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Learning @ Clunes

A study of the learning practices of the Clunes Residential Village Program Wesley @ Clunes

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Preface

The study *Learning @ Clunes*: *A study of the learning practices of the Clunes Residential Village Program Wesley @ Clunes* was undertaken by the Wesley College Institute for Innovation in Education for Wesley College. The aim was to get a better understanding of the learning afforded by the College's Year 9 program, *The Clunes Residential Learning Village*. This program was started in 2000, and by the end of 2008, 36 groups of students would have attended the program – aggregating to around 3000 students. Although it is not uncommon for large independent schools in Melbourne to have some special program, often off-campus, for students in Year 9, Clunes is unique in a number of respects, making a study of its practices valuable. This study examines what students learn at Clunes, and how aspects of the learning environment and the practices at Clunes afford or inhibit particular types of learning.

Wesley College is a large, multi-campus, co-educational school, structured into a Junior School (Early Years to Year 4), Middle Years (Years 5 to 9) and Senior School (Years 10-12). The school follows the IB PYP curriculum from Years One to Six. The Middle Years, of which the Clunes program is a part, follows a curriculum recently developed by the College, based broadly on constructivist philosophy and on the principles of *Understanding by Design* (McTighe & Wiggins, 1998). In the Senior School, the College offers the IB Diploma curriculum, the State's Victorian Certificate of Education curriculum, and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning.

The school has a long tradition of innovative teaching practices, and values learning in all its aspects. The school's vision embraces the UNESCO metaphor of the four pillars of education (Delors, 1996), and emphasises the cognitive and intellectual domains ('learning to know' and 'learning to do') as well as the broader goals that extend learning as being lifelong as well as life-wide ('learning to live with' and 'learning to be'). There is an awareness that the different contexts and communities in which learning takes place at Wesley – the camps, the music program, the classroom, the assemblies – afford these four aspects of learning to different extents.

In the Middle Years, a specially developed curriculum focuses on making learning more meaningful and enduring, with emphasis on transferrable understandings and skills. Personal and social growth and an awareness of one's place in community are emphasised in the curriculum. The Middle Years Student Profile also emphasises both cognitive and affective domains. A pastoral care curriculum has also been developed in the last couple of years. The Clunes Residential Village program is therefore well situated to be part of the Middle Years program of Wesley College, and the program helps realise the vision of Wesley College.

The Wesley College Institute for Innovation in Education was commissioned to undertake this research in 2008. The Institute is interested in building ideas in education and has a particular interest in exploring new learning frameworks for the 21st century. As this study shows, the Clunes program is unique and this study explores the practices that make this program such a success. A year-long ethnography, this study is based on the lived experiences of two cohorts of students and focuses on the features of the environment and the practices within this unique learning space.

Executive Summary

The purposes of this study were two fold: to add to the existing understandings of the learning that takes place at Clunes; and to examine the particular features and learning practices that make this experience unique.

Using grounded theory, this ethnographic study used multiple data sources which included 50 interviews with parents, students and teachers; several on-site observations; and documentary evidence, including student and teacher assessments.

The study endorses that the learning practices at Clunes provide unique opportunities and practices that promote powerful engagement with learning and an expansion of the range of possibilities of 'being' and 'becoming'. Specifically, it was found that:

- The Clunes experience enables students to develop deep insights about self; gain a sense of agency and empowerment; develop new capacities; gain a sense of independence in thought and action; learn to relate with people with a greater sense of understanding and empathy, and get an understanding of themselves as part of community
- At Clunes, known hierarchies and practices are displaced and students' social histories have a reduced impact. This allows students to surprise themselves and others, step out of their comfort zones and re-define the boundaries of who they are and what they can achieve.
- Several practices at Clunes combine to promote an intense focus on 'self', which is opened up as a site for examination and intervention. Staff, students and parents alike are extremely positive with regard to the goals of the program and what it achieves. While an 'ideal adolescent' is implied in many of the practices and activities – one who is sociable, a public speaker, a risk-taker and so on, care is taken to encourage each student to set his or her own goals and to expand the notion of what constitutes 'success'
- Shared experiences and challenges afford opportunities to develop a deep sense of camaraderie and promote understanding and empathy
- The full-on, 24/7 nature of the experience, where each student's actions can have a profound impact on others, promotes a heightened sense of students' own impact on their social and physical surroundings, encouraging a sense of responsibility as well as empowerment. This is reinforced by courses and activities such *Collective Potential* through which students can make a lasting, positive impact on community
- While the Clunes program is highly valued, it is discursively set up as an ideal but one-off experience, from which students must return to face the 'real life' of exams and grade averages. This paper suggests that the 'smooth spaces' (characteristic of Clunes) and the 'striated spaces' (more typical of the metropolitan campuses) need not be perceived as opposing and dichotomous, but as co-existing. Such an understanding can pave the way for the gains from the Clunes experience to continue to enrich student experience on the metropolitan campuses
- While students report profound learning and insights, leading to deep change in themselves, parents, students and staff also report that student behaviour and actions 'revert' to 'pre-Clunes' ways very soon after returning. This study suggests that Deleuze's notion of *differentiation* rather than *difference* may be

more helpful in understanding the change process and maintaining and consolidating the gains made at Clunes

- Continuous assessment and frequent feedback loops, combined with self-assessment, make for a very powerful model for assessment at Clunes – one that would be of interest to many educators and educational institutions. Parents, teachers and students emphatically endorse the value of the Clunes experience

Background: The Clunes Residential Village Program

The Clunes Residential Village Program (henceforth referred to as 'Clunes' or 'the Clunes program') is an eight-week residential program designed for students in Year 9 (most students are around 14 years old). Located in the historic former gold-mining township of Clunes, the campus has 12 purpose-built houses, each of which can accommodate eight students, with a kitchen and living spaces. In addition, a large hall (the 'Jube'), and a Church ('the Bluestone), also located on campus, provide study and work spaces. Other buildings house the offices. The Town Hall, the Masonic Lodge and the Weavery provide additional learning spaces.

Philosophy and Aims

The eight-week residential experience attempts 'the education of the whole person in community', the three aspects of which are identified as 'a philosophy of self, the interlinking of communities, and the place of spirituality and culture'.

In the words of the Principal of the school as quoted in an information brochure:

> *The activities and the environment of Clunes provide a unique experience for students to discover and develop their identity, but also to see first hand the inherent responsibilities and relationships of young adulthood in the world outside the family. The Clunes campus, with its practical involvement and social interaction, is a key part of learning in the adolescent years at Wesley.*

The Program

The Clunes program and curriculum require students to spend eight weeks on campus. Students are housed in one of the 12 purpose-built 'student homes'. Housing is single-sex. Students do the shopping, the cooking and the cleaning of their houses. Adults support the students and there is always an adult on hand when needed.

The curriculum is divided into required and elective studies. Most of the tasks are collaborative in nature and the emphasis is on flexibility and choice. Students undertake and complete a major research project during the eight weeks. There are no classrooms – in addition to the Jube and the Bluestone, the village and the surrounds are the locations where students learn.

In addition, students engage with the community of the village itself; Clunes is the site of the first discovery of gold deposits in Victoria, and was once a bustling community. For a few decades now, however, it has fallen into decline. Students learn about the history and culture of Clunes, and also engage with the community. Community service is an integral part of the Clunes program.

