can stand back from the experience.

*"I think that my character has changed in this group, now I realise. I'm told that I've changed since last year... I accept more things than before. You become aware of your character, and you try to change. You know a little bit more who you are, because you discover yourself"*

---

<sup>99</sup> Comments made by a few of those interviewed indicate that a couple of young people had left for other reasons: conflicts of personality, demotivation, etc.

*too by thinking about what you do. You realise your capacities, how you're made. You realise faster who you are because you grow up and you mature. It helps young people to grow up."*

The young people agree with their parents and the leaders that Scouting is complementary to school and family education. However, the older youth members also emphasise the importance of the natural process of maturation in interaction with what they experience in Scouting in stimulating their development.

*"I wouldn't be at all the same if I hadn't been in Scouting for a long time. Here you build your character, it happens mainly in Scouts plus the education you get at home, maybe a bit at school, I don't know, but it's different, it's an advantage."*

*"Of course, Scouts helps us to respond better to situations, it's obvious... but you grow up even so; it's linked to maturity, the two go hand in hand."*

The parents and some of the senior members think that the Scout experience will have little impact on a young person who has no desire to discover a new environment or to undertake activities with other young people. Those who started in the Movement very young at the encouragement of their families or friends only persevered when they had found a personal interest. They emphasise the importance of a voluntary commitment to continue in Scouting.

*"If you decide to go to Scouts, it's because you want to, but if someone feels obliged to go, then it's not worth it. He won't feel at ease, he won't feel like continuing. You have to want to test your limits, to get out of your habits... to want to discover yourself and the people around you."*

*"You do interesting things, I think it brings me quite a lot in the way I think, of how I am with others, it changes something. But there are some people in my class that I can't imagine being in Scouts. They're not the kind. You have to like living together as a community, living with others."*

Table 1 a

Dominant areas in which Scouting is perceived by the young people interviewed to have had a major personal impact

RANK	BELGIUM (YOUNG PEOPLE)	FRANCE (YOUNG PEOPLE)	SCOTLAND <sup>100</sup> (YOUNG PEOPLE)
1	Attitudes/skills for life in a group 100% (16) Ability to overcome obstacles 100% (16)	Practical skills 90% (18)	Practical skills 77% (17)
2	Development of values 94% (15)	Development of values 80% (16)	Ability to overcome obstacles 73% (16) Development of values 73% (16) Caring attitude towards others 73% (16)
3	Practical skills 81% (13)	Physical skills (sports) 75% (15) Attitudes/skills for life in a group 75% (15) Responsibility 75% (15) Cooperation/teamwork 75% (15)	Physical skills (sports) 64% (14)
4	Responsibility 75% (12)	Ability to overcome obstacles 70% (14)	Cooperation/teamwork 55% (12)
5	Caring attitude towards others 69% (11) Belonging/commitment to group 69% (11) Self-expression/communication 69% (11)	Caring attitude towards others 60% (12) Self-expression/communication 60% (12)	Responsibility 50% (11)
6	Self-confidence 63% (10)	Belonging/commitment to group 50% (10)	Leadership skills 45% (10) Self-confidence 45% (10)
7	Decision-making 56% (9) Cooperation teamwork 56% (9)	Self-confidence 45% (9)	Belonging/commitment to group 41% (9)
8	Leadership skills 31% (5)	Decision-making 30% (6)	Decision-making 27% (6) Attitudes/skills for life in a group 27% (6)
9	—	Leadership skills 25% (5)	Self-expression/communication 14% (3)

<sup>100</sup> In the Scottish troop (comprising young people aged 10 1/2 to 15 1/2), only the eldest, i.e. those aged 13 and over were interviewed. The views of the younger members (and those of their parents) are therefore not available.

Table 1 b

Dominant areas in which Scouting is perceived by the parents interviewed to have had a major impact on their children<sup>101</sup>

RANK	BELGIUM (PARENTS)	FRANCE (PARENTS)	SCOTLAND (PARENTS)
1	Responsibility 100% (12) Tolerance & sharing 100% (12) Attitudes/skills for life in a group 100% (12)	Belonging/ commitment to group 91% (10)	Responsibility 85% (17)
2	Belonging/ commitment to group 92% (11)	Physical development 83% (10)	Belonging/ commitment to group 79% (15)
3	Cooperation/ teamwork 83% (10)	Meaningful role in community 77% (7)	Cooperation/ teamwork 75% (15)
4	Ability to overcome obstacles 67% (8)	Responsibility 75% (9) Tolerance & sharing 75% (9)	Self-confidence 70% (14) Tolerance & sharing 70% (14)
5	New interests/ opportunities 64% (7)	Ability to overcome obstacles 72% (8) New interests/ opportunities 72% (8)	Ability to overcome obstacles 65% (13)
6	Self-confidence 55% (5)	Cooperation/ teamwork 70% (7)	Leadership abilities 63% (12)
7	Physical development 45% (5) Creativity 45% (5)	Self-confidence 58% (7)	Meaningful role in community 50% (10)
8	Meaningful role in community 42% (5)	Practical & technical skills 55% (6)	Physical development 37% (7)
9	Practical & technical skills 33% (4)	Creativity 33% (4)	New interests/ opportunities 25% (5)
10	Leadership abilities 25% (3)	Leadership abilities 27% (3)	Practical & technical skills 20% (4)
11	—	—	Creativity 20% (4)

<sup>101</sup> Percentages shown for any particular number of responses within a given group may vary, due to the fact that not all respondents answered all questions.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

### 2.a General

Over half the parents (55-70%) questioned consider that their children's Scout experience has contributed to the development of the ability to manage their lives, to face and deal with difficulties and to communicate better with others. In their opinion, the development of these aspects has clearly contributed to reinforcing self-confidence in their children. Nonetheless, the comments indicate that self-confidence is developed to various degrees according to each young person's personality.

The proportion of young people interviewed who explicitly mention the development of self-confidence as a result of their Scout experience is rather weak (45-63%), but it should be pointed out that this question was not expressed in the same way for the parents and for the young people. In the first case, the parents were presented with the statement: *"The functioning of the Scout group develops self-confidence, enables the young person to develop confidence in his abilities to act"*, and were asked to indicate to what degree they felt that this statement had proven true in the case of their children. In the interviews with the young people, this aspect was not treated directly, but was likely to be brought out in answers to questions concerning different aspects of their involvement in the group and through their comments on what had been learned during the course of their time in Scouting. The percentages only take into account the comments of the young people which explained explicitly that they had acquired greater self-assurance, or that they felt more at ease or happier thanks to experiences and relationships developed within the group. The answers which only mention the capacity to take initiative, to cope on their own, or to face problems without any further explanation or examples to illustrate in what ways they felt this to be true in their particular case were not taken into account in this category of analysis.

In the three groups, the young people point out that while they feel that their Scout experience has helped them in this area, Scouting is only one factor amongst several and that maturity also counts considerably in the process. A few others state that they had always felt fairly sure of themselves.

### 2.b Self-expression

The area in which the young people and their parents have noticed the greatest change concerns the ability to communicate more easily with others. Many of them point out that they have overcome their shyness through being with other young people with whom they feel comfortable and have got to know well. For some, it appears that the fact of feeling at ease in expressing themselves within the group has led to greater self-confidence in their ability to talk to people in general. In the Venture Scout units, the fact of having to contact and

discuss matters with people outside of their group in order to organise their projects and activities also appears to have contributed to their greater self-assurance in this area<sup>102</sup>.

*"It's true, you feel more at ease, and it helps even in working for the baccalauréat <sup>103</sup>. Talking in front of everyone, leading a team meeting, it's an advantage."*

*"I used to be shy... I didn't know how to start a conversation, but now it comes quite easily, it helped me to loosen up."*

*"I've also become more mature over this year, I've changed, I'm more self-assured, it's helped me... I can talk to people more easily than before. Now I can start a conversation, no problem."*

*"The fact of facing your shyness, I wasn't too bad, but still, quite. It's an important factor for later... and if you don't get rid of it..."*

The development of the capacity to express themselves appears much more clearly developed amongst the Venture Scouts (60% of the French and 69% of the Belgians interviewed mentioned this in their comments, but only 14% of the Scottish). The Venture Scouts' ability to express their opinions clearly was also apparent throughout the interviews (including the youngest in these groups). This capacity for self-expression was also mentioned by the majority of parents, although this does not appear clearly in the breakdown of their responses as the opinions expressed concerned two different aspects: the development of the aptitude to express a personal point of view and the development of the ability to accept other points of view. In the majority of cases, the parents consider that the young people are more at ease in expressing themselves in front of a group and have become more self-assertive. At the same time, the Venture Scouts' parents express a more reserved point of view as they also find that their children have become less likely to accept their parents' views without question, especially concerning what the young people consider to be the imposition of "parental constraints". This is probably partly explained by the difference in age in the three groups, as some of the Venture Scouts were over 16 years.

For the parents of the young Scots, it is especially when their children gain a status of responsibility and take part in council meetings that they become more at ease in expressing themselves in front of a group.

---

<sup>102</sup> Similar comments are apparent in the study led by a group of researchers from the University of Aberdeen (Craig & al., 1992) to evaluate the educational impact of youth organisations (including Scouting and Guiding) in Scotland. The results of their study and of several case studies led in parallel indicate that participation in youth movements or youth clubs has enabled young people to develop a greater feeling of self-confidence.

<sup>103</sup> School-leaving exams.

The capacity to argue a personal point of view can be exercised more frequently in the Venture Scout units in which the young people have to prepare proposals for activities and projects and find supporting arguments likely to convince the others, and in which they are expected to lead debates or take part in evaluation sessions. In the Scottish group, on the other hand, the youngest, who are not in a position of responsibility, discuss their activities within their patrols but do not have to propose or defend their proposals, or take part in evaluation meetings.

## 2.c Confidence in abilities

A number of comments indicate that the young people have developed greater confidence in their ability to achieve what they set out to do, to organise and manage their affairs and to overcome problems along the way. This aspect is especially apparent amongst the Venture Scouts interviewed and the older adolescents in the Scottish Scout troop.

*"It's true that Scouting brought me out of my shell. In the beginning I was very shy, I was afraid of people. I think that if I find it so easy to make friends and everything, it's partly due to Scouting that I've learned to become more sure of myself... I find that it's brought me out of my shell and it does me good. I would be much more at ease if I were to find myself propelled into an unknown environment. I'd know how to deal with things, adapt to the place, too."*

*"... A bit more self-confidence because you're less scared to do things. It's clear that it has taught me how to cope... to phone anywhere or to ask for information. I see my sister, she's completely different from us, she copes less well on her own, you have to do a lot of things for her, whereas we deal with things on our own, well, we try, we don't know how to do everything either."*

*"You learn to cope on your own. There are loads of things that I would never have done if I hadn't been in Scouting. We do our projects, it's up to us to organise them, we have more opportunities to do things than in everyday life."*

*"It's taught me to organise myself in a lot of areas, in school meetings and at Scouts, when you've got the hang of organising, you can pass that on straight away to others. You learn progressively through meetings and activities."*

The young people describe camps and expeditions that they have done with their Scout unit as unique experiences that have helped them to learn to manage their time and resources, and to face and deal with difficulties.



A number of factors in dynamic interaction appear to contribute to the young people's self-confidence. In addition to the effects of maturation, the factors mentioned explicitly by the young people include the climate of mutual trust and the closeness that they feel for each other, developed through sharing a variety of meaningful experiences over time; a team spirit that results from this; and the group dynamics that pushes them to overcome any initial apprehension, to undertake projects and to overcome difficulties which they would probably never have done on their own. Some point out that while the impact of the group is important to support and encourage them to push forward, personal will power is still necessary to face difficulties and reach their goals.

*"You have to trust people, you have to be with others to be able to do something big... You have to trust people, it's important. You have to be adventurous too, sometimes you can be amazed. Not giving up at the first difficulty, trying to go beyond them, getting out of [the mess], feeling less scared of difficulties... You have to want to get out of your habits, to discover others, to come out of your shell."*

Some of the comments indicate that the fact of passing on the skills acquired to the younger members helps the older members to realise the amount of progress made and encourages a sense of pride in their accomplishments. On the other hand, a few young people who have found it difficult to master certain skills deemed to be important by the group and by the leaders have felt demotivated by their relatively unsuccessful efforts.

Although not explicitly mentioned by the young people in this context, the support of the leader also appears to play an important role in this respect. The leader must be able to ensure an educational direction to their activities while allowing the young people to have a freedom of choice, to experiment, to take initiative and to organise themselves. He or she must provide encouragement, ensure security, sustain motivation, an atmosphere of conviviality and mutual respect, and take care of aspects which are as yet substantially beyond the current capacities of the young people.

### 3. SELF-AWARENESS 3.a Self-analysis

Many of the Venture Scouts mention that the Scout experience has helped them to gain a deeper knowledge of themselves. According to their explanations, it is especially their growing understanding and appreciation of others through meaningful experiences over time, the wide variety of situations, environments and other cultures to which they have been exposed, occasions to reflect on the meaning of those experiences, coupled with a greater capacity for self-reflection as they have matured that have helped them to analyse themselves. Many of the young people also point out that the fact of learning to understand themselves better has helped them to try to understand and find qualities in other people.

