

LEARNING SELVES

**A study of police students' learning in community placements,
using diaries**

PhD

Catherine Layton

2004

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

Production Note:

Signature removed prior to publication.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first thanks go to those students who kindly re-submitted their work for this thesis. The more I explored what they had written about their experiences, the more grateful and honoured I felt that they had shared their work with me, and with no possible benefit to themselves. Then, too, my thanks are extended to the staff who directly contributed to the shape of the community placement, particularly Rod Parker, Eric Heller-Wagner, Wendy Bowles and Christine Jennett, as well as those who indirectly contributed through their efforts to reform police education from the inside, without whom none of these materials would have been available.

I have also to say thank you to the staff of the School of Sociology at the University of Wollongong 1976-1980, whose interest in the sociology of knowledge set in train an intellectual and work-based journey that led to this thesis, and to the staff of the School of Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Technology, Sydney, particularly Ruth Cohen, whose interest inspired me to link my sociological understandings to my developing educational understandings.

I have particularly appreciated the support and help of colleagues, especially Anna Corbo Crehan and Christine Jennett, who read and corrected drafts of this thesis, as well as Geoff Cartner, Lynelle Osburn, and Ann Caddy, all of whose research provided invaluable stimulation. So, also, do other staff in the University, who have organised research seminars from which I have benefited, including the several times I have learnt N-Vivo from Pat Bazeley. Special thanks are reserved for Helen Smith, without whom I probably would never have embarked on the thesis at all.

In my private life, I have Lorraine ('Loz-Ange') to thank for typing up the students' transcripts with such enjoyment in what she was reading (and for leaving flower arrangements on the dining table as a delightful bonus), my son Sebastian for commenting on my first attempts at data displays, and my very special daughter Rebecca and my ever-supportive partner Charlie for believing I could do this.

Lastly, I have received helpful guidance from my co-supervisor, Lynn Yates, and, most particularly, unfailing support and encouragement from my supervisor, Dave Boud. I particularly appreciated their kindness as my work circumstances changed, my energies fluctuated, and I struggled to see a path ahead.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS (FIGURES & 'DIARYSCAPES') AND TABLES	xii
ABSTRACT	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 The question game	1
1.2 Personal background	2
1.2.1 The mutability of selves	3
1.2.2 Personal documents	4
1.2.3 Teaching against resistance	5
1.2.4 Police education	6
1.2.5 Assessing the influences	8
1.3 Introducing the research	9
1.3.1 Aims of the study	9
1.3.2 Theoretical background	11
1.3.2.1 Questions of identity	12
1.3.2.2 Questions of learning	14
1.3.2.3 Questions of time	15
1.3.3 Learning selves	16
1.4 Methodological issues	16
1.4.1 Accessing the learning of selves in an assessment context	19
1.4.2 Analysing the empirical materials	20
1.5 Organisation of the study	21
1.6 Pedagogical value of the study	24
1.7 Definitions	25
1.8 Limitations of the study	30
1.9 Summary	31
CHAPTER TWO: PROFESSIONALISING THE NSW POLICE	33
2.1 Situating the community placement	33
2.2 Professionalising police	34
2.3 Police identity	37

2.4	Police education in New South Wales	39
2.4.1	The 'limited expert' model	40
2.4.2	Foundational studies model – Police Recruit Education Program (1)	41
2.4.3	Problem-based learning model – Police Recruit Education Program (2)	42
2.4.4	The collaborative model: Diploma of Policing Practice/Constable- Education Program	44
2.5	The community placement: JST121 Police and Society	45
2.6	Community organisations	50
2.7	Summary	52
	CHAPTER THREE: BEING AND BECOMING	53
3.1	Key questions	53
3.2	The project of policing	54
3.2.1	What is a project?	54
3.2.2	Projects in temporal, spatial and personal contexts	55
3.2.2.1	Projects and (social) time	55
3.2.2.2	Projects and (social) space	57
3.2.2.3	Projects and the personal world	59
3.2.3	How do projects guide action?	61
3.3	Learning milieux	65
3.3.1	The social context	67
3.3.2	The practice context	71
3.4	Encountering and addressing the unfamiliar	73
3.5	The project of becoming a police officer in the face of problematic situations	75
3.5.1	Risks and uncertainties	77
3.5.2	Feelings in unfamiliar situations	78
3.5.3	Addressing the unfamiliar and risky	81
3.6	Summary	87
	CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY – A FOOL'S JOURNEY	91
4.1	A view of the terrain	91
4.2	Which path to follow?	93
4.3	Which town to explore?	96
4.4	Travelling around town	97