Some components of the program are:
Courses – which consist of 6 sequential lessons of three hours duration spread over a two-week period. Students complete three courses during the six middle weeks of the program
Electives – a wide range of elective programs are built into the schedule

The Mount Beckworth Run – This is a challenging 12 km run up nearby Mt Beckworth. Students train for weeks regularly and complete the run during the last week of the stay there. This is not compulsory, and not everyone chooses to participate in this.
Collective Potential Started only a couple of years ago, *Collective Potential* has become an important part of the program. Students work as a group to undertake a project that is of lasting benefit to the community.
Community Service Students who are not engaged in a full day music program perform community service which includes such activities as assisting local businesses and helping out at the senior citizens home
Music Unlike on the metropolitan campuses, the music program at Clunes is not formally organised or pre-determined; students form groups based on interest, practice their pieces and perform as part of Presentation Day
Circus Students who sign up for this program learn to use a variety of equipment to perform a show on Presentation Day
The Personal Project This is the most 'academic' aspect of the program. Students choose a topic to research. In addition to speaking about their topic, they prepare websites, keep a log, and reflect upon their own learning styles and needs, using Art Costa's framework of 'habits of mind'.

Some of this learning is showcased on Presentation Day, which occurs on the last Sunday of the course. Families are invited to this event, and students present their Clunes Project, as also a music performance and the circus performance, on this day.

Housing

Students are housed in groups of up to eight students, two to a room, in self-contained houses. Students are responsible for managing and running the house – including budgeting, shopping, cleaning and cooking. Roles and duties are rostered to ensure a fair distribution of work. Each house has a House Leader (a staff member) who oversees the house. Mentors aid student learning, and in particular assist students with their personal research project as needed. Teachers run the various foundation or core and elective subjects. Adults work shifts so that there are always teachers on campus. Volunteers from the Clunes township assist students in preparing their meal during some days of the week.

Parents visit around the half-way mark, and again have the opportunity to attend the Presentation Day, and again during Week 7, and students return home at the end of Week 8. An orientation program called 'Ticket to Clunes'[1] prior to departure, and a reorientation to school program are organised to ease the transition between programs.

Students are allowed to sign themselves in and out of the Clunes campus during designated times if they want to visit the Clunes village. The village itself consists of a main street and a few homes. The main street (Fraser St) has a butcher's, a lolly shop, a bakery and a green grocer's. Everyone from the Mayor of the town downwards participates in some way with each cohort of students. The history and the current circumstances of the village, and in particular the effects of the long-standing drought in the region on the surrounding farms and the ecology are all woven into the courses and programs in various ways.

[1] This program is not a feature on all the campuses.

Chapter 1

Locating and Framing the Inquiry

> *The very nature of what education is intended to accomplish, where it takes place, and the means used to achieve its goals is no longer fixed. As a result, some contemporary teaching programs do not occur in school buildings at all, and in others the administrative formality of 30 fixed seats facing a blackboard is fast disappearing. (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 11)*

This is a study of the Clunes learning environment, and focuses on understanding the practices that produce its distinct features. An earlier study has focused on the nature of the learning that occurs at Clunes. It concluded that the program has a positive impact in three areas: self-concept, learning, and understanding of community. This study focuses on the conditions that promote such learning. The approach taken in this study views students as active and agentic participants in the production of the learning environment, rather than as merely placed in a ready-made environment.

By way of introduction, in the sections that follow, I outline recent developments in schooling purposes and practices, and some of the ways in which learning has been understood and researched. I provide the rationale and the research questions that guide this study.

The Search for Meaningful Education

The recent decades have seen the development of a number of innovative teaching practices which are seen as alternatives to the traditional 'transmission model' of learning. From around the 1980s in particular, with globalisation processes rapidly changing the world, and increasing talk of the 'knowledge economy', the 'risk society' (Beck, 1992) and the 'runaway world' (Giddens & Pierson, 1998), many institutions have started to see the transmission model of learning as inadequate, and have been seeking other ways of teaching. Schools and curricula that promote a passion for 'lifelong' learning, focus on affective factors such as motivation, empathy and responsibility, and on transferrable skills such as communication and problem-solving, and encourage an awareness of the processes of learning are being developed.

While there is a growing awareness that most current designs of education are out-of-sync with the new realities and needs of the times (Banathy, 1996), traditional and received structures, assumptions and practices of schooling are difficult to displace. Models of school improvement, reform and even 'revolution'[2] in education are still often envisioned within the existing grammar of schooling, whereas what is needed, according to some, is a re-visioning of the project of schooling on a very fundamental level:

> *Those who are willing to face the new realities understand that: (1) rather than improving education we should transcend it, (2) rather than revising it, we should re-vision it, and (3) rather than re-form it, we should trans-form it by design. (Banathy, 1996, p. 207)*

[2] This makes reference to the current Australian education reform agenda, which has been dubbed the 'education revolution'.

The changing goals of learning

Since the 1980s, globalisation has seen the elaboration of the skills needed in the knowledge society. These are variously articulated as lifelong learning, 'learning to learn', transdisciplinary skills, inquiry and application-based learning, thinking skills, metacognition and a focus on communication, collaboration and creativity. Accordingly, school and curriculum reform has focused not only on the products of learning, such as achieving high levels of knowledge and skills, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, but also on *processes* of learning. Today's students are expected to adapt to a rapidly changing world and apply their knowledge and skills to a variety of contexts.

Further, affective factors such as self-esteem, confidence and motivation are seen as critical contributors to learning and to the development of the learner. It would be rare to see a school mission statement which does not highlight the social and emotional needs of students. Howard Gardner's now well-known delineation of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983), which includes 'intrapersonal' and 'interpersonal' intelligences, has provided the framework for focusing on a number of areas beyond the academic needs of students.

Technology has revolutionised the nature of the communities which young people inhabit today, and altered the way people relate with each other. Students today are seen as digital natives with networks and modes of knowing and being that are quite removed from those upon which traditional schooling is premised. School curricula struggle to remain relevant and to be regarded as useful by students. This has promoted the development of many creative programs in schools, particularly in the middle years of schooling.

In Wesley College, these ideas are reflected in a number of ways. Since 2005, the school has engaged in the development and implementation of a new curriculum for the middle grades called Learning in the Middle Years. This program values a focus on enduring understandings rather than factual knowledge, and gives weight to such aspects as personal and social growth and global citizenship. Clunes, which is part of the Middle Years program, is seen as a significant site in particular for students' personal and social growth, and the development of a sense of citizenship through interaction with the community.

Learning Environments

Research has established significant links between learning environments and the students' perceptions of self, their connectedness with community and their academic motivation. Roeser et al find that 'specific instructional, interpersonal, and organizational dimensions of middle school life, as perceived by students themselves', are associated with the development of adolescents (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000).

An increased focus on learning environments in recent years has led to explorations in many directions such as the focus on the built environment and architectural features that may better suit adolescent learners and the incorporation of media applications and new technology. Attempts are made to make learning more responsive to individual needs and interests of students. Questions with regard to shifting group sizes, of individuation, of genuine choice and concerning the learning environment

itself – about how and why it works – are among those being examined by educators and researchers.