*"It's an opportunity to analyse yourself through getting to know others. We're still fairly frank when we talk about what's bothering us. We think about it, whereas if we hadn't been in Venture Scouts, maybe we wouldn't have thought about it or we wouldn't have wanted to change."*

*"I've also learned to get to know and to analyse others, to see what they're thinking, and to analyse myself."*

*"I go to Venture Scouts to learn to cope, [to gain] maturity... understanding. The relationships developed with the others over the years makes us discover people. Venture Scouts is a different way of living, it's other experiences, events and from the point of view of maturity, it certainly helps, it helps us to grow up."*

The Scout structure seems to be important in this respect as opportunities to cooperate, face difficulties together and to share group life are relatively rare in the school context.

*"The classroom is a necessary evil. It always remains superficial. During camp, your individual personality is revealed. There is much less hypocrisy. Each camp produces results, especially in terms of knowing oneself and of knowing how to be part of a community. You also discover yourself and see how you react to situations which you don't encounter at school."*

### 3.b Discovery or reinforcement of talents, aptitudes and personal interests

The parents and the young people both find that Scouting brings out the latent talents and reinforces the existing talents of each person. In a few cases, they have found particular interests that they would like to pursue professionally. In the Venture Scout units, the majority of the young people indicate that they have chosen responsibilities and tasks to assume according to their interests and talents.

*"Discovering things, no, it's the opposite, it's more like pursuing interests that I already had. Being in Scouts enables me to do everything I love."*

It appears that the opportunities to experiment with a wide variety of skill-learning activities and responsibilities, together with the emphasis on developing self-confidence and mutual support in the groups, encourages the young person to overcome his apprehension at taking on challenges, and to discover or further develop existing talents, aptitudes and personal interests. For some, this has meant developing their aptitude to lead other young people, for others, it has meant developing their manual or creative skills.

Some of the leaders and families point out that Scouting will not have a major impact on the young person in areas which do not correspond to his or her basic personality.

*“Scouting enables [the young people] to live experiences which lead them to question themselves. It gives everyone the opportunity to learn and to cope and to try out things, but according to their aptitudes and personal interests... Being a [team] leader is an opportunity to reveal his capacities, but Scouting will not develop it if the young person does not have that kind of temperament.”*

*“The personality doesn’t change, but you learn a lot of things, you know how far you can go, you know yourself better, you know yourself and the others.”*

#### 4. THE YOUNG PERSON IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

##### 4.a The quality of the young people’s relationships with others in the group

The majority of those interviewed are rather active and sociable by nature and have friends outside of the Scouting circle. Nonetheless, the majority of the older adolescents in all three groups and their families find that the relationships developed through Scouting are deeper and more authentic than those established through school<sup>104</sup>. Amongst those interviewed, the need to have a circle of friends their own age who share the same interests and to whom they feel close appears most prominent in those aged 14-15 and above.

The majority of young people and parents feel that Scouting is above all an experience of life through contact with others. The troop or unit constitutes a micro-society with its code of living and customs which can be seen in the thousand and one things that are part of daily life in the group. The main difference that the leaders, parents and young people notice between those who have been in Scouting and those who have not concerns mainly the fact that they communicate and relate more openly with others.

Together the young people develop an experience of group life which contributes to consolidating the ties in the group. In the Belgian group in particular, the young people point out that it is just as much the experiences constructed and lived through with friends and the notion of a common challenge that contributes to influencing their attitudes and their active participation in the functioning of the group. In this group, the activities provide a framework which stimulates the group but it is the possibility of creating more solid bonds within a group of friends which attracts them, and the activities are to a certain extent a “pretext to be together”.

---

<sup>104</sup> See Part II, Chapter II: The young people’s perceptions of peer relationships within the unit or troop.

The majority of adults who had been Scouts also describe their motivation for Scouting as having being due to the relationships developed between the young people and to the group dynamics.

According to the young people's comments, it takes about six months for the newcomer to feel that he or she is a fully-fledged member of the group. The process of integration is facilitated by camps<sup>105</sup> during which the newcomer has the time and opportunity to become acquainted with the others on a more profound level. Many of the young people mention their first camp as being a turning-point in their relationships with others and in feeling that they have become an integral part of the group. The insistence of the leaders that newcomers join the group well before the first camp appears to be beneficial in the sense that the newcomers will already be familiar with the others and will have already contributed, in some small way, to the success of the camp. The welcome provided by the others in the group is evidently important, and appears to be more spontaneous amongst the older members.

*"We learn to be more assertive and to cope on our own. We are self-confident... it makes me have more confidence in myself, I think. The way you are welcomed into the group is different in Venture Scouts, I think that's a bit what gives you more confidence, the group is present."*

The parents who had been Scouts remember especially the atmosphere of conviviality and of friendship of the camps that they had been to, and it is partially for this reason that they encouraged their children to join Scouting.

*"In the beginning it's learning to live together, to share events... Camps bring a lot... You have wonderful memories, it's a whole past that is shared."*

The young people share this view. The majority feel that it is mainly living together during the camps that has enabled them to learn spontaneously about living with others and to get to know others better. The experiences shared and the difficulties faced together have made them more apt to understand each other, to appreciate each other, and have developed a closeness to those with whom they have shared the experiences. They feel very attached to their group and feel that they can count on each other.

*"The unit is my second home, it's like being at home."*

As mentioned earlier, the young people's comments indicate that their contact with other young people also helps them to understand themselves better. They search to discover themselves through the approval of their peers and friends, try to understand themselves by comparing themselves to others and by observing the way in which the other members react to their ideas and behaviour.

---

<sup>105</sup> In this context, camps refer to activities lasting several days away from home.

Concerning the relationships between boys and girls in the coeducational groups, the young people find that they have been able to get to know the members of the other sex much better than they are able to in a school context. Many comments indicate that through working together in a variety of situations, they have been able to get to know and to appreciate each other as individuals, thus helping to break down stereotyped images.

*"It's not really that we don't have any contact with girls, but at school, it's maybe more superficial... Whereas at Venture Scouts, you really see girls from a different angle... Here, you see everyone busy working, you really see people the way they are, you see them in every possible situation... It really helps to get to know them better."*

In a few cases, the group has been a unique environment in which young people experiencing difficulties have been lent an ear. They found a friendly and reassuring atmosphere at times when they were experiencing conflicts with their family and felt isolated. When dialogue was established between Scouts and the family, the young people have felt better able to put the crisis into perspective.

*"I have learned things from living in the group, it's helped me. There are difficult moments from time to time, where it offers a comfort and stuff, I find that really important... André told me that if he hadn't had the Venture Scouts, he wouldn't have coped, it could have turned badly. I find that important because it gives young people something to do other than being in the streets and doing just anything."*

Amongst the leaders interviewed, some are particularly sensitive to this aspect as they themselves benefited from the support of the group when they were young.

In a few cases, the relationships developed within Scouting have helped the young person to establish and consolidate friendships outside of Scouting.

*"I have learned to live with others, my relationships with my friends are much better since I've been in Venture Scouts. I feel more attached to friends now, before I often changed friends. Becoming integrated somewhere, I feel that those who have not been Scouts are more timid... us, when we go into a shop, we simply ask [for what we want]."*

#### 4.b Self-assertiveness, discovery of limits to personal freedom and the development of tolerance for others

The comments of the parents, leaders and young people indicate that the majority of those who were initially timid have gained greater self-confidence and are more self-assertive. The leaders' insistence on giving an opportunity to each young person to express himself and on

developing and maintaining a climate of mutual respect and support is certainly a contributing factor. By the same token, most of those who tended to be “bossy”, or who tended to ignore other people’s needs or feelings have gradually become more aware of the need to take others into account.

Through taking part in activities and preparing and carrying out projects together, the young people have been able to discover the need to develop self-discipline in the way in which they treat others. Through observing the behaviour and attitudes of their elders, and through observing the group’s reactions to their own behaviour and attitudes, learning to express their disagreement through frank but non-aggressive discussion, experiencing the need to adjust to each other, etc., the majority of the young people have become aware of limitations and rules to observe to be able to function effectively in the group and to establish harmonious relations with each other.

*“It has changed my attitude a bit... not judging others without knowing them, without trying to understand their true worth.”*

*“You can usually recognise someone who has been a Scout immediately, though not always. It’s their way of treating others, of knowing how to live in a group. When you live in a group, you are forced to make concessions, sometimes to think more of the group than of yourself.”*

*“Living in a group, being able to respect the rules, being able to give yourself rules, being able to limit yourself, because that too is important... being able to discuss all those things, I think it’s a lot thanks to Venture Scouts that we do that.”*

*“We’re in a kind of little society, and we live with people. We adapt to them, we don’t stay in our little corner. We have to be in contact with the people around us.”*

*“You have to know how to conform to the rules of the group, take part even if you don’t like it, you can’t go into your little corner, you have to make an effort, you live in a community.”*

While the young people have developed a liking for group activities, group life inevitably entails conflicts which they do not hesitate to point out. They feel, however, that these antagonisms have been useful as they have eventually led to a greater mutual understanding, respect and enrichment. The older members remark that it is thanks to these experiences that they also feel more at ease in expressing their points of view during disagreements.

*“Basically, it’s especially where you learn to respect others... We’re much more mature. We know how to dose things and take care about what we say, but you still have to say things. When we’re not happy with something, we talk about it... I certainly don’t have any problems in that area.”*

In the three groups, decisions tend to be made on the basis of the wishes of the majority. For some, having to swallow their own desires to enable the group's wishes to come first has been very difficult.

*"From the point of view of living all together, learning to be more tolerant, there are some things we'd give a miss... It's really something that's tough and maybe when you're not used to living in a group, it's different, that's for sure."*

While the use of the patrol/team system inevitably means that the young people often work and live with the same small group and therefore to get to know their team members particularly well, the leaders in all three groups have tried to ensure that the young people have opportunities to get to know and work with others in the troop or unit, albeit to varying degrees and in different ways according to the group<sup>106</sup>. Though not exempt from difficulties, it is especially through working with other members that they know less well (or with others outside of the group during projects) that they feel that they are learning to understand a greater range of people with personalities different from their own and from different walks of life, thus contributing to their experience of life.

*"Because of Scouts, sometimes I had to get on with someone that didn't like that much. Sometimes, I met people and became friends with them, and I generally got to understand other people a lot more... you have to appreciate how other people work, because nobody works the same way you do. In general, I am not sure, but I have picked up an awful lot just sort of from being with people."*

*"When you leave school you don't have much experience of life, here we get more experience of life because we've met a lot of people."*

#### 4.c Experience of interdependence, the development of a sense of responsibility towards others and solidarity

The young people's comments indicate that it is the opportunities to share responsibilities, meaningful experiences and friendships that they have progressively become aware of their responsibilities and the bonds of interdependence which unite the members of the group. They have integrated the need to play an active role, to bring a personal contribution to the work and life of the group. They feel that it is thanks to the structure and way of working in their group that each person develops a feeling of belonging and of having a contribution to make. Moreover, some point out that each member of the group is an indispensable element but that each can contribute in his own way and make the group benefit from his personal talents. In

---

<sup>106</sup> See Part I, Chapter III: An overview of the activities and ways of working in each group.

this sense, the ways of working in the groups have been able, in different ways, to meet their need to feel recognised as individuals, to feel useful and to exercise their share of responsibility.

*"It makes us more responsible, we become more aware that we are quite indispensable, that we have to fulfil our roles because if we don't, it may be to the detriment of others. So we have to do it."*

*"We're asked to be more responsible, we have a role to play, we're not here to be submitted to things. We have to prepare the activities, they won't happen on their own. We have to contribute everything necessary for things to turn out well. You can't just be there, you have to participate, which is already more important. We feel older, we feel well integrated seeing as we contribute something. You have to have responsibilities because we all depend on each other, that's what living in a group is all about, in fact."*

*"Those who have not done Scouting, they're missing lots of things. They're missing the fact of loving nature, of forming a group, of knowing what a group can do. Alone, you can do lots of things, but in a group, all kinds of projects are open [for consideration]. Going to Romania, it's impossible to do that alone. You have to have a close-knit group with good leaders, otherwise it's sure to flop."*

*"You learn to take initiative, to carry out a task, to do concrete things. To me, it seems clear that that helps things in our community to advance. We have lived through things, we gain things from that, it helps in doing things outside of the Scout community as well, in other contexts."*

The answers indicate that in the majority of cases, it is especially through the responsibilities undertaken that the young people feel that what they are experiencing is meaningful. However, while responsibility is referred to in the majority of answers as a direct consequence of the Scout experience, it is not a major element which attracts and retains the young people. The comments of the senior members in the two Venture Scout units show that it is often the aspect of discovery, opportunities to do something for the first time or to undertake projects that they would not otherwise have the opportunity to do which underlies their interest in the activities. The majority of the young people in the three groups admit that it is essentially the enjoyment that they derive from being together and doing activities together which motivates them. They are aware that they have to work to carry out their project and reach their objectives, but having fun is essential<sup>107</sup>.

---

<sup>107</sup> This aspect was also prominent in the study of the University of Aberdeen, Craik & al., 1992. They concluded that it is crucial to integrate this dimension in the methods and objectives when working with young people, otherwise the educational impact may not be able to take place.