4.4.1	Unsolicited diaries	100
4.4.2	Solicited diaries	101
4.4.3	Keeping true to type	102
4.5	Selecting the itinerary	102
4.6	Describing the journey	103
4.6.1	Collecting keepsakes: students' notebooks	104
4.6.1.1	Selection of diaries	105
4.6.2	Collecting keepsakes: Placement briefings and debriefings	108
4.6.3	Collecting keepsakes: Assessment comments	108
4.7	The journey itself	109
4.8	Limitations of the study	117
4.9	Trustworthiness	119
4.10	Ethical and political considerations	123
4.11	Summary	124
CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS – PROFILE OF INFORMANTS AND AGENCIES		125
5.1	Setting the scene	125
5.2	Profile of informants	125
5.3	Agencies and client groups	127
5.4	Informants' descriptions of agencies and their practices	129
5.4.1	Staff support of informants' learning	131
5.4.1.1	View of policing	131
5.4.1.2	Levels of participation	133
5.4.1.3	Types of talk	135
5.4.1.4	Acceptance	136
5.4.1.5	Organisational practices and feelings	136
5.4.1.6	Legitimate peripheral participation	138
5.4.1.7	Informant positioning vis-à-vis staff	140
5.5	Implications for informants' self-positioning	141
CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS – FIVE TRAJECTORIES		143
6.1	Introducing the five informants	143
6.2	Annabel	144
6.2.1	Biographical information	144

6.2.2	The agency	145
6.2.3	Annabel's notebook	146
6.2.4	The project of becoming a police officer	147
6.2.5	Encountering the unfamiliar	148
6.2.6	Feelings about the unfamiliar	151
6.2.7	Actions in response to the unfamiliar	153
6.2.8	The project as touchstone	154
6.2.9	Learning selves	157
6.2.10	Summary	161
6.3	Brittany	162
6.3.1	Biographical information	162
6.3.2	The agency	162
6.3.3	Brittany's notebook	164
6.3.4	The project of becoming a police officer	165
6.3.5	Encountering the unfamiliar	166
6.3.6	Feelings about the unfamiliar	167
6.3.7	Actions in response to the unfamiliar	170
6.3.8	The project as touchstone	174
6.3.9	Learning selves	175
6.3.10	Summary	180
6.4	Denis	182
6.4.1	Biographical information	182
6.4.2	The agency	183
6.4.3	Denis's notebook	185
6.4.4	The project of becoming a police officer	187
6.4.5	Encountering the unfamiliar	188
6.4.6	Feelings about the unfamiliar	189
6.4.7	Actions in response to the unfamiliar	190
6.4.8	The project as touchstone	193
6.4.9	Learning selves	194
6.4.10	Summary	195
6.5	Hector	197
6.5.1	Biographical information	197
6.5.2	The agency	198

6.5.3	Hector's notebook	199
6.5.4	The project of becoming a police officer	200
6.5.5	Encountering the unfamiliar	201
6.5.6	Feelings about the unfamiliar	203
6.5.7	Actions in response to the unfamiliar	206
6.5.8	The project as touchstone	209
6.5.9	Learning selves	210
6.5.10	Summary	214
6.6	Kelvin	215
6.6.1	Biographical information	215
6.6.2	The agency	216
6.6.3	Kelvin's notebook	218
6.6.4	The project of becoming a police officer	220
6.6.5	Encountering the unfamiliar	221
6.6.6	Feelings about the unfamiliar	222
6.6.7	Actions in response to the unfamiliar	223
6.6.8	The project as touchstone	225
6.6.9	Learning selves	226
6.6.10	Summary	228
6.7	Summary	229
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION – STEPPING BACK		232
7.1	Answering the research questions	232
7.2	The demands of the present	232
7.3	The new and the novel	237
7.4	Learner orientations	239
7.5	The role of feelings in learning	243
7.6	Problem-solving	248
7.7	External resources drawn upon in addressing the novel	250
7.8	Negotiating selves	252
7.9	Cross-checking my interpretations	253
7.10	Summary	259
CHAPTER EIGHT: REFLECTIONS AND PROJECTIONS – THE FOOL, THE JUGGERNAUT AND THE JOKER		261
8.1	From Fool to Joker	261

8.2	Recapitulation and Review	263
8.2.1	The value of an holistic perspective on selves and learning in conceptualising learning at work	265
8.2.2	Bricolage and learning for action	269
8.2.3	The permeability of private, work and global domains	272
8.3	Implications of the study	275
8.3.1	Theoretical implications	275
8.3.2	Methodological implications	279
8.3.3	Practical implications	281
	8.3.3.1 Going beyond reflection	281
	8.3.3.2 Recognising the importance of the future	283
	8.3.3.3 Assessment	284
	8.3.3.4 Recognising ethical issues	286
8.3.4	Implications for further research	286
8.4	Strengths and limitations of the study	289
8.5	Reflecting on the ride	291
8.6	Summary	294
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	295
	APPENDICES	333
Appendix 1	List of 20 required activities in <i>JST121: Police and Society</i>	334
Appendix 2	Contact with students	335
Appendix 3	‘Maps’ (Microsoft Excel spreadsheets) summarising informants’ diaries	337
Appendix 4	Summary profiles of the informants in this study	348

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

This research draws primarily on three items of five students' writing. These are their diaries (D) (referred to largely in terms of the day of the diary entry), the required 20 activities (A1 – A20), and two reflections (R1 and R2). Some information about the students was provided on a cover sheet (CS) supplied to them.

To distinguish between the writings of the various students, each writer's initial becomes a prefix, with, for example, Annabel's second reflection being referenced as AR2, or Denis' cover sheet as DCS. Although several students share the same initial, all of the detailed quotations and references concern the five students whose work was intensively studied. None of these five informants shared the same initial.