However, traditional models of schooling have been difficult to displace, as Pfeiffer asserts:

> *Regiments of desks with a teacher at the front of a box-like room, contained in an egg-crate super-structure, still characterizes the predominant public school learning space. Both economics and unresolved, disparate philosophies account for the slow curricular and architectural upgrading of our schools, and as it can be shown that schools are almost always a direct reflection of their communities, these disparities take many forms across the country. (Pfeiffer, 1974, p. 11)*

In the intervening 34 years since this statement was made, the 'egg-crate superstructure' and the 'regiments of desks' is still the dominant model of schooling. The Clunes project is a bold experiment in breaking free of these traditional structures of 'school' and in addressing the critical needs of the coming decades. While some new programs emphasise technology[3] and its use in education as a critical area, Clunes is more concerned with developing a sense of place in community, with exploring interdependence in communities and in nature, and with fostering a sense of caring for self and others. It seeks to develop in students a sense of responsibility and self-efficacy. It makes a commitment to valuing the 'softer' and more nebulous aspects of learning such as a spiritual connection with oneself and with one's surrounds.

Adolescence as a special phase of life

Adolescence has been receiving increasing attention as a time when students can experience a decline in their 'academic motivation, self perceptions and school-related behaviours' (Eccles, Lord, & Midgley, 1991). Early adolescence is 'a pivotal phase' where students could either tend towards 'healthy adjustment' or 'maladaptive behaviors' (Roudolph, Lambert, Clark, & Kurlakowsky, 2001, p. 929, and others cited therein). Rudolph et al find that any 'impairment in functioning' could compromise the attainment of key cognitive milestones and also adversely impact long-term development.

In the US, three significant reports: An *Agenda for Excellence at the Middle Level* (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1985), *This We Believe* (National Middle School Association, 1995), and *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Corporation's Council on Adolescent Development,1989) influenced school reform aimed at addressing what were seen as specific needs of adolescent students, and advocated such ideas as addressing personal responsibility, a focus on skills 'necessary for successful participation in the adult world', problem solving, lifelong learning, and the maintenance of 'substantive ties to and with the community' (Williams-Boyd, 2003, p. 8).

In Australia, some schools run special programs in Year 9, often of a residential nature, including programs that operate overseas. They vary in length, many of them

[3] While technology is not a focus of learning at Clunes, Wesley College itself lays emphasis on the use of technology by teachers and students. Indeed, Wesley College was one of the first institutions in Australia to become a 'laptop school'. Students continue to have access to their laptops while at Clunes.

running for the entire year. Some of the well-known programs include the Methodist Ladies' College program *Marshmead* in the Croajingolong National Park, with a focus on the environment, and power and water use; Geelong Grammar's *Timbertop* program, where the focus is on nature and learning from the natural environment; and Lauriston Girls' School's *Howqua* which is a year-long residential program with a focus on a 'direct and intimate experience of nature' and the building of confidence through negotiating the challenges posed by living in remote and natural surroundings. Most of these Year 9 programs continue to provide instruction in traditional classroom subjects in these diverse settings, in addition to other types of learning afforded by the nature of the environment in which they are located.

Clunes is unique in this regard – it does not follow the traditional curricular framework of subject areas such as mathematics and language study, though learning in these subject areas could arise incidentally through students' own interests and through their Clunes Projects[4]. This structure underscores the confidence the College has in its broadly defined notion of learning, and its commitment to provide much more than lip service to its vision of encouraging learning in all four areas identified in its vision statement. Where most of the other Year 9 programs are located in remote areas insulating students from any contact with a larger community, Clunes consciously interacts with the local community and places this interaction as a significant aspect (if not at the very heart) of the program.

21st Century Learning Environments

Traditional methods of research on learning pay attention to the 'products' of learning such as levels of literacy and numeracy; more informed research pays attention to learning processes as well. However, understandings of 'learning environments' or 'learning contexts', and how they play out with regard to how and what students learn, are still emerging. This emerging field of research is of particular interest to the Wesley College Institute of Innovation and Learning. Attentive to the idea a rapidly changing world has brought in its wake unique challenges and opportunities for educators, it is committed to exploring different types of learning contexts and environments to expand the notion of learning, reach diverse student needs, and exploit the potentials of learning both within and outside traditional school settings.

The Clunes program represents a departure from 'mainstream' and simplistic practices and therefore demands more nuanced understandings of learning. With Clunes, the conscious location of the program in rural Victoria, its arrangements for the housing of students and its deliberate bid to change the way students and adults interact among themselves and with the environment are all not only integral but *central* to the program.

Most theories of learning place the context or environments as a kind of backdrop or a stage – learning occurs, and it just happens to occur in that particular location. More recently school architecture and 'learning spaces' have begun to emerge as sites of research, and are being theorised in more complex ways. However, many of these studies see 'environment' as a relatively stable actor, rather than as a dynamic and

[4] This is true for the most part. In recent years, students have been required to write a 1000 word essay as part of their personal project, which some staff and parents feel is a capitulation to pressure from those who want more familiar patterns of learning to occur at Clunes.

emergent entity that is variously produced and experienced. While socio-cultural theories give prominence to learning as emergent phenomena, the individual continues to be the unit of analysis.

In this study, the environment itself is the focus, and individuals, learning processes and the socio-material practices are all seen as emergent, relationally 'produced' and inherently dynamic. Further, this study makes a contribution to understandings of teaching and learning through an elaboration and extension of present understandings of what constitutes a learning environment.

Rationale for the Study

Many educators and social critics highlight concerns such as 'How we can live together without killing each other?' and 'How we can live on this planet without destroying it?' as being the most critical to consider in our times. The Clunes program seems well situated to stimulate the development of attitudes and approaches, as well as understandings and skills, which would address these concerns. As such, the Clunes program has important lessons for education in general.

Clunes is a unique learning environment, and its study would offer important understandings with regard to how learning occurs when socio-material relations of accustomed ways of being and knowing are displaced. How do learners negotiate their way through new practices? What new ways of knowing and being evolve when practiced ways of relating become unavailable? What is the value of such re-negotiation? These questions serve to advance our understanding of how learning occurs.

The Clunes story, therefore, is an important one to tell. This study privileges the positions of those best equipped to tell the story – those who have lived the experience: students, parents[5] and staff. While many anecdotal and recorded and unrecorded stories have circulated over time, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the Clunes experience by collecting data in an organised manner and analysing it through particular analytical lenses. Theorising the experience makes it possible to speak with greater clarity and purpose when considering program changes and refinements, and enable the application of these understandings in other settings. This study thus makes a contribution to the scholarship of teaching and learning.

The Research Questions

- What do students learn at Clunes? What are the most significant experiences?
- What are the special features of the learning environment that make experiences significant? What practices are employed?
- What new insights about learning are afforded by this unique learning environment?

Limitations of this Study

The scope of this study is inevitably limited by factors of time and other resources. Focus has been on such findings as would be of immediate relevance and use to

[5] Though, of course, the parents' experience is vicarious. The inclusion of parents in the study is explained in later sections of the study.

Wesley College. In particular, the data suggests that pursuing a study of the role of sociomaterial artefacts would be feasible and interesting, but there was insufficient time to pursue this line of inquiry. Directions for further research are suggested in the concluding chapter.

Outline of the report

In the chapters that follow, I provide an overview of the theoretical underpinnings and the analytical commitments of this study (Chapter 2); detail the methodologies and methods used (Chapter 3); and summarise the results in the form of vignettes (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 discusses the notion of self and how this is opened up as a site for intervention, while Chapter 6 is devoted to the issue of change. Chapter 7 examines some essential features of pedagogic practices at Clunes, and Chapter 8 provides conclusions and points to further investigations that may be undertaken.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Underpinnings, Conceptual Tools, and Analytical Commitments

For many years, theories of learning were based on individual and cognitive models. Many studies focused on what individuals learnt. When it came to explaining how they learnt, differences were explained in terms of 'learning styles' which were located within individuals. Consequently, the unit of analysis in educational research was the individual, and the site of intervention and improvement was the individual.