The families and leaders interviewed attach great importance to developing a spirit of sharing and solidarity. The young people's comments also indicate that they adhere to these values and try to put them into practice in their Scout life. Over two-thirds of the young respondents (60-73%) state that the experience of life in the group has helped them to become more receptive to the needs of others. They have become more conscious of the need to help each other and are more apt to cooperate with others.

*"The fundamental principle is being able to live with others, to share, not to be selfish... You have to go towards other people, not to be reserved, you have to know how to help out. At Scouts, you're always doing things together, it's better when you do things together. Some things you can do alone, but it's good if you can share a job."*

*"I'm an only child so my parents tried to bring me up [as if I weren't an only child]... Being in a group has perhaps helped me to learn things like sharing. It's helped me to live in a group and not stay in my little corner. I find that really useful at school, it's useful everywhere."*

For some, helping people in need is something they do spontaneously in everyday life as they feel a personal satisfaction in doing so. However, for the majority, it is especially within their unit or troop that they give a helping hand spontaneously. The sense of solidarity is reinforced by the sense of interdependence and friendship between the members. Helping each other within the group appears meaningful to them as they can see the impact of their action and sense the strengthening relationships. Some regret that the development of solidarity and cooperation are not more widespread in the school system.

The majority of the young people interviewed were made familiar very early with the idea of service to others both within the family and in Scouting. The majority find that service to others is primarily a "moral obligation" to which they have become more receptive as they have grown older. Many find that it is mainly the group dynamics that encourages them to undertake service activities as individually they would probably not make the same amount of effort.

*"You don't need to be a Scout to feel concern for others, but it's certain that when you are a Scout, it helps to feel more concerned. Helping others, we do it because we're in Scouting, because we feel concerned and because we feel that, at least, you're not alone in doing it."*

*"It's important to help out other people. Often when you help out, you feel closer to people because they're much more open. Some people need help, it's normal, it's our duty to help out."*

Due to a number of discouraging experiences<sup>108</sup> many of the young people, in fact, strongly dislike certain kinds of service activities. The service activities that seem more meaningful to them are those which they perceive to provide a source of personal enrichment through getting to know the people they are helping, discovering new aspects of life, and being able to see the impact of their action. Some parents agree with this and point out that service projects and caring for others should ultimately be able to contribute to the young people's personal development.

*"I have often heard them talking about how they've found the experiences they have lived through as personally enriching. When you present a project, the aim is for the benefit of others, but it is especially an opportunity to experience something new, to develop."*

## 5. DECISION-MAKING

Only a third of the French and Scottish respondents feel that Scouting has helped them to make choices and decisions, whereas half of the Belgian Venture Scout unit consider that the Scout experience has helped in this area. The higher level of positive responses from the young Belgians may reflect their greater participation in the decisions concerning the unit's affairs. Both the Belgian and the French Venture Scouts mention a greater awareness of the responsibility involved in the decision-making process than they did at Scout age. It appears from their comments that they are more apt to weigh the possible consequences of various options and once a decision has been taken, it becomes a challenge to follow through on it. The fact of finding themselves with senior, more experienced members and more challenging projects appears to stimulate the junior members in this respect. Nonetheless, many of the young people find that assuming the consequences of their decisions is difficult and sometimes unpleasant<sup>109</sup>.

*"I think that the first year in Venture Scouts has brought me a lot, the fact of being in the second year and to look back on what I did last year brings a lot... First, there's the fact that I got out of home... There's the way of acting according to the situation, to assume the decision you have taken, to follow through on a decision you've made, to accept the consequences. I think that I have gained a lot from that point of view. Taking responsibility for what you say, think and do, not to give up. I think that Scouting has given me a lot of those things. Age [has contributed] too."*

---

<sup>108</sup> See Part II, Chapter VI: The young people's views on helping others, community service and contact with their community.

<sup>109</sup> See Part II, Chapter VII: The young people's perceptions concerning their experiences of decision-making and responsibility in Scouting and their involvement in planning and evaluation.

*"It's true that I've got better at making choices. Before, I kept hesitating, I didn't do anything, and now we're forced to make choices, so I don't hesitate as much."*

## 6. APTITUDE AND CAPACITY TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY

### 6.a General

In the three groups the capacity to take on responsibility is perceived as an absolute necessity for succeeding in adult life and the majority of the young people interviewed state that progressively learning to take on responsibilities throughout their time in Scouting will remain with them as an acquisition for the future. Their comments indicate that opportunities to undertake challenging responsibilities within the school or family context are less frequent.

They point out the interdependence between the process of integration in the group and the development of the aptitude to assume responsibilities. When the young people arrive, they need time to get to know others and to become familiar with the operating methods before they feel ready to become actively involved and assume responsibility. Conversely, the fact of contributing actively to the achievement of projects and activities and to the well-being of the group helps the newcomer to become integrated. The extent of responsibility that they assume becomes progressively greater as they acquire practical skills and gain confidence in their abilities.

*"I think that it is important to take on responsibilities, not straight away when you arrive, because you feel a bit lost, you want to see how things work. You're a bit passive at first, but then you become integrated into the group... Now I'm going to try to take on responsibilities, to help the others... The more you grow up, the more opportunities you have to take on responsibilities."*

*"Taking on responsibilities... it's an essential step in life, that's the only way you can succeed in life I think. You have to take responsibility for yourself."*

The majority of the parents interviewed (the average of the three groups is 86.6% - a variation of 75-100%) and the young people state that it is thanks to being directly involved in the functioning of the group and participating in the responsibilities and decisions that they have been able to discover faster than others the ups and downs of life. The roles and responsibilities which they assume have forced them to face difficulties directly. They have also enabled the young people to gain self-confidence through being able to overcome obstacles, and thus to progressively feel more "adult". These experiences have contributed to increasing their desire to invest time and energy in carrying out their projects and reaching their objectives<sup>110</sup>.

---

<sup>110</sup> See Part II, Chapter VII.

*“For those in Scouting, learning about life comes a little faster, you discover more things than if you aren't in it... Those who aren't in the Movement don't have the opportunity to discover things like we do, or if they do, it's by chance much later... For one thing we accept responsibilities much earlier compared to other people. We're prepared to take on responsibilities younger, those who do not live like us don't have the experience in terms of decisions.”*

*“It's really a unique experience... it must be helpful for life because you learn to live together... It helps you to learn loads of things, I can't imagine that Scouting doesn't change anything. Taking on responsibilities, later on in life we're going to have to take on responsibilities... make phone calls, write things, do all kinds of things.”*

Relatively fewer of the comments of the young Scots interviewed (50%) explicitly indicate that they have developed their capacity to assume responsibility as a result of their Scout experience. However, only answers which illustrated a perceived personal change in this area were taken into account. It is probable that the impact is underestimated as the percentage would increase to 91% if all the answers of the young people who mention learning to become responsible without any direct reference to their personal experience or to feeling more prepared for adult life were taken into account.

## 6.b Responsibility for leading a patrol or team

In all three groups, the young people who have the responsibility of leading a small group (patrol, team or mission) derive a sense of self-worth from this function of responsibility. It is a responsibility generally reserved for the more senior members who have gained experience and have developed the capacity to be able to organise, coordinate and lead their team's work. Being elected or appointed to carry out this job is therefore a sign of recognition of those abilities, of a certain level of maturity and of popularity within the group.

In the Scottish group, where the development of the aptitude to lead others, of respect for authority and of group discipline are part of the educational objectives (and are part of the socio-cultural values of the families and their environment), the impact of the Scout experience on the development of leadership skills is much more frequent in the young people's answers (45%), as well in their parents' replies (63%), than in the other two groups.

In contrast, in the francophone Venture Scout units, less value seems to be attached to hierarchic structures. Some of the young people in these two groups refuse the term “chef”<sup>111</sup> to describe the function of managing the work of a team as it does not correspond either to the

---

<sup>111</sup> The French term for team leader is “chef d'équipe”. “Chef” can also mean “boss”.

way in which they perceive their role nor to their vision of the relationships they have with their team members. The majority feel more concerned about their ability to develop a spirit of cooperation and a sense of responsibility amongst their team members, than by ensuring the functioning of a hierarchic structure or by the exercise of authority.

Despite these differences, the opinions in the three groups are similar concerning the need to develop attentiveness to others and to develop the capacity of the young people to cooperate and help each other.

Most of the young people aspire to this position (perhaps unconsciously for some) throughout their time in the group. However, not all of the young people who would like to become team or patrol leaders will be able to do so. Some of them will not be able to master the technical skills or show the aptitude to be able to lead others sufficiently to be elected or appointed to this position. In some instances, even though they may have the potential, the number of young candidates for the role may be greater than the number of patrols/teams available to lead. It appears that this situation can be a source of demotivation for those who are unlikely to be appointed. Although becoming a team leader is a “desirable” aim in all three groups, the system of missions (which operates in parallel to that of the teams) in the Venture Scout units offers opportunities to a greater number of young people to lead others by heading a mission<sup>112</sup>.

## 7. TECHNICAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS

In the three groups the majority of the young people interviewed (77-90%) state that through Scouting they have been able to develop technical and practical skills which are learned mainly through hands-on experience. The young people interviewed in the Venture Scout units point out the efficiency of this approach compared to what they experience at school.

The nature of the skills learned differs from one group to the next and reflects the diversity of activities and projects in which they take part. The young people mention for example, mechanics, masonry, gardening, journalism, audiovisuals, leading activities or campfire evenings, photography, organisation of dinners or parties, budget management, as well as more traditional Scouting skills (orienteering, knots, setting up camps, first aid, etc.). In the Scottish and French groups, the young people also mention the various sports as skills. Some have discovered talents or personal interests through the Scout activities and have used the skills at home.

---

<sup>112</sup> This is so to a lesser extent in the French group as the heads of missions are often team leaders.

*"I first learned to use my hands, because I didn't know how to do anything with my hands. The first year, they had to explain how to do things, then after that I really enjoyed being able to learn. With Hervé and Daniel, I'm going to mend the roof [of the Scout building]... it's something I've never done, but I think we'll manage anyway... Daniel is going to explain everything. If later it has to be redone, maybe it'll be me who explains to the others, I really like that idea... At home, I repaired the tiles, I did the cementing and it worked really well. There's still a door to repair, they're things I like doing."*

*"Games, backwoods cooking, workshops, overnight camps... I had never used a compass."*

The technical and practical skills appear to contribute to the young people's self-confidence. This is perhaps because the progress made is of a more measurable nature than the development of skills in other areas. For the older members within the groups, the sense of pride in their accomplishments is reinforced by the fact that the younger members tend to admire their abilities in areas in which they themselves would like to progress. The realisation of the progress made is also reinforced by helping the junior members to acquire these and other skills which they too once found difficult. Skills which can be put to use in everyday life also help them to feel more autonomous.

The acquisition of these skills generally constitutes the bulk of the work for the badges and awards which the younger or newer members are often keen to collect, especially in the Scottish Scout troop and, to a lesser extent, in the French Venture Scout unit<sup>113</sup>. The motivation to collect as many badges as possible tends to diminish, however, as the young people reach mid-adolescence.

While they tend to enjoy experimenting with a wide variety of skill-learning activities, it is especially the opportunity to choose from a range of skills to develop according to their aptitudes and interests that appears important to them. The comments of a few young people indicate that they had sometimes felt demotivated when they felt expected to acquire skills in areas which they found particularly difficult or in which they were not at all interested.

The parents mention that their children have gained technical and practical skills through Scouting, but only 20% of the parents in the Scottish group and 33% of the Belgian families consider these skills to be a major aspect of what they feel the young people have learned. In the French group, a greater proportion of parents, leaders and young people (90% of those interviewed) attach a high level of importance to these skills, thus reflecting the emphasis placed on this area in this group.

---

<sup>113</sup> The Belgian group operates according to an informal progressive scheme and does not award badges.

*"Here, I have learned to take good photos. Before my photos used to be bad, but with tips here and there, you learn fast. I've learned pot-holing, at first it's scary, but once you've got the knack, it's easy... I really like dealing with sound, installing the amplifiers with a mixing table, it's great fun. I sorted it out at the church with my cousin... At first I didn't know anything about masonry. At school you learn the theory, here we learn as we go, and so it really goes in... I've learned to write things, to store equipment, I've learned everything."*

Few parents or young people mention media skills as a major acquisition. Only one-third of the Scottish and French parents mention it, and a little less than half of the Belgian parents. The Belgian families mention this more often as during the period of the interviews the year's project was to make a video film with a scenario developed and written by the young people and some of the young people were particularly enthusiastic at having discovered new interests and talents through using their skills in a creative way.

*"I'm good at French, and I'm writing the script. We do activities which we're good at. It also helps to see where our talents lie. Really at Venture Scouts you do what you're good at."*

## 8. INFLUENCE ON ATTITUDES TO LIFE

### 8.a General

The respondents point out that the skills learned in this respect are difficult to define, but explain that Scout life tends to develop a certain outlook on life, a way of viewing and tackling situations, and of actively seeking to overcome problems. The main attitudes mentioned by those interviewed are openness to others, greater availability for others, greater resourcefulness, a greater sense of initiative and of taking responsibility for oneself.