Other abbreviations used in this study are as follows:

CARE	Centre for Applied Research in Education, University of East Anglia
CSU	Charles Sturt University
ECT	electro-convulsive therapy
LPP	legitimate peripheral participation
NSW	New South Wales
PARC	Police Academy Review Committee
PREP	Police Recruit Education Program
S/E	socio-economic

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS (FIGURES & 'DIARYSCAPES') AND TABLES

Figures

Figure 1	Client focus according to organisational type	128
Figure 2	Informants' level of familiarity with the client group	129

Diaryscapes

Diaryscape 1	Average number of entries coded to nodes by placement type	130
Diaryscape 2	Number of diary entries about legitimate peripheral participation by organisational type	138
Diaryscape 3	Constraints, opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation and interventions according to organisational type	139
Diaryscape 4	Annabel- shifts spent with Ben and other significant clients	149
Diaryscape 5	Annabel – feelings over time	152
Diaryscape 6	Annabel – feelings experienced on days spent with Ben	152
Diaryscape 7	Annabel – diary entries about the project of becoming a police officer	154
Diaryscape 8	Annabel – entries concerned with the project of policing, according to clients with whom shifts were spent	155
Diaryscape 9	Annabel – summary of diary entries concerning self-positioning	158
Diaryscape 10	Annabel – self-positioning across time	159
Diaryscape 11	Brittany – feelings over time	168
Diaryscape 12	Brittany – diary entries concerning her three projects	170
Diaryscape 13	Brittany – interactions related to 'breakthroughs'	172
Diaryscape 14	Brittany – summary of diary entries concerning self-positioning	176
Diaryscape 15	Brittany – self-positioning across time	179
Diaryscape 16	Denis – summary of diary entries concerning self-positioning	194
Diaryscape 17	Hector – feelings over time	204
Diaryscape 18	Hector – participation in workplace activities over time	206
Diaryscape 19	Hector – self-positioning over time	211
Diaryscape 20	Kelvin – feelings over time	222
Diaryscape 21	Kelvin – self-positioning over time	227
Diaryscape 22	Overview of comments on students' work	255

Diaryscape 23	The placement context	256
Diaryscape 24	Responses to the placement	257
Diaryscape 25	Students' writing skills	257
Diaryscape 26	Impact of students' prior learning	258
Diaryscape 27	Applicability to police work	259

Tables

Table 1	Student and agency profile: number of Diploma of Policing Practice students placed, September 1998 – February 2002, by number of agencies and target groups	51
Table 2	Informants by age, timing of placement, agency type and location	105
Table 3	Notebooks resubmitted and selected by agencies and target groups	127
Table 4	Word count of informants' notebooks according to type of task	144
Table 5	Annabel – the project of policing as a filter for experience	156
Table 6	Changes in self-positioning	231
Table 7	The presence of projects and goals across diary entries	233
Table 8	Encounters with the new and the novel	238
Table 9	Learning orientations towards the subject	240
Table 10	Evidence of feelings in informants' diaries	243
Table 11	Consequences of feelings	245
Table 12	Resources drawn upon by informants	251
Table 13	Changes in self-positioning	252
Table 14	Views of the community placement expressed in debriefings	254
Table 15	Comparison of my current understanding against the literature base	264

Abstract

When considering how people learn through, and are themselves changed by, work, the processes of learning are largely conceptualised in terms of the immediate work context and its tasks, and in terms of reflection upon experience. These approaches tend to obscure the location of work itself in people's lives in late modern societies, and intentional, future-oriented aspects of learning in this broader context.

In this exploratory case study of police students' learning in community placements, drawing upon a sociological framework, I consider whether and how five students, and their project of becoming a police officer, changed as they dealt with the risks of unfamiliar situations in the light of their intended career. My guiding assumptions about selves and learning are that both need to be viewed multi-dimensionally. Selves, and therefore learning, involve temporality, embodiment (senses, actions, feelings and thoughts), language, relatedness and situatedness.

Using a variety of analytical and interpretive strategies, in an iterative and hermeneutic process, this thesis examines the recorded experiences of the students during their four-week placement. Records such as these are considered particularly useful for exploratory case studies, because of their capacity to reveal self-positioning and concrete socio-historical conditions.

The results were that, although learning could be stimulated by the immediate context, it was also channelled by the students' wider social and temporal context. Unfamiliarity was only a potential starting point for learning, critically influenced by factors such as learners' understandings of their situation and of their future as a police officer, their values, skills and self-confidence, their emotional responses to what they encountered, and the types of guidance available. Students responded creatively to the risks of the new work environment, thereby creating new situations that also demanded action, in an ongoing process of *bricolage*. In so doing, they drew on resources in their private lives as much as they did those at work. These interactions did not always change a student's self-positioning, nor, therefore, did they necessarily lead to learning or to a changed perception of the future. The study suggests the potential value of further

exploration of sociological understandings of selves, particularly an ecological approach, in extending our understanding of adults' learning in everyday life in contemporary society, as well as our understanding of intentional, future-oriented aspects of learning.