More recently, the *context* within which students learn has also become the subject of study, and interest began to be taken in the question: What are the conditions which enable learning? Learning environments came to be seen as subjects of research and objects of change and improvement. Still later, the notion of 'context' or 'environment' was expanded to the nature of interactions and to the practices which obtained in different environments, and to how these were appropriated and negotiated by individuals and groups. Both individuals and groups came to be seen as consequential in learning sequences, as they interacted within and with the environment. These preoccupations applied both in education and in the fields of organisational life and the study of society in general.

> *It has been recognized that system design will benefit from explicit study of the context in which users work. The unaided individual divorced from a social group and from supporting artifacts is no longer the model user. But with this realization about the importance of context come many difficult questions. What exactly is context? If the individual is no longer central, what is the correct unit of analysis? What are the relations between artifacts, individuals, and the social groups to which they belong?(Bonnie, 1995, p. 35)*

In this study, I use *practice* as the unit of analysis. Such a focus allows for the study of individuals and groups in interaction with and within their contexts. In the sections that follow, I present a brief overview of different classification frameworks and taxonomies of learning and learning environments, and explain the theoretical underpinnings, the analytical commitments and the conceptual tools employed in the present study.

Three Models of Learning: Behaviourist, Cognitive and Constructivist

Instructional theories and practices are informed by models of learning we hold. Three models have been identified by Palinscar (1998):

The Behaviourist Account

The behaviourists hold that learning occurs through connections between situations and actions. The implication of this for teaching is that instruction is designed to elicit the desired responses through modelling, demonstration and reinforcement. Knowledge is seen as constructed sequentially. Tasks are broken down into component parts, and the curriculum is premised upon the mastering of concepts in an incremental, step-by-step sequence. Learning premised on such a model is largely

teacher directed and direct instruction is the most frequently used mode of teaching. Although this method of learning is efficient in teaching factual knowledge, its value in teaching higher order thinking skills is not supported by evidence (Palincsar, 1998). Despite this, this method of instruction is widely practiced in schools.

The Cognitive Account

The cognitive perspective focuses on 'meaning-making' through cognitive structures which form the basis for problem solving and the ability to transfer understanding. These structures are thought to be formed by individuals as a consequence of experience. Because learning is seen to result from personal meaning-making on the part of the learner, cognitive perspectives also involve a form of constructivism.

Constructivist accounts: Sociocultural Theories

In postmodern constructivist accounts, learning is inherently social, and the locus of knowledge is not the individual. Rather, it is held that such learning as problem solving and expert reasoning occurs more effectively when the cognitive work is distributed among different individuals, tools and activities, making cognition a collaborative process. Constructivists see learning not just as influenced by social factors, but as an inherently social phenomenon (Palincsar, 1998).

Piaget's social conflict theory holds that learning occurs when there is reason to question one's existing understanding of a phenomenon. Here, research suggests that children working together learn better than those working alone, as do those who are actively engaged rather than merely observing. Research also suggests that verbal interaction is 'key to co-construction and cognitive change (Palincsar, 1998, p. 351).

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory posits that 'learning and development take place in socially and culturally shaped contexts, which are themselves constantly changing' (Palincsar, 1998, p. 354). Development is therefore a combination of internal and external factors which is contextual and particular rather than generalisable.

> *From social and cultural constructivist perspectives, separating the individual from social influences is not regarded as possible. The sociocultural contexts in which teaching and learning occur are considered critical to learning itself, and learning is viewed as culturally and contextually specific. (Palincsar, 1998, p. 354)*

This understanding of learning is particularly relevant to the study of Clunes, and supports its philosophy, which is also premised on the notion of 'learning in community'.

Not only does sociocultural theory not make a distinction between the individual and the sociocultural in the learning process, it also makes no separation between cognitive and affective factors. This has implications for how learning is researched.

> *[C]ognition is not …analysed as separate from social, motivational, emotional, and identity processes and the study of generalization is the study of processes rather than the study of personal or situational attributes. Given these complexities, researchers are still developing research methods consistent with the assumptions of this perspective. (Palincsar, 1998, p. 354)*

This study is informed by sociocultural understandings of learning, and uses activities and processes rather than individuals as the unit of analysis.

Theorising 'New Learning'

Based on reforms in the Dutch education system, de Kock and others have elaborated the attributes of what Duffy et al have termed 'new learning' (de Kock, Sleegers, & Voeten, 2004, citing Simon, Van der Linden, & Duffy, 2000). According to them, 'new learning' emphasises three attributes: learning is *constructive*, *social* and *situated*[6]. Each of these attributes of learning has implications for practice, and therefore on how it is researched. Following de Kock et al, I elaborate each of these attributes below.

Learning as a Constructive Activity

A constructivist orientation views learning as more than transmission of information. Rather it sees learning 'primarily as the active and personal construction of knowledge' (de Kock et al., 2004, p. 146, citing De Jong, 1995). The implications of such a view are that learning environments should be 'complex, realistic, and relevant', and there must be

> *provisions for social negotiation; encouragement of student ownership in the learning process; and nurturing of self-awareness with respect to the knowledge construction process. (2004, p. 146, citing Driscoll, 2000, p 382-383)*

Such a constructivist paradigm demands a shift from a 'knowledge-transmission model' of learning to a 'knowledge-construction model' (Lowyck & Ellen, 1993), with an attendant shift from an exclusive focus on learning products such as knowledge and skills, to learning processes such as metacognition. The role of students changes from being 'knowledge consumers' to becoming active, engaged and independent 'knowledge producers' It also requires changes in the way students and teachers interact with each other (de Kock et al., 2004, p. 141).

These understandings underpin the program at Clunes, with self-assessment, one-on-one interviews, group meetings, log books and other such devices that focus strongly on metacognition, reflection and process rather than product orientation.

Learning as a Situated Activity

As de Kock et al explain, viewing learning as a situated activity implies that 'knowing cannot be separated from doing' (2004, p. 147). The environment and the social context shapes – and is shaped by – the learning that occurs. Learning is seen as occurring in a 'practice field', and this has implications both for how environments are designed and viewed, as well as the theories used to research learning environments.

With regard to the first, de Kock find this alters the way roles are distributed between teachers and learners. The situated nature of learning makes it possible for students to feel a sense of independence and efficacy as they have access to the context of learning. Where learning is decontextualised, learners are dependent on the teacher

[6] However, de Kock et al point out that these attributes had long been recognised by Piaget, and question the adjective 'new' attached to this understanding of learning.

for instructions, in a practice field, learners have more agency and can develop their own practices. In terms of learning processes, learners are seen as becoming more self-regulated, metacognitive and reflective, exercising control over the processes of their own learning.

Such a situated view of learning also informs how learning is researched. The 'practice turn' requires theories that overcome the dualistic notions of dominant structuralist paradigms in education. Arnseth (2008)sees activity theory and situated learning theory as offering better ways to study learning.