*"Making decisions concerning your career, that's more diplomas... Seeing what you expect out of life... when you've done Scouting, maybe you have different leisure activities, you're more active... closer to the environment, to everything around us."*

*"[Being in Venture Scouts] gives me a different outlook on life generally... I see things from a different point of view... I don't seek to just have fun as much... I have the impression of being more adult, more mature, of getting closer to really doing something, to see reality more clearly."*

The majority of young people point out that it is especially the multiplicity and diversity of experiences lived through and shared that has contributed to enlarging their perspectives and vision of the world.

## 8.b A more dynamic, active approach to life

The parents, leaders and the young people in the three groups unanimously point out that Scouting's structured framework has enabled the young people to develop a dynamic approach to leisure-time activities, to expand their social horizons beyond school and family and to do a wide variety of activities that they see as more enriching than passively passing time in front of the television. This opportunity is all the more appreciated by those whose family context offers relatively few occasions to meet others and take part in activities (the case of only children, for example).

The comments of the families and of the young people show that the peer group constitutes a mobilising factor which encourages the young people to gain confidence in their capacity to act as they have a space for freedom which enables them to live their own experiences, to deal with difficulties while being supported by the group's structure. Some young people point out that this has enabled them to give themselves aims, to stimulate them to make decisions, while others find that it has reinforced their capacity to organise themselves and to persevere to make their project work.

*"I think that if I can cope, it's thanks to Venture Scouts. I would be passive if I hadn't done all that... If I got lost in a city now, I would always be able to find my way. It's something that's useful to me now. I see people at school who can't make a decision if something's wrong, they don't know what to do. So, yes, from that point of view, coping and sense of initiative, I think it has really helped me... It has taught us to be active and not passive. Nowadays we're much more likely to expect everything to fall from heaven. When you're at camp and you're cold, you have to make a fire, and you have to do it yourself. If we're lost, we have to ask for directions. It's unusual for people to be able to cope, some people wouldn't have the faintest idea of how to do the simplest things."*

*"First of all, [Scouting] is something to do on the weekends. It takes up most of the year, so I don't sit around in front of the TV, I see people. I take part in things, it makes me feel alive. You meet people and make friends... In a group like [ours], we set ourselves goals... maybe it's easier to reach a goal [when you're in a group] than trying to do everything on your own. When you're in a group, it's easier to make a wish come true, a goal... it's easier and it's more fun."*

*"At Venture Scouts you take initiative, you take on responsibility for something, it's just like working life... It helps to make you more conscious of what you're doing... Before I kept on starting things which I never finished. But now when I have a job to do, I make myself stick at it. I try to get myself organized, get things done in good time. Sometimes it's not easy though."*



### 8.c A greater aptitude to take initiative and overcome obstacles

Amongst the areas in which the Scout experience is considered to have had an impact, the aptitude to respond actively to situations, to have gained confidence in their capacity to face the unexpected and find solutions to everyday problems are in the top three mentioned the most frequently by the young people (70-100%) and by their parents (65-72%). In their daily lives and at school, they have already had the opportunity to realise that when confronted with obstacles, they can better assess the situation, make a judgement and take action.

*“What I’ve gained [from Scouting] is a different way of tackling problems, initiative, more will power to take care of a problem myself... whereas normally you tell yourself that someone else will surely deal with it for me.”*

*“You learn to cope... You learn to remain calm and to react well in the face of adversity.”*

### 8.d Greater openness to others

The comments of the families and the young people often mention the development of openness to others as being a result of the Scout experience.

*“I’m certainly more open to other people’s proposals in general, that’s certainly it, in my view. Yes, I’ve learned a lot, but I don’t know how to explain it, it’s more like a general state of openness and understanding.”*

This view seems to be shared more widely in the Scout population and beyond as in a study carried out amongst Scout leaders in an area of France, “open” is one of the adjectives that came to their minds the most often in association with Scouting and Scouts<sup>114</sup>. Nonetheless, this capacity for openness is probably not only due to the effects of Scouting, as it could probably also be observed in other young people who regularly practise leisure activities outside of the family or school context (such as sports, or cultural activities).

The answers indicate that it is above all the experience of learning to live and work together during Scout camps that brings about a change of perspective as they provide opportunities for each person to explore his potential, discover limits and to develop his personality through interaction with others in the pursuit of a common goal. Camps are also frequently described as unique opportunities to develop mutual understanding and appreciation and to feel an important part of a team. Some parents point out that this attitude is also

---

<sup>114</sup> “Engagement et culture entre scoutisme annoncé et scoutisme représenté”, J. Lefébure, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris III, 1993.

reflected in their children's school life as they are more available for others, and more apt to work in teams.

*"We try to work together, and in the job that we will do in life, there will certainly be attitudes that can be [attributed to Scouting]. The fact of not always thinking about yourself, but to tell yourself that you may work for others. I think sociability."*

## 9. INFLUENCE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF VALUES

The young people's comments indicate an understanding and personal adherence to the code of living of their groups, and many of the values mentioned are similar. The vast majority of the comments of the young people interviewed (73-94%) describe one or more "values" when talking of the areas of development or skills gained as a result of their Scout experience. Some point out that as far as they are concerned, this area is more important than the development of technical and practical skills.

*"Doing knots, it's not really what interested me... It's especially the values that I've learned... The values that I've learned through Scouting, they'll be with me for the rest of my life... It's in the things that we live, all the little slaps in the face that you feel when you see underprivileged people... They're things that teach us to live, that we have nothing to complain about."*

The values mentioned the most often in the three groups are responsibility, respect for others, the ability to become integrated and take part in a form of community life. The parents as well as the young people are unanimous in recognising the influence of the Scout experience in developing a sense of responsibility, sharing and a spirit of tolerance. Nonetheless, in each group one can observe dominant characteristics which reflect the different approaches in the way the educational objectives are translated.

The comments of many of the older adolescents in particular indicate that it is especially life close to nature, meaningful experiences and the strong relationships developed that have helped them to reflect on basic human values, their relationship to the world in general, as well as on their everyday environment and their personal lives. Many comments indicate that their reflection has led them to question their own attitudes and behaviour and to modify, or attempt to modify, certain attitudes or aspects of their behaviour which did not seem to be coherent with the values that they find important.

*"I think that there are a lot of values in our group that you don't even find in school any more... I have the feeling that when we're at camp, you really find true values and you forget about the really superficial little daily niggles... I don't know why I was always getting upset about little things... you don't need luxury or particular comfort... I think that's good."*

*"Sleeping under the stars, it's an experience that has to be lived. It's the beginning of survival, it'll help me in the army later. The atmosphere of living as a group, the group spirit, the spirit of sharing."*

*"Camping, living with others with actually very little, standing back from everything material, from material things, and at the same time savouring the fact of going home. I've never been wasteful, but I always noticed when I went home how lucky we were."*

The margin of initiative and autonomy given to the young people has given them confidence in their capacity to act, to feel a sense of self-worth through accomplishing their projects, and also to experience concretely the sense of effort and the value of work. In the groups where they are asked to contribute directly to financing projects, the majority consider that this experience has been enriching as it has enabled them to develop practical skills, to realise the effort necessary to find the funding needed, and in some cases to appreciate their family situation differently.

*"You learn to deal with things yourself... you have to work to get things. Sometimes, you don't realise, at home you expect the meal to be cooked, there's the fridge, everything's paid, you don't realise. When you have to work to help pay for the camp, you realise that earning money isn't easy, but it's an interesting experience."*

The majority of the young people believe that what they have experienced through Scouting has brought them to change their perspectives, their way of thinking and reacting, but that the evolution is due to the combined effect of family education, Scouting and personal maturation. The relative impact of each of the factors is not often expressed and analysed consciously, but both the young people and the leaders point out that the awareness of the importance of the various contributing sources and of personal change becomes much more perceptible at mid-adolescence.

*"I think it does have an influence, but unconsciously. I don't know how the others feel about it, but I'm sure that it has changed my mentality, my way of seeing things... I've gained experience with the Scouts and without it I'm sure that I'd be different. I'm happy to be in Venture Scouts, it's brought me a lot, a vision of the world and of people that is different from the one I would have had if I hadn't been in Scouting."*

The majority of young people who have had the opportunity to discover cultures and social milieus very different from their own find that the fact of discovering others ways of life and sharing the same conditions of life as the local population have helped them to become more conscious of the advantages and particularities of their own social environment, to enlarge their vision and understanding of the meaning of solidarity and to question their own attitudes. Some of them find that these experiences have also had an effect on the way in which they relate to others.

*"If other [young people] want to go, I'd encourage them to experience things like Romania, because it's a good way to question yourself. You realise a lot of things... I'd tell them to be careful, it's not easy, don't expect to land like Santa Claus. I wonder if unconsciously we didn't all think that we were going there to do good... When we came back, most of us felt that we'd received far more than we'd given."*

*"It was especially [going to] Romania that changed a lot of things. It changed the way I see things, the whole idea of sharing, how lucky we are... and not to waste what we have."*

The young people express the need to nourish and strengthen their aptitude for personal reflection through experiences and encounters with people that take them out of their usual environment. Discovering how other people live has stimulated them to want to put into everyday practice the values that they have discovered, but in the long term the results of the experiences seem also to depend on the receptivity of their social environment towards developing these values.

*"Now the Romania experience seems a little far away and I've fallen back into our society... I've got to start thinking of school again. I don't have any time left to think about it all, to question myself, to try to change. I don't know if I'd be able to, but I think I could change my behaviour sometimes, smile a bit more to other people. Stuff like that seemed really, really important."*

## 10. PREPARATION FOR ADULT LIFE

### 10.a Development of skills and attitudes perceived to be useful for adult life

The majority of the young people, leaders, and parents believe that Scouting makes an important contribution in helping young people with the transition towards adult life.

*"At Scouts you have fun... You don't feel like you're learning, but you always learn something. You never tell yourself when you're doing an activity, 'I'm learning something', but later in life you use it again... It helps a bit in later life, it prepares us."*

The percentage of young people who fully agree with the statement *"Since I've been in Scouts, I feel that I am better prepared for what I will have to do when I am an adult"* is greater in the Scottish Scout troop than in the two Venture Scout units (75% of the young Scots interviewed agreed with this statement). Nonetheless, it is difficult to discern in their replies how they perceive adulthood and why they feel better prepared. The youngest interviewed in this group mention mainly Scouting skills (knots, orienteering, first aid) and the sports activities, but are not able to explain precisely how they feel that these skills will be useful later on in life.

The older adolescents in the three groups explain their reservations concerning the statement. While they feel that Scouting has contributed in this area, they point out that they are becoming more mature in any case. Many of their comments indicate that it is the effects of the natural process of maturation in dynamic interaction with what they experience through Scouting that makes them feel that they are evolving towards adult roles. The main areas in which they feel better prepared for adult life concern the ability to assume responsibility, to cope with difficult situations and the ability to communicate with and relate to others.

*"It teaches us things like taking on responsibility, being tolerant, all those things you learn at Scouts. It's important for life later... I think it teaches us a way of life."*

A different explanation provided by a number of the young people as to why they feel that Scouting only partially prepares them for adult life is that they strongly associate "adult life" with "professional life", an area in which Scouting appears to have exerted relatively little influence.

#### 10.b Influence on the choice of career

Scouting appears to exert relatively little influence on the choice of a career for the young people in the case studies. The subject of employment is a major concern for the young people, particularly in the Venture Scout units where the young people are at an age where they have to make choices at school which will determine their future area of work, and are very much aware that finding a job is not an easy task. Many have a fairly precise idea of the area in which they would like to work (85% of the young Belgian respondents have decided on their future career, 82% of the French group, and 69% of the Scottish group). The careers mentioned vary, but the choices are largely conditioned by each person's aptitudes, exam results, potential job openings, career orientation proposed within the school framework and the socio-professional family experience. Very few of the young people interviewed feel that Scouting has influenced them in this area.

*"What I would really like to do is to be a photojournalist, that's my ideal job, work for a magazine like National Geographic... It's a dream, but in reality, a degree in photography doesn't count for much in Belgium. I know girls who've done that and have ended up behind a counter... So I'll study law which can take you more or less anywhere. My grandfather did law, he was a businessman, my father did law, he's a law specialist in a big company... Maybe I'll be a lawyer."*

*"I see myself working in an aeronautical company as an engineer, but that will depend on my exam results. My studies are more on the technical side, I'm not really into the Arts. I wouldn't like to work in a bank sitting in a chair all day. Of course, when you're an engineer,*

*sometimes you're in an office, but you can also be out in the field with the machines. That's what I'd like to do..."*

## 11. THE DOMINANT IMPACT OF THE SCOUT EXPERIENCE IN EACH CASE STUDY

### 11.a The Belgian Venture Scout unit

The dominant impact in this group is the experience of living as a group and learning to relate constructively to others. The parents of the young people interviewed in this unit consider that the greatest impact of their children's Scout experience is the development of the aptitude to share and to show tolerance towards others, and a commitment to group life. The young people fully agree with their parents on these aspects. They do not, however, find that the young people that they know in other units necessarily benefit in the same way.

*"I'm convinced... there's a very different spirit concerning sharing or the way you are with other people, or availability [for others]... It depends on the units, but here you can see it... You can really see the difference between those who've been [in Scouting] and those who haven't... it does a world of good and you can really see the difference..."*

The parents who had been Scouts in their youth observe that the practices have evolved and that their children are now encouraged to take more initiative than they were as Venture Scouts. The parents remember that when they were youngsters they were expected to obey their leaders' instructions. They find this change to be beneficial as it corresponds to changes in society and to the needs of today's generation of young people.