> *They both turn to the notion of practice in order to overcome the limitations of mentalist and structuralist accounts of educational phenomena. Together they represent some of the most influential attempts to transcend the dualistic tendencies of the dominant theoretical paradigms of educational research such as structuralist theories and educational theories that place mind and mental processes at their centre. Activity theory and situated learning theory offer very different accounts of the nature, scope and relevance of institutional, social and material contexts when accounting for the meanings and functions of any particular action or activity. While situated learning theory offers a more internal perspective, activity theory offers a more external perspective on human practices. (p. 289)*

However, Arnseth finds that 'there is still a tendency to treat communities, institutions and cultures as separable entities and not as praxiological instantiations' (p. 290). The persistence of 'structuralist and mentalist' approaches to teaching is often reflected in research in learning as well.

Learning as a Social Activity

Viewing learning as a social process places participation and interaction between members within a community as central to learning. Cooperation and collaboration become important skills in such a view of learning. The learning goals are shared and members of the learning community work together to achieve these goals.

These understandings would significantly alter the goals of learning (social skills become as important as cognitive understandings – indeed, social skills are not seen as separate to cognitive skills) and also the organisation of the learning tasks and environments. It would have implications for the way roles are distributed between students and teachers.

Learning Theory and Learning Environments

As we have seen above, different models of learning point to different ways of organising learning environments, and different intended goals of learning. A comprehensive study of classifications of learning environments has been done by de Kock, et al, who find the following attributes of learning environments explicated in the literature on the subject:

- the physical context in which learning and instruction occur
- the division of roles between teacher and learner
- the roles of learners in relation to each other
- learning goals

- the teacher's method of instruction
- the tasks to be performed by the students
- the materials used and the roles they play

(de Kock et al., 2004, and others cited therein)

These attributes have been reframed by de Kock et al to a classification scheme that is articulated in terms of

- learning goals
- the division of teacher and learner roles, and
- the roles of the learners in relation to each other.(de Kock et al., 2004)

de Kock et al contend that this new three-point classification system is appropriate for use with 'new learning' scenarios, both for practitioners to use in planning and evaluating learning environments, and for researchers conducting process-product research. It allows for a shift away from old models of process-product research, which focused on the effects of teacher behaviour on student outcomes, and accommodates factors such as student motivations and metacognition. de Kock et al's model can be represented as follows

Classification of Learning Environments	
Learning Goals	***Learning Products*** • Knowledge of learning content • Knowledge of learning process • Attitude towards learning content • Attitude towards learning process • Cognitive learning skills Affective learning skills • Social learning skills • Transfer skills
	Learning Process • Preparatory Learning Functions • Executive Learning Functions • Closing Learning Functions
Division of teacher and learner goals	***Behavioural Model*** (teacher directed) ***Developmental Model*** (Learning oriented) ***Apprenticeship Model*** (Learning from an expert other in a shared world)
Roles of learners in relation to each other	***Competitive*** ***Individual*** ***Cooperative***

This taxonomy of learning environments is more appropriate for the study of 'new learning' than the prevailing models such as Bloom's Taxonomy. They have been developed taking into account sociocultural theory and allow for variations within these understandings, through the options in the second columns. However, some critical elements are missing in this framework. The effects of spatial and temporal

factors are left out of this framework. There is an assumption that the teacher creates an environment and the learners inhabit it; the agentic participation of the learner in producing the environment is denied. The role of the material aspects of the environment, and the ways in which they may mediate practices are also unacknowledged.

Activity Theory and Situated Learning Theory

Arnseth (2008) provides a wonderfully coherent and scholarly account of activity theory and situated learning theory, which I draw upon in this section. He uses the work of Engeström (1987) on activity theory, and of Lave and Wenger(1991) on situated learning theory, to highlight their main principles, their similarities to each other and their points of difference, and the analytical implications of using one or the other theory.

Activity theory (AT) and situated learning theory (SLT) are both practice-based theories, which go beyond structuralist understandings of learning. Rather than viewing 'social structures or individual cognition as the primary constituents of the orderliness of educational phenomena', they suggest that *social practices* become the objects of inquiry. These theories do not regard behaviour as 'the enactment of pre-existing codes and structures'. They find that the intelligibility of 'structure, system, meaning and action' are constituted in social practices. Learning and teaching are regarded as embedded in *historical*, *social* and *material* contexts (Arnseth, 2008, p. 289, and others cited therein).

In these theories, Arnseth explains, practice is seen as *constitutive*. This means that learning is not seen as an independent occurrence that happens to be situated in a practice; rather, 'learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35). In this way of thinking, 'the lived-in world of everyday activity becomes the site where the action is, and this is where identities, knowing and communities are produced and reproduced'. Engeström offers the notion of learning as 'expansion', as an integral part of activity. Expansion, in his view, is 'the work of both mental and material extension and transformation in time', as an integral aspect of activity. In other words, learning is an integral part of activity, where activity constitutes what he terms 'societal practice' (Arnseth, 2008, p. 291).

Situated Learning Theory

Propounded by Lave and Wenger, SLT has its roots in Dewey's pragmatism, and reconceptualises learning as lived experience. Arnseth explains that Lave and Wenger

> *treat thinking and learning as something that is constituted in the lived-in-world – the world as it is experienced in social practice. Consequently, the orderliness and intelligibility of human affairs are conceived as* ***pervasively relational and agency-driven****. According to Lave and Wenger: 'learning as increasing participation in communities of practice* ***concerns the whole person acting in the world'*** *(1991, 49) and 'conceiving of learning in terms of participation focuses attention on ways in which it is* ***an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations'*** *(1991, 49–50). (p. 294, emphases mine)*

Further, Arnseth explains,

> *Lave and Wenger (1991) treat learning as changing participation in changing practice. According to them, practice is something which is developed and changed in and through social relationships. This means that concepts such as roles, identities, rules and social structures are realised in everyday activity, and not the constitutive foundation of the same activity. (p. 294)*

Research on practice would therefore focus on 'relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world' (Lave and Wenger 1991, 51). These ideas resonate strongly with ways in which Clunes is described in their informational brochures, with a focus on learner agency and lived experience, and in particular, the notion of 'the whole person acting in the world'. Situated learning theory would therefore provide the relevant conceptual framework for this study.

Activity Theory

Arnseth explains activity theory as 'object oriented' practice, or *praxis.* 'Object' here is viewed more in the sense of 'objective' or 'purpose'. But practices occur within particular social and material arrangements; in other words, there is a larger (and prior) system of relations that make it possible for us to make sense of our activities and experiences. We might conceive of this larger set of relations as a system. In activity theory, the unit of analysis is the system within which activities are made possible and made sensible (i.e., which ascribe meaning to them).

Activity theory also pays attention to the role of material and semiotic artefacts as mediators of activity. As Arnseth puts it,

> *[A]rtefacts are crucial in carrying out actions that enable us to reach certain goals. As such, they enable us to engage with* ***the world of both matter and ideas****. Artefacts are both ideal and material, that is, a tool such as a hammer is not just a material means for driving in nails. It is also an ideal tool, in the sense that by being related to a certain activity it carries with it* ***historically developed purposes****. The notion of mediation refers to the fact that artefacts are embedded in activities and that they get their meaning and purpose in regard to particular subjects and objects. The ideal and material properties of artefacts have developed historically through human practical activity. Therefore, the historical dimension of practice becomes crucial in AT. The experiences of other people using a tool are, so to speak, accumulated in the structural properties of the tool as well as in knowledge about how the tool should be used.*

The attention paid to a historically existing context is of critical value in the study of Clunes. The Clunes program can be conceptualised as situated within the broader context of the Middle Years of Wesley College, which is of course itself situated in the history and tradition of Wesley College, the broader contexts of the APS schools, Australian schools, and a particular historical time period. For the purposes of this study, the situation of Clunes within the broader context of practices within the Middle Years at Wesley College is of particular relevance.