The present educational approach encourages the young people to express themselves more and value formation is treated differently. The parents had learned the Scout law by heart, but today the young people learn it experientially. The ways of working enable the young people to take on greater responsibility. The young people can discuss their differing opinions, express disagreement, but at the same time learn to accept each other. It is principally through taking care of the tasks involved in making the group function that the young people have progressively developed an awareness of their importance within the group. It is in this group that the feeling of attachment and cohesion appears the most developed: 69% of the young people state that they are proud to belong to this unit and want to see it continue to exist. It is amongst the former members of this Venture Scout unit that the quasi-totality of the leaders of the local Scout Group are recruited.

A few parents regret that a community spirit does not extend more to local social problems. The views of the families on this point tend to diverge, however, as other parents express reticence due to the fact that they find their local social environment fairly unsafe - some

young people have had their belongings stolen on the way to school or have been attacked in the evening. Thus, the majority of parents feel satisfied that their children have been able to find a safe environment beyond school and family. The majority of families find that it is especially thanks to the friendships developed within the unit that most of the young people have been able to develop self-confidence and have developed motivation to take part in the functioning of the group and to ensure its continued existence.

The skills gained through being a member of a youth organisation are held in high esteem in this social environment and the young people have had the opportunity to realise the importance of this experience when seeking employment. The leaders and some parents confirm that the fact of having been a member of a youth organisation counts very positively on a curriculum vitae.

*"I do baby-sitting for the Family League and on the form it asks whether I was a member of a youth organisation. It is a question that is asked for lots of jobs... Maybe we can communicate better, and we find it easier to cope with things, to take initiative...I don't know whether it's an advantage to have been in Scouting, but I think that it's in the way [that Scouts] act that they'll find it easier to become integrated in a community, they'll be accepted more easily..."*

This group is considered both by the parents and by the young people to be an attraction for the younger age sections. The unit projects the image of a group that is close-knit and that undertakes ambitious projects. A strong tradition of continuity has developed as the parents and the former members are always called upon to help the Scout Group but without any direct intervention in leading the young people which remains the responsibility of the adult leaders.

### 11.b The French Venture Scout unit

The development of the values of group life and a sense of responsibility are also dominant traits mentioned both by the parents and by the young people interviewed, but they also point out the development of physical skills thanks to the many, varied sports activities. They point out that these activities have enabled the young people to test their capacities and to develop self-confidence through reaching objectives which they did not expect to achieve in the beginning. Many of the young people point out the importance of the group dynamics in stimulating and supporting their efforts and in helping them to reach their goals.

What has made the reputation of the group is the considerable quantity and diversity of the activities on offer. The aspect of discovery often comes up in their comments: 72% of the parents appreciate the fact that their children have been able to undertake numerous activities which they would not have been able to undertake alone or with the family. The young people also point out that the wide range of activities and responsibilities proposed has enabled them to make

discoveries and to gain experience and skills in numerous areas, thus helping them to develop more self-confidence in their ability to work with others and to make their ideas become a reality. A few remark that such opportunities are much more limited at school.

*"You learn to manage things, it's only at Scouts that you can do that... At school, there are class delegates, it's a kind of leader. I was class delegate last year. I was bored, it doesn't achieve anything... When you're team leader, you pass on skills, you teach others. When I was leader after Dominique, I did the best I could... And in the evaluation, they found that it was going okay."*

*"When you're a Venture Scout, I think it's easier to act, to become integrated. I don't know whether I'd find it easier to become involved in adult life, but I think so, I might have an advantage over other people."*

The young people think that their Scout unit is strongly integrated in the local community and that they have been able to develop numerous contacts through their Scout activities and their involvement in parish life: 85% of the young respondents state that thanks to Scouting they have been able to develop more contact with their community than they would if they had not been in Scouting.

The spiritual dimension is highly developed in this group. In addition to religious services, it is developed through debate and reflection on local and world issues.

### 11.c The Scottish Scout troop

For the majority of parents in this group the major areas of impact on their children have been the development of self-confidence and a capacity to assume responsibility as a result of having progressed through the hierarchic structure and through having exercised the responsibility of a patrol leader or assistant patrol leader. The opportunities to organise themselves so as to cooperate within their patrols and the experience of coordinating a team are considered to be the best means to develop the capacity of the young people to become responsible for themselves and to develop a responsible attitude towards others. Nonetheless, in a few cases, this capacity seems limited to Scouting life, or did not develop as certain young people were not able to reach the required level of technical competence and therefore did not benefit from this opportunity to develop their self-esteem.

The acquisition of skills through work towards badges is a key element in this group, but the young people who have less aptitude for acquiring traditional Scouting skills find it more difficult to develop self-esteem in this way and thus to sustain their motivation. For many of them it is especially the friendships developed with the other members of the troop and the element of fun in the activities that encourage them to stay in this group.



Many of the young people mention traditional Scouting skills and sports skills as areas in which they have developed. One of the former troop member explains how he feels that these experiences have been helpful:

*"A lot of the activities are things that only happen with Scouts, like the sort of camping idea. It forces you in a slightly different situation from normal life in the city. You face new problems which on their own may seem ridiculous, like how to cross a river or something with a piece of rope, but I think it applies to life in that you have got a limitation and you've got to cope with that."*

Discipline is a dominant value and it corresponds to the expectations of many parents who perceive this dimension to be very important for adult life. This value is also strong in the socio-cultural context and constitutes an extension of family and school education. Many of the young people mention discipline as one of the essential values of their group and attribute to it much of what they have gained in terms of personal development. Nonetheless, the parents and the young people unanimously find that it is mainly the enjoyment that the young people derive from the activities that drives their motivation for Scouting.

## 12. UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS OR CHANGES DESIRED

### 12.a The parents' point of view

In the majority of cases, the parents are satisfied with the Scout experience of their children and perceive many more positive points than negative ones. A few parents spontaneously express a few reservations during the interviews but appear fairly reticent to discuss the aspects that seem less satisfactory.

A number of parents react to the issue of school and Scouting in the French and Belgian groups. It is especially the time commitment and the fact of having to take part in activities on a regular basis that they sometimes see as detrimental to their children's studies. They point out that it is especially the idea of being committed on a long-term basis that distinguishes Scouting from other leisure time activities, where sporadic attendance is better accepted. On the other hand, it is also because of a long-term commitment and regular attendance that the young people become integrated in the group, develop relationships with others and learn through their experiences. It is with this in mind that some leaders find it difficult to tolerate that the young people do not attend all the activities organized.

Another point mentioned by a few parents is a certain amount of apprehension concerning the security aspect of the activities although they appear to have full confidence in the adult leaders. Other parents of the young people in the Belgian group mention a certain amount of regret that the aspect of religious practice appears to be weak.

## 12.b The young people's point of view

The majority of the young people interviewed are satisfied with the ways of working in their units and with the quality and diversity of activities on offer and do not wish for any major changes. They feel that it is thanks to a very structured way of working that they have been able to undertake such interesting projects.

The majority of young people interviewed have been in Scouting for some time and have chosen to stay as they have found a personal interest. They have been able to make friends and to pursue interests. The majority have gained self-assurance through the different experiences but feel that this style of life does not correspond to every young person's personality. A few have found it difficult as their personal aptitudes did not correspond to the range of activities or skills on offer. Those who have persevered have sometimes felt demotivated due to the level of personal effort required and the fact of having to "give in" to the group's wishes. Nevertheless, the convivial atmosphere counts considerably in motivating them in the long-term.

In each group there is a minority of young people who had started to abandon Scouting and then renewed interest. It has not always been possible to question them in detail on this aspect but, in the majority of cases, it is the difficulty of finding time for both school work and Scouting that appears to be a problem.

## 12.c The leaders' point of view

The leaders were asked for their views concerning any improvements they could envisage in the educational approaches promoted by their associations and any difficulties that they were encountering in their groups.

The French leader feels that the educational approach prescribed for the adolescent section at national level needs to be revised in terms of the orientations and activities proposed in order to follow the Venture Scouts' interests more closely. He also feels that the progressive scheme needs to be adapted to the actual time that the Venture Scouts spend in the unit. He observes a shift of interest among 14-17 year olds towards projects of a greater scope which would currently fall into the field of activity of a more senior section (humanitarian action, cooperation workcamp, etc.).

He would like the educational approach to take more into account the adolescents' need for adventure and experimentation with new technologies. He believes that leaders should be encouraged to develop greater contact with non-Scout associations and specialist bodies in order to broaden the fields of skills that the young people can develop.

The French leader would also like to see a greater effort undertaken at national level to ensure that Scout magazines regularly contain

information on the main social problems of today (unemployment, family problems, AIDS, drinking, smoking, etc.), as well as on methods of prevention and possible action within the framework of Scouting. This priority is reflected in his leadership approach as the Venture Scouts have the opportunity to reflect on and discuss these problems.

The Scottish leader is also concerned about the issues of smoking, drinking and drug abuse. He believes that there should be more leader training and tools for use in this area. The Belgian leaders are aware of these problem areas, but point out that such issues are already dealt with at school and do not see any need to duplicate the work. Nonetheless, if any of the group members were to request help in this area, they would revise the programme accordingly.

Despite these different perspectives on the prevention of substance abuse, the leaders in all three groups find that the active life led by the young people, adherence to a code of living (which promotes a healthy lifestyle) and peer pressure within the groups themselves, are helpful factors in this respect.

The leaders of all three groups would also like Scouting to be more accessible to young people from non-middle class families and more adapted to their specific needs. In the Belgian and French groups, a particular effort is made to ensure that financial considerations are not a barrier. However, they also feel that an analysis needs to be carried out to determine the particular needs of these young people and their families, and to provide the leaders concerned with training material.

### 13. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Both the parents and the young people interviewed in all three groups consider Scouting to be more than simply a leisure-time activity. Their answers indicate that they have a clear perception of the educational objectives developed by the leaders in the groups and adhere to them personally.

The majority of those interviewed consider that the Scout experience helps the young people to mature. The majority of young people believe that they have gained a lot through being in Scouting. They also point out that Scouting is but one factor, as the process of maturation and their families have also contributed. Some feel that Scouting can only help the young person to develop if experienced over a relatively long period of time and if the way in which Scouting is practised corresponds to the family's values and the young person's personality. They also point out that Scouting has to be a personal choice. The older members consider that their commitment to Scouting becomes more important to them at around 15 years as that is when they become more aware of the educational impact of the experience and are able to benefit from the increased capacity to analyse their development.

In the three groups, the main educational impact attributed to Scouting concerns the ability to take responsibility for oneself, to manage one's own affairs and deal with difficulties, to communicate and relate

to others<sup>115</sup>. The attitudes underlying the specific skills in these areas are often referred to as the values that they feel that they have gained<sup>116</sup>. The comments emphasise the importance of experiential learning in this respect. It is primarily through experiencing group life and different levels of responsibility that the young people have been able to get to know and understand themselves better through contact with others, and have gained confidence in their potential. The Scout structure has encouraged them to become more ambitious in their undertakings. They have learned to deal with problems and difficulties by themselves, to test their capacities and to learn from their mistakes. The obstacles encountered and the difficulties shared have reinforced the relationships within the groups and they feel better equipped to face the ups and downs of life as they have gained a certain experience of dealing with difficult situations.

*"This year we're having problems with the project, our desire to do it tended to mask the problems... It's an experience that shows us that life isn't easy. It's one more thing that we've learned."*

Through playing an active role in the functioning of the group, the young people have progressively discovered their personal aptitudes and have reinforced some of their skills. "Community life" and the need to work together have encouraged them to become more flexible in order to become integrated in the group. They have become aware of the interdependence that links the members of the group and of the rules and limits to personal freedom that are necessary to enable the group to function effectively. The majority feel that it is thanks to these experiences that they have developed their aptitude to take on responsibility, to become integrated within the group to work and communicate with others. Learning how to live and work constructively with others appears relatively more important to the young people than the opportunities to gain technical and practical skills. The young people and their parents also comment on the interactive relationship between personal development, the quality of the relationships established, and the development of a caring attitude towards others.

The young people's vision of the adult world is strongly associated with their careers and very few young people feel that Scouting has influenced their career choice. For the majority, career choice is primarily determined by their aptitudes at school and potential job openings. The young people who interpreted "adult life" more broadly than simply professional life consider that the experiences of responsibility, mutual support, resourcefulness, greater self-confidence and a greater ability to relate to others will remain with them as acquisitions for the future.

---

<sup>115</sup> Some parents who have several children in the Movement remark that the impact is not the same on each of their children. While Scouting has enabled each of them to develop their capacities, each has benefited differently according to his personality and needs.

<sup>116</sup> The same values are mentioned in all three groups, but in each there are dominant aspects depending on the educational approach adopted.

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the findings of two initial research papers<sup>117</sup> reviewing literature on adolescence by social scientists, two major problems in modern society appear to affect adolescents' transition to adulthood in many parts of the world. The first is an increasing decline in interaction between adults and adolescents considered essential to help young people develop a consistent self-image, to plan for the future and to find a sense of meaning to their lives. The second is that, due to prolonged schooling and an uncertain employment market, there are few opportunities for young people to take on meaningful roles that are valued by themselves and by others.