The scope of this study is limited and cannot encompass the Clunes campus as well as the three metropolitan campuses in its empirical work. However, it employs two ideas from activity theory in its orientation – one, it pays attention to the ways in which the practices at Clunes are distinct from the practices more widely used in 'regular'

school; and two, it pays attention to the role of socio-material artefacts in mediating practice.

Bourdieu's 'Habitus' and 'Field'

Bourdieu proposes the notion of 'habitus' to denote the dispositions which incline agents to act as they do. Bourdieu suggests that habitus generates consistent practices which are almost automatic in response to the 'filed' or a social context. However, he does not see habitus as a determining feature; rather, habitus provides the way in which agents make sense of and respond to the world. Practice is generated in the interaction between habitus and the social world (Reay, 2004). Habitus is seen as emergent – changed by the varying experiences encountered by the agent. As Bourdieu puts it, it is not only that the habitus is in the world, but that the world is in the habitus. Habitus is seen as cumulative, so that past experiences mediate understandings of the encountered world, and the practices employed in acting in the world.

However habitus is not overly deterministic; while it disposes agents to act in certain ways, it is also unpredictable. Reay (2004) summarises the four main features of habitus: habitus is *embodied*, and includes more than 'mental attitudes and perceptions'; it includes durable ways of perceiving and acting in the world; habitus is agentic, rather than mechanical; habitus is 'a compilation of individual and collective trajectories'; and, being cumulative, involves a 'complex interplay between past and present' (p. 432).

For Bourdieu, habitus is the relatively unreflexive and almost instinctive way in which humans interact with their environment. It is a notion based around action and practice, seeing habitus as generating relatively stable practices.

'Fields' are the social worlds or the environments with and within which habituses act. Reay describes Bourdieu's 'fields' as 'the structured space of positions within which
relations are determined by the ability of those within them to 'play' according to their habitus, but also dependent on the resources, or capital, to which they have access (2004).

The notions of habitus and field provide a useful way to examine the Clunes experience. The Clunes environment is quite different to the city campus experience of school, and the living experience of home. When students arrive at Clunes, their practiced ways of acting and being seem out of pace in this new field. How they learn to negotiate this new world is dependent upon the dispositions they carry and the resources they are able to mobilise. This in turn shapes their habitus. The extent to which their habitus is reshaped determines how durable the changes are when they return to the former 'fields' of home and school.

While Bourdieu's notions have been used widely to study a number of different types of social worlds, they have not been without criticism. The most serious criticism is that his way of theorising 'habitus' makes individual actions

unthinking and automatic, rather than deliberate or agentic. However, some interpretations of Bourdieu deny the validity of this allegation.

In this study, I view habitus as a disposition which is nevertheless agentic and always emergent as it interacts with, and helps produce, the field. By the same token, I see the field itself as emergent, produced both individually and collectively by agents acting within it, but also performing it. In this conceptualisation, both habitus and field are fluid networks which interact to produce varying degrees of change in individual and collective habitus, as well as in the field.

Deleuze's Smooth and Striated Spaces

Deleuze provides a more complex and productive description of how we act and interact with others and how this occurs in different space-experiences[7]. He proposes the idea of 'smooth spaces' and 'striated spaces'. Smooth spaces are unregulated opportunities for interaction and transformation. Smooth spaces invite us to take off on 'lines of flight' and allow us to experience 'haecciety', where we are one with the environment and feel completely and intensely 'in the moment'. As Davies puts it,

> *Haecciety or this-ness is integral to what Deleuze calls smooth space—the space that escapes over-coded striations. Smooth space enables an immersion in the present moment, in time and in space, that often eludes us in the press of normative expectations, of habitually repeated thoughts and practices. (Davies, 2008, p. 7)*

In contrast, striated spaces restrictive, structured, and hierarchically organised spaces which limit relations and encourage 'molar lines' rather than 'lines of flight'.

Smooth spaces and striated spaces each have their uses and their dangers. While smooth spaces generate transformative experiences, they can also be risky spaces which may lead to dangerous or self-centred actions. Striated spaces constrain the range of possibilities and inhibit creativity. At the same time, striated spaces provide secures and familiar spaces within which to operate.

The concepts of smooth and striated spaces, and of lines of flight and molar lines, are used in particular in the analysis of why students appear to 'revert' to their 'old' selves when they return from Clunes.

Earlier Studies of Clunes

The Clunes program was the focus of a 2002 Master's thesis, based on data collected in 2001. The study examined the program and its impact on individuals in the areas of self concept, learning, and understanding about community. McDonough concluded that the program had a positive impact on the self-concept of students in two areas – opposite sex relationships and emotional stability; a change in the concepts of learning; and a better understanding of community. It also concluded that students were 'adopting the features of a new discourse in order to describe and reflect upon their experiences' (McDonough, 2002).

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[7] This understanding of Deleuze is based on a presentation made by Prof. Bronwyn Davies at the University of Melbourne in November 2008, and her work-in-progress paper cited here with her kind permission.

The study meticulously documented the types of learning students reported and the focus was on what students had learnt. This present study extends the scope of that inquiry, using a different analytic to study the dynamic between pedagogy, context and self. The present study pays attention to the conditions, the particular arrangements and practices, which facilitate the learning that occurs at Clunes.

In 2002, the College undertook an evaluation of the Clunes program. This document, called *Clunes Evaluation Report 2002* was an extensive study not just of the learning at Clunes, but also such aspects as enrolment, facilities, financial management and health and safety. The study concluded

> *Clunes is now at a crossroads. It can allow itself to be 'normalised', or it can continue to evolve its own ethos, allowing the original vision to be realised. If it follows the latter path, it will develop its own culture and tradition, complementing and stimulating other areas of the College. If the campuses and Clunes can work together, students will be able to manage the transition between them and build up their autonomy, knowledge, skills and learning strategies as they move through the Middle School years. (Clunes Evaluation Report 2002, 2002, p. v)*

Six years on, this present study examines how Clunes resists such 'normalisation', and examines the practices that enables its ethos to challenge traditional expectations of school.

Gaps in the Literature - Extending Understanding

Understandings of learning have progressed greatly in recent decades, with an expansion of focus beyond individualistic, mentalistic and purely cognitive understandings to more dynamic, interactive and emergent models of learning. We have come a long way from the early behaviourist and purely cognitive models to constructivist, socio-cultural theories which allow for a more dynamic and emergent conceptualisations of learning. Viewing learning as constructed, situated and social has led to different understandings of what is desirable in terms of the goals of learning, the relationships between learners and teachers, and the interaction between learners (de Kock et al., 2004).

For practice, these theories imply the need to move from transmission models represented in behaviourist understandings to developmental and apprenticeship models of learning. These latter models privilege different goals of learning, with a focus on process as well as product, on cognitive as well as affective aspects. For research, this has changed the unit of analysis from individuals to social interactions and the environment as the unit of analysis.

Activity theory and situated learning theory move the understanding to a more complex realm. Viewing learning as a *practice* allows situated learning theory to focus on the interaction between cultural, semiotic, historical, social and material factors in learning. The introduction of the *material* and the *semiotic*, in particular, bring new dimensions into research on learning. Material factors are seen as mediators of meaning and practice, whilst at the same time made meaningful in practice through historically constituted meaning systems. These theories also move

us beyond a purely linguistic focus of semiotics, into socio-cultural meanings that arise in and through practice.