The original hypothesis underlying the research was therefore to determine whether, and to what extent, the Scout experience provided responses to the following questions:

- In what way is the Scout leader a model or mentor who helps the young people construct their own value systems and make the choices necessary for their future roles in the adult world?
- In what ways do the activities provide 14-17 year olds with the kinds of challenges and meaningful roles which help them meet their adolescent growth needs<sup>118</sup>?

### 2. GENERAL

All of those interviewed (parents, leaders and young people) believe that the young people have benefited in one or more ways from their Scouting experience. The benefits mentioned by parents and/or young people include: a more dynamic, active approach to life, a greater ability to cope with problems, self-confidence, self-awareness, deeper friendships, the ability to cooperate and share with others, greater tolerance and openness to others, a sense of responsibility, interdependence and solidarity, greater technical and practical skills, discovery or further development of personal talents.

The impact of Scouting is combined with the effects of family education and also with the effects of personal maturation. It is towards 15 years of age and above that the young people develop a greater awareness of Scouting's educational objectives, but they do not feel fully able to evaluate its impact and, according to some

---

<sup>117</sup> "Adolescents Facing the Future: The changing role of the family and its implications for the transmission of values", L. Huberman, M. Tra Bach, 1990, WOSM Research and Development Committee (unpublished); "Narrowing the Margins: Adolescent unemployment and the lack of a social role", L. E. Hess, A. C. Petersen, The Pennsylvania State University, 1990.

<sup>118</sup> The primary social tasks of adolescence can be summarized as being: to develop a consistent self-image, to intensify peer relationships, to establish independence, to plan for the future, to deal with issues of conformity versus deviance and, more globally, to find a sense of meaning to life and to elaborate a set of values and expectations.

young people's comments, they will probably not be able to do so until they have left the group and can stand back from the experience.

While there is a common core of benefits perceived in the three groups interviewed, different aspects appear more prominently in each of the groups, or are gained in different ways, depending on the educational objectives favoured by the leaders, the translation of those objectives into the methods of working within the group and the nature of the experiences lived by the young person. The level of importance which the families attach to Scouting as an educational experience, the socio-cultural backgrounds of the families and leaders and the personality and age of the young person also bear an influence on the ways in which, and the extent to which, each young person has benefited. In all three groups studied, Scouting appears as a multi-faceted experience for the young people.

For the vast majority of parents, Scouting provides a structured environment in which the young people learn about social life. It provides a complement to character development that is not offered by the family, nor by school nor sports activities. The parents feel reassured by the fact that they perceive the Scout environment as a known factor, and one in which their children are "protected" as opposed to what they perceive as a dangerous environment in the streets.

The analysis of the characteristics of the three groups and of the views expressed by those interviewed indicate that there is a strong resemblance between family values and the Scout group to which the young people belong. In the Belgian and Scottish case studies, one or more parents in 80% of the families interviewed had been a member of Scouting (or of another youth organisation) in their youth and a number of them had also been Scout leaders. While nearly one-third of the parents in the French group had not been in Scouting, their expectations and family values are very similar to those of parents who had been. The positive attitude and the interest shown by the parents in their children's Scout experience can help to sustain the motivation of the young people. Some comments indicate that when parents consider Scouting as simply a leisure-time occupation, the effects of Scouting can be short-lived.

The young people who enjoy Scouting enjoy being active and appreciate group life. Many of the young people comment on the fact that not all of the young people they know outside of Scouting would be attracted by these aspects and therefore would not be attracted to Scouting<sup>119</sup>.

---

<sup>119</sup> Although questioned informally on this aspect, many of the young respondents appear reticent to talk to school mates about the fact that they are in Scouting. Their explanations indicate a certain negative public image of Scouting amongst non-member adolescents.

While the vast majority feel strongly motivated to continue, a minority of young people (approximately 10%) find it difficult to accept the demands of group life and leave the Movement. School work is also a factor as the parents strongly encourage the young people to devote more time to their studies and to choose a single leisure-time activity<sup>120</sup>.

### 3. THE ROLE OF THE ADULT LEADER AND THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPED

#### 3.a To what extent does the adult leader act as a role model for the young people?

A role model has been defined as: *“A significant other, upon which an individual patterns his or her behaviour in a particular social role, including adopting appropriate similar attitudes”*<sup>121</sup>.

All of the young people interviewed hold their leaders in great esteem. They greatly appreciate their devotion to the group, but they do not perceive them as models<sup>122</sup> in their personal life and would not like to be like them. It is primarily in the area of organising and leading the group that they feel that they take inspiration from the way in which their leaders work. The majority do not find that their leaders have a direct influence on them but do find that the leaders stimulate them.

Many of the older adolescents strongly object to the notion of a role model as in their view the term has connotations of blindly imitating someone and of “hero worship”. When explaining their disagreement with the idea of identifying themselves with the leader as a role model, a number of the older members point out the importance of personal experience, the need to confront their opinions with those of others and to be able to glean from others those elements which they perceive as being helpful in developing their own personal identity. Others, for whom the term did not seem to have negative connotations, also disagreed with the idea of their leaders as role models.

---

<sup>120</sup> The results of a study interviewing 24,000 people by the INSEE (the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies) in France in 1985-1986 indicate that adolescents of 15 years old and above have little time available for activities other than school work, family commitments and sports. A study conducted in France in 1991 by the Scouts de France on the reasons for leaving the Movement indicate that 61% of young people aged 14-17 leave Scouting due to pressure at school.

<sup>121</sup> “The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology”. Edited by Gordon Marshall, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994, p. 454.

<sup>122</sup> These views correspond to the findings of a parallel study (Measuring Benefits of Youth Work, 1992) conducted in Scotland on a greater number of people in various youth organisations (including several Scout groups). In its conclusion, this study emphasises the fact that the young people do not consider their leaders to be role models.

Some point out that the leader may be a model for the younger children. A few others find that while an adult may be a model for some at their age, depending on the individual's level of maturity, it would not necessarily be the leader. Some comments indicate that they believe that a model implies a degree of perfection that they find unrealistic to expect in a leader.

*"... There are things people do, people that I admire a lot, but my goal in life is not to be a second 'them'... you can take inspiration from experiences, find books or ideas that are interesting... there are people that I admire, but all that goes through my own coding system. You want to live your own life."*

It is nonetheless possible that a process of identification does take place - but not directly with the leaders - as the young people feel a strong bond with their group and appear to identify with the group's objectives, way of life, "spirit", etc. - all aspects being promoted by the leaders.

*"The Venture Scout leader, his job isn't to be a model, we shouldn't all be like him... it's to make sure that the unit works well, and to encourage a spirit, for that I think it's mainly they who manage to set the tone... all the time... through direct contact with the young people... through a multitude of little things, reactions to problems, how they react in certain circumstances."*

*"The fundamental principle is being able to live with others, to share, not to be selfish... You have to go towards other people, not to be reserved, you have to know how to help out... At Scouts, you're always doing things together, it's better when you do things together. Some things you can do alone, but it's good if you can share a job."*

### 3.b To what extent is the adult leader a mentor for the young people?

A mentor has been defined as: *"an older, more experienced person who seeks to further the development of character and competence in a younger person by guiding the latter in acquiring mastery of progressively more complex skills and tasks in which the mentor is already proficient... In the course of this process, the mentor and the young person develop a special bond of mutual commitment. In addition, the young person's relationship to the mentor takes on an emotional character of respect, loyalty and identification"* <sup>123</sup>.

The role images selected by the young people interviewed in the three groups concerning their leaders which appear as a common

---

<sup>123</sup> Defined by U. Bronfenbrenner, quoted by S.F. Hamilton in "Apprenticeship for Adulthood: Preparing Youth for the Future", New York, Free Press, 1990.



denominator are adviser (81% - 100%) and by extension “guide” (67% - 100%). These two role images coincide with those chosen by the leaders.

According to the young people’s comments, the roles of adviser and guide are mainly associated with the Scouting context (help with difficulties arising with activities or skill-learning), and do not normally extend beyond this context.

Some comments of the older adolescents indicate that they do not expect the leaders to be already proficient in all of the areas of learning but, at the same time, expect the leaders nonetheless to be capable of steering them towards achieving their goals through their own experiences and to ensure the cohesion of the group so that they are all aiming in the same direction.

*“It’s not the leader who necessarily knows everything. In fact his role is to go further with everyone, and to try to understand what is going on in the group...”*

*“... [The leaders are] people who are in the same boat as us. They’re friends who are there to make sure everyone’s rowing in the same direction...”*

*“They’re more facilitators than leaders. We’re more autonomous, we have more of a say, we’re each responsible for the others. We’re more independent, the leaders are there to advise us, and not to tell us what we have to do...”*

*“He teaches us to live as a group. He helps us, but, well, he’s not so much an example [in the sense that] we want to be like him. He helps us to be what we want to be.”*

*“... He makes us develop our ideas...”*

While the leaders in all three groups seek to get to know each young person individually, one-to-one communication tends to take place more at camps than during the weekly meetings. Outside of camps, the leaders tend to address the young people as a group, either directly or via the team leaders. In the event of questions or difficulties, the young people initially tend to turn to more senior members, or young adults. This is especially so in two of the groups which are run according to a hierarchic structure and in which the adult leader initially appears intimidating.

In the event of personal problems, the young people would normally confide in or consult friends of the same age, or others with whom they have established a very close contact. In the Belgian group, however, the young people unanimously chose the option of “friends” as a role image. While the leaders in this group are closer in age to the young people, age may not be the primary factor in considering the leaders as “friends” as it is also in this group that the

group is not hierarchic in structure and in which the team leaders do not act as intermediaries between the leaders and the young people.

In the French and Scottish groups, the amount of time spent tutoring the young people is greatest for the team leaders (as a small group, not necessarily as individuals), and the intention is to help the team leaders to coordinate and help the younger ones, i.e. to develop a peer mentoring system. In these two groups, the team leaders act as intermediaries between the team members and the leaders. In the Belgian group, the senior members are also expected to help the younger ones, but no particular training events are organized with the leaders.

While there does appear to be a relationship based on respect and loyalty and a mutual commitment between the young people and the leader, it appears to be less on a one-to-one basis than towards the group as a whole<sup>124</sup>. The comments of a number of the older adolescents often refer to a notion of partnership, both in terms of relationships and in the complementarity of roles that each person plays in the group. The knowledge that their leader accompanies them in their adventures voluntarily (i.e. the leader is not obliged or paid to do so, but does so because he or she also derives enjoyment and personal satisfaction) appears to contribute to this sense of partnership. It is principally this sense of partnership based on voluntary participation, dialogue and a complementarity of ideas and experience which appears to provide a strong intergenerational link between the leader and the young people.

*"Of course Marc has loads of contacts, it's thanks to him that we can do things. He's involved for 95%, but the little we do is valuable, because without him we couldn't do it, but without us, he wouldn't do anything."*

### 3.c How does the adult leader help the young people to construct their own value systems and make the choices necessary for their future roles in the adult world?

In the three groups, the socio-economic and cultural context, the perception of the educational philosophy of the national association, the age of the young people in the group, the leader's personality, experience, style and perceptions of the needs of young people bear an influence on the way in which the various elements of Scouting's principles and method are articulated and put into practice. The values presented to the young people will therefore to a certain extent reflect the leader's own value system.

---

<sup>124</sup> An exception is that a few of the former members of the Scottish troop who return on occasion to help out have developed a strong bond of friendship with their leader.

A large majority of young people describe one or more “values” when talking of the areas of development or skills gained as a result of their Scout experience. Many of the values mentioned are similar, whatever the group. These include responsibility, respect for others, the ability to become integrated and take part in a form of community life, sharing and a spirit of tolerance. Certain others are specific to the group such as discipline in the Scottish group.

The process, however, by which the young people have internalised these values is not one of direct transmission nor of inculcation. While the leader has an essential role to play, his influence appears to be indirect. The young people generally listen to their leaders’ views and observe how they react to certain situations, but the most powerful element in the construction of the young people’s values appears to be personal experience, and the meaning that he or she makes of the experiences, much of which takes place within the peer group itself. The climate of mutual respect and trust promoted by the leaders facilitates dialogue and the young people’s aptitude to express their views. Self-analysis, reflection on the meaning of one’s experiences and life skills associated with relating to others appears greatest amongst those in mid-adolescence and older. While this age corresponds to the development of a greater capacity to do so, there is also a conscious educational effort being made in these two groups in this direction (preparation to make one’s promise, participation in evaluation sessions, etc.). In this respect the chaplains appear to play an important role. In the younger group, the development of abilities in the areas of listening to others, self-assertion, negotiation, etc., takes place especially through learning to coordinate one’s actions within a patrol and, for the older members, through leading a patrol. A number of the comments of the older adolescents indicate that once they have found a value to be personally meaningful, they try to modify certain attitudes or aspects of behaviour so as to be in line with their beliefs, but their efforts need to be nourished through further experiences.