Bourdieu's and Deleuze's ideas can be usefully applied to the study of learning situations, particularly to study learning in settings outside of school.

The Missing Links

A focus on spatio-temporal arrangements

The idea that knowledge is 'situated' leads to a focus on place and space, which are intricately implicated in the notion of praxis. While such aspects of place as architecture and classroom arrangements have been theorised and investigated, these notions have largely remained discrete and viewed as prior entities, rather than integral to it, variously produced and emergent in practice.

The active use and production of time and temporality has not been sufficiently theorised, though it is central to practice. Temporality can be seen as a discursive production - we are not just subject to time that somehow impinges from the outside—as is suggested by such statements such as "I don't have time" or "Time is running away" but, through our agency (i.e., power to act), we actively produce temporal metrics to suit the occasion, thereby changing the structures of the different fields in which we act.(Roth, Tobin, & Ritchie, 2007, p. 118, and others cited therein).

Further, as suggested by the empirical data in this study, individual and collective history continues to act in the present through the concept of habitus. Individuals produce notions of the future self, and the future is evoked as a rationale for present actions and practices. Time is therefore an important actor in the story of practice.

Ordering Devices

While language has received much attention as discursive and semiotic devices in making up a social world, insufficient attention has been paid to the role of ordering devices such as the weekly roster, the morning assembly, the log book and the sign out sheet as nodes around which practices gather.

The Framework for this Study

For the purposes of this study, a sociocultural approach has been adopted. Activity theory and situated learning theories are sensibilities rather than analytical formulae; by definition, the analytical frameworks have to be empirically derived. Arnseth quotes from Engeström,

> *AT is not a specific theory of a particular domain, offering ready-made techniques and procedures. It is a general, cross-disciplinary approach, offering conceptual tools and methodological principles, which have to be concretized according to the specific nature of the object under scrutiny. (Engeström 1993, 97)*

In addition, the concepts of 'habitus' and 'field' as used by Bourdieu, and of smooth and striated spaces as used by Deleuze, are used as conceptual tools in the analysis.

Chapter 3

Methodologies and Methods

[Q]ualitative research… does not start with hypotheses or preconceived notions. Instead, in accordance with its inductive nature, it involves the researcher's attempts to discover, understand, and interpret what is happening in the research context (Bowen, 2006, p. 3).

The Clunes program is in many ways like an island from a research perspective – with an ecology and ethos all its own. Students are literally displaced and relocated for a period of eight weeks, and placed in a setting where 'school' is done very differently. In some ways, the students themselves are participant ethnographers – placed in a new culture in which they participate and which they also help create, as they work out how to 'be' at Clunes.

In order to capture the range of experiences which make up the Clunes program, this project was set up as an *ethnography*. Further, as this learning environment is unique, *grounded theory* was used so that pre-existing notions of learning practices did not, as far as was possible, prejudice what was seen and how it was understood.

Methodologies

Ethnography

Ethnography is an approach particularly suited to the study of social settings. Ethnography honours the lived experience of the members of the community being studied. It is a well-recognised tool of interpretive research, where the purpose of the study is not hypothesis testing; rather, the researcher sets out to describe how communities function and operate through *in situ* observations and through giving voice to the experiences of the participants of the community through in-depth interviews, formal and informal conversations and documentary evidence. Below I summarise briefly some of the features of ethnography highlighted by Atkinson and Pugsley (2005).

Ethnographers believe that social actors have cultural awareness of the setting they inhabit, and 'engage with one another and with the world about them in the light of their interpretations and understandings of actions, objects and communications'. This provides the rationale for using participants within these social settings as knowledgeable informants. Further, ethnographers do not have a static notion of societies – they posit identities and meanings as being 'always open to negotiation and redefinition'. Since context is critical to the understanding of cultures, analysts are attentive to the contexts in developing their understandings (p. 230).

Ethnographic analysts take the stance of cultural relativism, attempting an understanding of social settings 'in their own terms'. Ethnographers attempt to understand 'why and how people do what they do', and 'what tacit skills and background knowledge of social actors are brought to bear and deployed' in the accomplishment of the 'everyday world' (p. 230).

Such a study requires a sustained engagement with the setting being studied, from a position of a novice. When the setting studied is one that is familiar to researcher, then the need to employ the imagination in order to approach the milieu from the perspective of a novice is not only more demanding, but more pressing (p. 230).

Roth, Tobin and Ritchie also underscore the value of ethnography, particularly in school settings:

> *As is often the case with everyday understandings, during praxis much of what is enacted happens without conscious awareness and it is only when events are brought to their attention that insiders assert, "this is not new, just common sense that everybody knows." Of course everybody knows once it is pointed out, and it is for this reason that institutional ethnography specifically and ethnography more generally often yields assertions that do not surprise insiders. Rendering the familiar strange for the purpose of better understanding some aspect of culture is at the very heart of ethnographic research. We regard this as one of the most important reasons to do institutional ethnography in urban schools, to document what happens and explore the ramifications of the patterns we identify as salient. (Roth et al., 2007, p. 117)*

An ethnographic approach is particularly apt in the study of Clunes, since the students are themselves, in a sense, ethnographers – transported from one culture to another for a duration of eight weeks, during which they have to learn new ways of making sense of, and participating in, a different set of institutional and socio-material practices.

Limitations of Ethnography

Since ethnographies involve long-term and detailed observation, the sites observed are usually limited in number. A frequently cited drawback with regard to such 'case studies' is that findings cannot be generalised. But it is often the uniqueness of particular cases that make them worthy objects of research. Ethnographic studies can be of great use to the social group studied by raising to view 'invisible' and taken for granted assumptions, and by opening 'black boxes' of practices that have become routine, and therefore invisible.

Atkinson and Pugsley emphasise that ethnography is a rigorous and worthy approach to research[8]:

[8] In recent years, there have been calls for the use of 'scientific evidence' using the 'gold standard' of randominsed testing or carefully controlled experimentation. The implication is that qualitative study is not 'scientific' and therefore not reliable. In a wonderfully scathing article, Sorensen, Smaldino and Walker discuss (2005) the unsuitability – and indeed impossibility – of applying such a 'gold standard' of research to the study of the most common and useful questions in education.

It needs to be emphasised that ethnographers are not engaged in a vague and impressionistic accumulation of personal 'experience' in their chosen research setting. They observe what is said and done with careful attention. They make careful documentary records of what they observe. They observe and collect other data over protracted periods of time. They analyse those data systematically. In consequence, the process is 'objective' as ethnographers only record and work with observable and recordable data. They recognise and acknowledge that they are part of the social world that they seek to study. This commitment to reflexivity is central to the research process. (2005, p. 232)

Finally, the researcher's familiarity with the sites can be an asset as well as a drawback. On the one hand, interviewees and those observed could be more at ease with the researcher. Any 'observer effect' – a commonly cited drawback with ethnography, whereby the milieu observed is seen as changed by the introduction of the researcher – may be neutralised. However, the researcher would have to muster up great imagination to become an 'outsider' in a familiar surround in order to do good ethnography.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory has been applied by scholars in very diverse fields such as anthropology, sociology and health care. Grounded theory is particularly suited to ethnographies where the researchers is keen to hear the story as told by the participants and to understand the world as experienced by those who live in it. Grounded theory has been found to be a particularly powerful research method 'that can produce information to increase educators' understandings of the complex interactions between students and college environments (Bowen, 2006, p. 2, and others cited therin).