*“Now the Romania experience seems a little far away and I’ve fallen back into our society... I’ve got to start thinking of school again. I don’t have any time left to think about it all, to question myself, to try to change. I don’t know if I’d be able to, but I think I could change my behaviour sometimes, smile a bit more to other people. Stuff like that seemed really, really important.”*

When questioned concerning certain kinds of activities that they take part in aimed at a concrete expression of Scouting’s “duties” - such as “duty to others” through community service activities, or “duty to God” through religious practice - the majority of the young people’s comments indicate that they accept to perform these duties as it is part and parcel of what they promised to do, but relatively few of the activities of this nature in which they have participated appear to have real meaning for them. While, for example, the majority of the young

respondents in the two older groups<sup>125</sup> attach importance to seeking spiritual values, many of them strongly criticize formal religious practice as they experience it. In their view, what they actually experience often seems incoherent with, or contradictory to, the values that they are expected to seek. Their explanations include: a feeling of often being preached at as opposed to being helped to seek a spiritual meaning to life; that what is being preached sometimes seems incoherent with what they see and experience of the world around them or does not address the problems of importance to them; a dislike of the lack of an active role to play and the lack of dialogue between the congregation and the officiating priest; that services do not bring people in contact with each other and often seem to be ritual for ritual's sake. On the other hand, more of the young people appreciate the Scout services in which they actively prepare the service with the chaplain and all reflect together on the meaning of their observations, experiences and relationships. The young people in both of these groups are fond of their chaplain and appreciate his availability and ability to listen. Other comments indicate a search for a spiritual dimension through a communion with nature.

*"Scout services, that's okay. It's the services outside of Scouting that I don't like... They're often nonedescript, they don't put people in contact with each other and that's not good."*

*"It becomes a sort of ritual, so you just don't think about it any more..."*

*"I like it when we take part in it... It's not just to read a text... It's when we do something and it's given value in the service... When we take an active part in it, then it's interesting..."*

What is learned, therefore, (apart from concrete practical skills) appears to be connected less to the "subject area" of the activity than it is to the entire experience which surrounds it - thus highlighting the importance of ensuring a coherence between the educational objectives and the way in which the educational objectives are translated into learning opportunities for the young people.

Concerning the leaders' role in helping the young people to make the choices necessary for their future roles as adults, the leaders in the older groups seek to provide opportunities to open their horizons to a variety of possible future careers, to learn the basics of a number of vocational skills and introduce them to the world of work through the small remunerated jobs that they carry out to finance their projects. Many comments indicate that the fact of working to earn money for their activities has helped them to understand the relationships between effort and concrete returns, but neither the vocational skills

---

<sup>125</sup> This subject was not discussed in any detail by the young people in the younger Scottish group.

learned nor the contacts made in professional milieux appear to have influenced their career choices. On the other hand, some of the young people comment that such exposure has provided them with a wider experience of life and some of the technical and practical skills are considered enjoyable or useful in everyday life (as hobbies to be pursued, or as skills providing greater autonomy in solving everyday practical problems).

Many of the older adolescents' comments indicate that it is especially the values and attitudes to life (including openness to others, a sense of responsibility towards others developed through group life, etc.) and a feeling of confidence in their resourcefulness that they have had the opportunity to develop that will remain as major acquisitions in preparing for adult life.

*"Making decisions concerning your career, that's more diplomas... Seeing what you expect out of life... when you've done Scouting, maybe you have different leisure activities, you're more active, closer to the environment, to everything around us."*

*"[Scouting] has taught us to be active and not passive. Nowadays we're much more likely to expect everything to fall from heaven. When you're at camp and you're cold, you have to make a fire, and you have to do it yourself. If we're lost, we have to ask for directions. It's unusual for people to be able to cope, some people wouldn't have the faintest idea of how to do the simplest things."*

Although the leaders' influence on the young people appears to be indirect, they nevertheless play a crucial role. According to the young people in the three groups, their leaders' role is primarily to guide them and to support them, to encourage them and to offer them opportunities to experiment with different forms of behaviour, to develop their understanding of themselves and the world around them and to provide opportunities to develop their capacity to make decisions and assume responsibility so as to enable them to develop. The views of the leaders of the three groups are very similar to those of the young people in this respect. They feel that the young people need a structured and reassuring framework with clear guidelines, but that it is important to offer them space in which they can experience life for themselves, test their abilities and discover their limits.

### 3.d The relationship between the leader and the young people: a balance between authority and friendship

It is especially through developing a relationship which is close and encouraging that the leaders are able to motivate the young people to become more involved in group life. While the young people acknowledge the legitimacy of the leader's authority and the need for certain constraints in order to channel the group's energy, what the young people appreciate and seek the most is a relationship based on

greater active listening, and communication on more of an equal standing, than they find at school or at home. They appreciate the fact that they are provided with more and greater opportunities for self-government than they find elsewhere.

In the three groups, the young people are involved to different degrees in the decision-making process and can express their views concerning the selection of activities. In the majority of cases they state that they are satisfied with the margin of autonomy provided in the choices and orientations to be decided upon and agree with the code of living of the groups. However, the need is apparent to extend further and further the margin of autonomy as each person develops as in some cases the older members feel that they cannot develop their full potential when the leaders take too great a control over the organisation of group activities. The main criticisms concern the balance that the leaders maintain between authority and friendship. The feeling of being submitted to constraints becomes stronger when the young people feel that negotiation is not possible.

#### 4. IN WHAT WAYS DO THE ACTIVITIES PROVIDE THE YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THE KINDS OF CHALLENGES AND MEANINGFUL ROLES WHICH HELP THEM MEET THEIR ADOLESCENT GROWTH NEEDS?

##### 4.a General

The driving force of the activities is the dimension of challenge and the enjoyment that the young people derive from taking part. In the French and Scottish groups, it is the aptitude of the leaders to come up with ideas for activities and make them exciting that stimulates the young people. In the Belgian group, it is especially the group dynamics and the ability of the group to manage its own affairs which predominates.

The activities constitute the framework within which skills are learned and relationships are developed. The research findings clearly show, however, that in the three groups it is the dynamic interaction between the activities and a number of other elements (in particular the relationships developed within the peer group) which create opportunities for the wide variety of areas of personal development, and not the activities alone.

##### 4.b Personally enriching activities

At 14-15 years of age, the activities which the young people prefer and which they find most enriching for their personal development are those which respond to their need to expand their horizons and to develop a greater experience of life. Both the parents and the young people find that Scouting offers greater opportunities in this respect than the family or school. It is especially in the two Venture Scout units that this aspect has been developed, and the majority mention their interest in "exotic" adventures. At the time of the interviews, this aspect was also in the process of being developed in the younger Scottish group through experimenting with camps abroad.

For the older adolescents, the fact of sharing adventures appears important, but so does the discovery of other ways of life and cultures as in some cases this has enabled them to look differently upon their everyday environment and has stimulated self-reflection. The comments made concerning camps reflect the importance that the young people attach to opportunities to be active, to experience meaningful moments with peers away from home, meet new people or discover new places and to exercise their growing capacity for autonomy.

*"... When you're with your family, [holidays away from home are] a bit limiting. It's the car, the beach. Whereas with Venture Scouts, we'll go and put on a show, and we're the actors. If you're with your parents, you go to a show and you're a spectator."*

The personal involvement of each member of the group in the phases of selection of the projects, planning and evaluation of the results also contributes to stimulating an awareness of personal potential in the group where this occurs. The awareness of what has been acquired and of what remains to be improved, particularly in the area of community life and interpersonal relations seems to be reinforced when there is a dual opportunity for self-evaluation and mutual evaluation - in other words when the young person is encouraged to analyse his or her involvement in group life, the level of commitment to assume responsibilities and reach the group's objectives, and to confront his or her perceptions with those of the other members of the group who will either confirm the analysis or disagree with certain aspects.

#### 4.c Acquisition of technical and practical skills through activities

In the three groups, the development of skills is the leitmotiv of the activities. In both the two older groups, the activities are determined according to more or less long-term projects. The range of activities is vast. In the younger Scottish group, the accent is more on learning Scouting skills, competitive sports and other competitive activities (requiring cooperation within the patrols). The recreational element is also more developed in this group to adapt to the majority (three-quarters are between 11 and 14).

A large majority of the young people interviewed (77-90%) state that they have been able to develop technical and practical skills through Scouting. Individual interests are accommodated in this area through badges to be earned (more popular in the younger group) and through choosing tasks to be carried out in the framework of ensuring the group's welfare and the success of activities and projects in the two older groups. The fact of being able to choose amongst different skills and experiment with a variety of them is important to the young people, as is the fact of learning them primarily through hands-on experience. In the younger group, the skills are mainly traditional Scouting skills (orienteeing, knot-tying, first aid, etc.) and sports aimed at developing physical fitness, psycho-motor coordination, mental agility, and the ability to coordinate their actions within

their patrols. In the older groups, many of the skills are of a more vocational nature (masonry, mechanics, catering, accounting, carpentry, journalism, photography, drama, etc.). It is in the French group, where particular emphasis is placed on learning these skills, that the leaders, young people and parents consider this area to be an important part of what the young people have learned through Scouting. In none of the groups, however, do the skills appear to exert a major influence on career choice.

The French adolescents and the Scottish Scouts often mention the more unusual sports (abseiling, mountain climbing, kayaking, etc.) as skills. In this respect, according to the comments of the French Venture Scouts, it is especially the adventure, the “exotic” nature of the activities, discovery of new places and a sense of achievement in having overcome their apprehension that seems particularly important to them.

The skills mentioned as having been acquired often extend beyond technical or practical skills and generally depend on the interests and personal aptitudes of the young people. Some will develop to a greater extent their manual or technical skills, others will reinforce their aptitude to express themselves (through journalism, script-writing, etc.), or others will find that they are talented in organising meetings or entertaining others. Those who have a very strong character will have to learn how to tolerate the fact that other people have different views and seek to negotiate. A few will discover an aptitude to lead and coordinate the work of a team. Nevertheless, whatever their aptitudes and personality, the majority of the young people emphasise having learned to take on responsibilities, and to become more open towards others as a result of their Scout experience.

In addition to helping the young people to develop self-confidence and evaluate their progress, the skills learned also play a role in the integration process as the skills enable them to take on responsibilities (and therefore help them to feel that they are making an active contribution to the group) and the fact that the senior members help the younger or newer members to acquire skills provides opportunities for relationships to develop.

#### 4.d Activities and socially meaningful roles

In each of the groups, the young people take part in task-oriented activities which have the potential to be perceived by themselves and others as being useful, and which offer opportunities for them to feel recognized for their abilities and achievements and contribution to group life.

For many of the young people, the unit or troop is a unique structure in which they are progressively led, thanks to the group dynamics and to the activities undertaken together, to take responsibility for themselves and to assume a role within the group. The young people who have been in the Movement for a long time accept, and some empha-



size, the need to take on responsibility, to help the younger members to develop the skills that they have acquired and for each person to contribute actively to ensuring the welfare of the group. The vast majority believe that this experience will remain one of the main acquisitions in preparing for adult life. The views of the parents, leaders and the young people are very similar on this subject. Amongst the parents, 86% feel that the primary impact of the Scout experience concerns learning to become responsible for oneself and to assume the consequences of one's actions. The influence of the family and of the young person's personality also play a role, and tend to add to that of the Scout experience.

- Tasks to ensure the group's general welfare and the achievement of activities and projects

In all three groups, the young people have tasks to carry out which contribute to the general welfare of the group and to the achievement of their activities and projects. The scope and complexity of the tasks become progressively greater as the young person gains maturity, skills, experience and capacity to assume responsibility. Developing a sense of responsibility is an educational priority in the three groups, although it is developed in different ways.

In each of the groups there is an interdependence between learning skills and assuming responsibility. It is by developing a certain know-how in technical and practical skills that the young people can take on greater and greater responsibility, and it is also through accepting certain responsibilities that they are able to develop their capacities.

There is also an interdependence between the level of responsibility assumed and the level to which they feel integrated within the group and an essential part of the whole. It is through assuming responsibilities within the group that they feel that they have a personal contribution to make, and when that contribution is recognized by the others, it stimulates the development of relationships. Equally, the level to which they feel at ease in the group, the quality of the relationships formed and the degree to which they believe their personal contribution to be important are stimulating factors for them to further develop their sense of responsibility.

Through organizing themselves and carrying out tasks within their teams or missions in order to achieve the objectives of the activities or projects, the young people discover that what they are able to achieve is multiplied in a structured environment and the group enables each young person to achieve projects that are out of the ordinary and to experience meaningful moments. They also discover that in order to do so, each person must play his part and contribute to the tasks involved.

*"[Scouting] makes us more responsible, we become more aware that we are quite indispensable, that we have to fulfil our roles because if we don't, it may be to the detriment of others..."*

A few of the older members remark that, in terms of contributing to the group's welfare, it is not only the tasks carried out that are appreciated, but also certain people's particular talents, such as being able to make the others laugh and improve an occasionally tense atmosphere.

- Activities to serve the wider community

The vast majority of the young people interviewed have internalised the principles of mutual support and cooperation which are at the heart of the Movement and state that "offering one's services" are a necessity and are part of the Movement's "values". It is especially within the framework of the team or the unit that they have found helping each other to be positive and a source of self-esteem and a few regret that these attitudes are not encouraged in the wider community and at school.

However, many have a number of reservations about service activities undertaken for the wider community as they have sometimes been disappointed by the reactions of people when undertaking such initiatives. Some find that they would not take part in this kind of activity if they were not carried along by the group dynamics. Their major complaints are that what they are asked to do is often boring and tedious; the activities often do not offer opportunities to see the benefits of their action or to develop contact with those that they are supposed to be helping. They also feel that their efforts are often taken for granted. An example of a kind of service activity which they dislike for these reasons is collecting money for a national charity.

The majority prefer by far the kind of service activities which enable mutual personal enrichment as opposed to the notion of "gratuity" which they find inherent in other forms of community service. Examples given of positive experiences included constructing an extension to a local school for handicapped children and a trip to deliver toys and entertain children in hospitals in a country suffering from extreme hardship. In both of these examples, what the young people felt to be important was the fact of being able to discover a new environment, and to develop a warm and sharing relationship with people who lived in difficult circumstances. The comments made by the young people indicate that these kinds of experiences stimulated reflection on values.

*"If you help others, others will help you, and that's really what brings people together, because we're in a world today where people don't really like each other."*

*"[If you just give] money, you don't realise what good it has done... I prefer going to [a country]... there wasn't any money at stake... It's more direct."*

*"It's good to offer your services, but people have to realise what we do. They can't take it for granted because we're Scouts and so it's normal to do community service. I think some people have an image of Scouts"*

*that help an old lady to cross the street, and [they] find it quite logical, and they don't even thank us any more."*

*"We're not a charity organisation, that's not our aim, there are other organisations that do that."*

## 5. THE PEER GROUP AS AN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

### 5.a Interaction between activities and group dynamics

In all three groups, the activities are the driving force for the group dynamics. The desire to progress is stimulated by the group dynamics and by the prospect of taking part in more adventurous and challenging activities in the company of friends. It is the fact of having taken part in memorable activities and projects together over time that helps to strengthen the bonds between the young people, thus progressively fostering a feeling of solidarity and belonging to the group. The stronger the cohesion of the group and the feeling of mutual support, the more the young people feel that they can undertake increasingly challenging projects. Likewise, the more challenging the projects, the greater the stimulation for each person to try to extend his limits, and feel a sense of pride in the collective and personal achievements, and become aware of being able to cope with a greater variety of situations<sup>126</sup>. The peer group therefore constitutes a stimulating, synergistic force.

*"It's events, things we live through together, the more we live things together, the more integrated we feel, the better we know each other... It comes naturally..."*

### 5.b Development of values, attitudes to life and interpersonal skills through group life

In many respects, group life appears as a microcosm of the wider community: each person is an individual with different traits, variations in background, skills, experiences, expectations and variations in needs. Each young person in the group comes to realise that many of the experiences are only possible through a collective effort and thus the group stimulates each person to play his part in making those experiences possible and enjoyable through learning skills and using them for the benefit of the group. Through such experiences, the young person develops an awareness of the meaning of interdependence. The support of the peer group is an important element in helping the individual young person to overcome difficulties or apprehension and gain self-confidence.

---

<sup>126</sup> On the subject of challenge, the comments of several young people emphasize the need for challenges to be beyond their present capacities or experience, but not so far beyond them as to be unrealistic. Other comments indicate that challenges are more meaningful when set by the young people themselves as opposed to set from the "outside", for example by the leader.

The young people who took part in the interviews feel at ease in their Scout groups and the majority are sociable by nature. Those who have been in Scouting for some time have developed solid friendships. Many of the young people find that, on the whole, relationships developed in Scouting are deeper and more authentic than those formed through school or elsewhere. The quality of the peer relationships is an important factor in maintaining or strengthening the young people's interest in Scouting. The development of relationships between the members is facilitated by the fact that they feel that they have a certain number of points in common with the others - a love of adventure, life in the outdoors, life in a group and other elements of the "spirit" of Scouting.

In addition, life within the peer group and the quality of the relationships developed within it also appear to play a substantial role in the development of the attitudes and values which the majority of parents and young people consider to be a major impact of the Scout experience: a sense of responsibility for oneself and for others, openness to others, a spirit of sharing and tolerance, caring for one another, etc. It is in this area that learning through direct experience takes on its full meaning.

While the ways of working are different in the three groups, there is nevertheless a common factor: all of the young people operate within a structured framework which stimulates each person to take on responsibilities vis-à-vis the group through tasks which are assigned or which they choose. The primary role of the leaders in this respect is to mobilise the young people and to coordinate the functioning of this structure.

Group life and the necessity of working together in order to achieve a common objective help the young people to become more attentive and more tolerant of the others. It is by working together and helping each other in order to achieve their projects that the members of the group have strengthened their relationships and have developed a spirit of solidarity.

*"Because of Scouts, sometimes I had to get on with someone that didn't like that much. Sometimes, I met people and became friends with them, and I generally got to understand other people a lot more... you have to appreciate how other people work, because nobody works the same way you do. In general, I am not sure, but I have picked up an awful lot just sort of from being with people..."*

*"I am often with Venture Scouts and I know that they're really true friends that I can count on... It's not that I don't like people at school, but they're more acquaintances than real friends. They're classmates, you can have fun with them, but I'm not sure I could really count on them... When I was in hospital, it was all the Venture Scouts who came to see me, not school friends... yet [the hospital] was closer to school."*

While clashes of personality and outbursts occur from time to time, the group nonetheless appears to help the young people to feel

recognized and appreciated for their qualities, the effort made, skills and talents, thus contributing to a sense of personal achievement and self-confidence. Thanks to the effort made by the leaders in establishing a climate of trust in the groups, the vast majority of the young people feel that they are able to express their opinions and disagreement. For the most timid, this appears to be a major area in which development has taken place. A few, however, admit that they still tend to go along with the ideas of the others. Many of those who have a natural tendency to dominate discussions and impose their opinions have gradually been made to leave room for others.

### 5.c Effects of differences in age/maturity within the peer group

In all three groups the senior members (in particular the patrol/team leaders) play an important role vis-à-vis the younger or newer members in terms of helping them to feel integrated in the group, providing advice and encouragement and in showing them the “ropes” of how the group functions and what is expected of them. The senior members also help them to acquire the basic skills required to take part in the activities and to acquire new experiences of life. Some of the younger members admit a certain admiration for the senior members who have acquired skills which they themselves would like to acquire. Nonetheless, the majority would not like to emulate their elders, and once they feel that they have acquired the basics, they prefer to experiment on their own.

The presence of the senior members appears to stimulate the younger ones to progress and, for the senior members, the presence of the junior members is a reminder of the progress that they have made since they were junior members. According to several comments, however, too great an age difference can be counter-productive as some senior members no longer feel part of a peer group as more and more younger (less mature) members arrive. It also appears that the proportion of senior members to junior members also affects the group dynamics. A number of comments made by the older adolescents indicate a decline in the turn-out for activities on the part of the junior members and a perceived decline in the group dynamics in certain years when there is a substantially greater proportion of junior members to senior members<sup>127</sup>.

### 5.d Effects and perceptions concerning coeducation in the peer group

In the coeducated groups<sup>128</sup>, the young people feel that the fact of having young people of both sexes together has a positive influence

---

<sup>127</sup> This situation can occur when, for example, there is a major influx of young newcomers and/or when senior members leave during or prior to the last year, leaving a greater proportion of young people with less skills and experience and a vacuum in terms of the stimulation normally provided by the most senior members.

<sup>128</sup> The two senior groups interviewed were coeducational.

on the group. At around 14-15 years of age, it appears to respond to a need in the young people<sup>129</sup>. All of those interviewed in the coeducated groups appreciate the fact of being in an environment which facilitates communication between girls and boys, especially as they find that school does not offer the same climate.

In the coeducated groups, the fact of being together does not seem to restrict the opportunities to undertake projects which are considered stimulating to both boys and girls. The projects nonetheless need to be conceived so as to take into account the variety of interests and skills of the members. Within the framework of the projects and of group life, the activities and responsibilities undertaken in the groups are chosen primarily according to interest (occasionally the newest of either sex take on responsibilities that the others dislike), not according to gender stereotype. According to the young people, what distinguishes coeducated groups from single-sex groups is not so much the nature of the activities undertaken as the fact that the atmosphere in the group and the way in which the activities are experienced are different when boys and girls work together.

The majority of the parents of the young people in the coeducated groups are very positive concerning coeducation. However, when the idea was first introduced there was a considerable amount of reticence due to "potential problems". The parents' fear of sexual promiscuity appears to have been allayed in the two groups as they have confidence in the leaders' vigilance. The young people themselves tend to discourage the formation of cliques (and couples) during the time spent as a group as they would have a negative effect on the group dynamics in working on projects.

### 5.e The role of camps

In the three groups, the young people and leaders refer to "camps" as being more than one day spent together away from home during which activities or projects are carried out. Many of the camps involve sleeping in tents, although the development of an awareness of nature may be an incidental (or major) component of the camps, depending on the objectives being pursued and the activities to be carried out.

Concerning camping in nature, most of the young people consider it to be part of the "folklore" of Scouting, although the level of appreciation varies. For some (of whatever age) sleeping in a tent is primarily a form of accommodation, which can be more or less comfortable depending on the weather conditions. It is especially those who have been in Scouting for a relatively long time who find that their appre-

---

<sup>129</sup> All of the boys in the single-sex younger group and a number of the members of the older groups who had not been in coeducated groups in the younger age section expressed reservations at the idea of coeducation in the Scout age section.

ciation of camping has changed. In addition to the constant appreciation of activities, when younger it was especially the adventure which attracted them, whereas they later come to appreciate the feeling of freedom, autonomy, a different rhythm of life and a sense of being in contact with essential values.

Camps are the events that the majority of young people look forward to and enjoy the most, whatever their age. They are considered to be the highlight of the year. The major attraction is the activities, especially when they offer opportunities for adventure, discovery and challenge.

While the majority of young people enjoy taking part in running their camps, some young people feel that activities that they perceive as “chores” sometimes restrict the amount of time available for the more “exciting” activities. In response, catering has sometimes been arranged for them. The fact that these young people differentiate between “activities” and “chores” is, however, an indicator that the educational importance of developing group life is underestimated.

For the leaders in the three groups, camps are an important time to be able to get to know the young people individually, to develop the cohesion of the group, to respond to the young people’s need for adventure, discovery and challenge and to help them to internalise the key elements of their educational approaches.

The young people in the three groups point out that Scout camps are unique experiences which enable them to distance themselves from everyday routine by living amongst peers, away from their parents. This experience helps them to feel more independent, and it also offers opportunities to develop resourcefulness, to test their abilities by taking charge of everyday needs and by taking part in making the common project a success. It is in this context that the notions of responsibility and mutual support can be fully exercised and take on real meaning for the young people.

The parents, leaders and the young people consider that it is important for them to be able to learn through these experiences over a long period of time so that they can discover their potential and become aware of their progress. The impact of these experiences which the young people develop and share together becomes stronger as camps go by and the young people derive an ever increasing amount of pleasure and personal satisfaction.

Camps also appear to play an important role in the integration of newcomers and in strengthening relationships - both between the young people and between the leaders and the young people. Several young people comment that when, for one reason or another, they have not been able to take part in a camp, they have felt that they have missed out - not only on the activities on offer, but also in the special closeness that has developed between the participants.

## 6. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OR "LEARNING BY DOING"

First-hand experience appears as an essential element in personal development and in the internalization of values. The young people's need and strong desire to experience life for themselves comes across very strongly in the majority of their comments, whatever the topic discussed. The young people's comments indicate that the experience of learning to live as a group, discovering new aspects of life, meeting new people, sharing meaningful moments and difficulties together have been particularly important in widening their outlook on life.

In all three groups the young people are encouraged to make decisions - although the extent and scope differ from group to group. While the young people's answers are not very clear as to whether they feel better capable of making decisions as a result of their Scout experience, it nonetheless appears that through the experience of making decisions and of assuming the consequences, they have become aware of the responsibility involved - one of the main reasons given as to why they find making decisions difficult.

Many point out that challenges<sup>130</sup>, facing and overcoming obstacles and making mistakes are an important source of learning as it enables them to test their capacities, to react more critically, more maturely and to feel better equipped to face life. Thanks to this experience built over the long-term, they feel more capable of reacting to unforeseen circumstances and of resolving problems that they meet in everyday life.

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

While the nature and scope of the research clearly does not make it possible to provide empirical proof of Scouting's effects on young people, and even though the development of the adolescent is largely influenced by family education and the natural process of maturation<sup>131</sup>, the analysis of the in-depth interviews with the parents, leaders and the young people themselves and of the observations made nonetheless provide a number of indicators suggesting that Scouting as practised in the three case studies has had a beneficial impact on the young people interviewed.

It is hoped that this study has provided an insight not only into what the young people have gained (or not gained) as a result of their experience, but also into the numerous interacting factors at play which help to explain how and why.

---

<sup>130</sup> The young people emphasise that challenges are only constructive if they are just beyond their present capacities, i.e. challenges that the young people have a realistic chance of being able to meet, and thereby derive a feeling of accomplishment. Their comments indicate that challenges are only meaningful if they are set by the young people themselves, i.e. not by the leader.

<sup>131</sup> It is interesting to note that it is primarily the young people who mention the effects of personal maturation as a contributing factor to their development, in addition to family and Scouting. Apart from the effects of family education, the other factor mentioned by the parents was school.