Inductive analysis is the primary technique of grounded theory. As observations, interview data and documentary studies offer insights, the researcher begins to attempt to make sense of the data, and to perform his or her own set of 'orderings'. Hints of understandings begin to suggest themselves, promising leads emerge which may consolidate into themes over the course of the data collection. Data is interpreted and re-interpreted in light of emerging understandings. As Bowen puts it:

Grounded theory is a research approach or method that calls for a continual interplay between data collection and analysis to produce a theory during the research process…Data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with one other (Bowen, 2006, p. 2).

Thus theory emerges from the data, rather than form a prior filter through which to view data. As data accumulates, certain common threads begin to emerge and cohere. Morse and Field (1995, cited by Bowen) capture the process of the emergence of themes most vividly:

Thematic analysis involves the search for and identification of common threads that extend throughout an entire interview or set of interviews. Themes are usually quite abstract and therefore difficult to identify. Often the theme does not immediately "jump out" of the interview but may be more apparent if the researcher steps back and considers. "What are these folks trying to tell me?" The theme may be beneath the surface of the interviews but, once identified, appears

obvious. Frequently, these themes are concepts indicated by the data rather than concrete entities directly described by the participants. . . . Once identified, the themes appear to be significant concepts that link substantial portions of the interviews together. (pp. 139- 140, emphasis in original)

Sensitizing concepts

Blumer proposed the idea of 'sensitising concepts' in 1954, and made a distinction between 'sensitising concepts' and 'definitive concepts'. In his words,

> *A definitive concept refers precisely to what is common to a class of objects, by the aid of a clear definition in terms of attributes or fixed bench marks. . . . A sensitizing concept lacks such specification of attributes or bench marks and consequently it does not enable the user to move directly to the instance and its relevant content. Instead, it gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look. (Blumer, 1954, p 7,Bowen, 2006, p. 2)*

In this study, informed broadly by socio-cultural theories of learning. Further, Bourdieu's concepts of habits and field, and Deleuze's concepts of differentiation and difference, have provided conceptual frameworks for analysis.

Methods

In keeping with the traditions of ethnography and grounded theory, a variety of methods were used in data collection. These included observation, interviews and documentary analysis. Given the inevitable limitations of time and giving consideration to pragmatic imperatives, a careful process of sampling was used. A variety of data sources were included in this study – interviews with students, parents, teachers; observation data; photographs; the Clunes website; and student reports formed the bulk of these.

Sampling

In general, sampling in ethnographies is purposeful – since the purpose is to glean information and understanding through the study, choices are made with regard to the people and items that would yield useful data.

> *The allocation of time and effort in the field is organised in terms of sampling strategies. Ethnographic sampling differs from the sampling used in surveys, and is driven by rather different underlying notions of representation. It is more akin to opportunistic or purposive sampling. The ethnographer will try to allocate periods of time for observation and participation on the basis of sampling key features of his or her research site. Purposive sampling of this sort, driven by the ethnographer's developing analytic interests, is often referred to as theoretical sampling (Atkinson & Pugsley, 2005, p. 231).*

The sampling decisions in this study were mediated by theoretical, as well as pragmatic considerations, and adjustments were made to the original study design as the study progressed, as needed.

Student and Parent Informants

In order to ensure that diverse experiences were represented in the study, a stratified, systematic sampling technique was used. Given that students were from three different campuses, a proportionate number of students from each campus were chosen. Generally, every fourth student on the roll was shortlisted. The list was then balanced for gender – if there was an imbalance on any campus, the next person on the rolls of the requisite gender was placed on the shortlist.

Given that the study dealt with young adolescents, in the first instance, the Year 9 Cluster Leaders were contacted to see if there was any reason why some students should not be included in the study (recent family or other trauma, or the inadvisability of the student missing classes to do the interview, for instance). A change was advised in only one instance, where the students on the list was shortly leaving the country..

The next step was to contact parents and students for permission to interview. At this point, if permission was refused, the name was replaced by the next student of the same gender on the rolls.

Staff Sampling

Staff sampling was done on a much more purposeful basis.

Clunes staff

The researcher met with staff at Clunes during morning coffee to explain the project and call for volunteers to participate. There was a suggestion from Clunes administrators that getting a mix of people in different roles (house leader, mentor, teachers of diverse courses) would be beneficial to the study. Accordingly, four staff members were chosen for interviews. These staff also took photographs throughout Term 3, which formed part of the documentary evidence gathered for this study.

Year 9 Cluster Leaders

Each campus has a Year 9 Cluster Leader who interacts most closely with students and their families. The Cluster Leaders on the three campuses were interviewed.

'Special Category' staff

There were many staff members who had invaluable knowledge of the program, and whose knowledge was tapped into. These included the Middle Years Curriculum Coordinator at one of the campuses, who was for many years a teacher and curriculum coordinator at Clunes; a current Year 9 Homeroom teacher who went to Clunes as a student in Group 1, and a couple of parents who are also College staff members. The former Head of Clunes who had been with the program from 2000 was also interviewed as was the current Clunes Transition Coordinator, who was part of the project team in 1998-99 and was involved in planning the program from its very inception.

Observation

Ethnographers learn about the social world through 'direct engagement' with it (Atkinson & Pugsley, 2005, p. 230). The researcher made several trips to Clunes during the course of this research, observing, amongst other things, Presentation Day,

a sprinkling of courses, as well as a house meeting, a staff meeting and a 'change of shift' meeting to get a sense of how the Clunes program worked. In addition, incidental visits were made to the local bakery and café on Fraser St., and to the local supermarket, all of which are part of the student experience of Clunes.
Observation enables the ethnographer to see the social world in action. The rules of engagement, the discursive sense-making processes, the deployment and use of semiotic and symbolic artefacts, all feed into an understanding of how this social world works. Further, observations help direct the researcher to particular questions, and aids during interviews to make sense of the informants' narratives. As Campbell puts it,

> *Similarly to interview data, observations of everyday life, where the researcher captures the language used by participants, can be used to gain entry for analytic purposes into its social organization. The researcher is searching for traces of how the participants' actions and talk are conditioned…Experiential data, whether from interviews or observations, thus inform a method, allowing researchers an entry to social organization for the purpose of explicating the experiences; by explication I mean to write back into the account of experiences the social organization that is immanent, but invisible, in them. (Campbell, 1998, p. 60)*

Interviews

Interviews are an important tool in the ethnographer's toolkit. The assumption made is that social actors engage in intelligent ways in social practices within their milieu, and that they are best placed to present their understanding of how their world works. Interviews with key informants are used to get a sense of social transactions, the exchanges and the relations that make up the social world. In the case of this study, some of the social actors, the students, were themselves placed in the position of the ethnographer – having to unlearn known practices of 'school' and relearn new ways of being and doing. Since all of the interviewers also had access to worlds common with that of the researcher, conversations yielded much information.

Interviews in ethnography are informal and conversational in nature, as Atkinson and Pugsley explain:

> *Ethnographers will typically include interviews with key informants in their repertoire of data collection strategies. Interviews of this sort differ markedly from those employed in survey research. They have been accurately described as 'conversations with a purpose'. Indeed, in the context of sustained ethnographic fieldwork, 'interviews' and spontaneous 'conversations' may be all but indistinguishable. In addition to such 'naturally' occurring encounters, more formal interviews may also be enacted. Again, however, these have a characteristically conversational tone and structure. Questions are not posed in a predetermined order, nor are they necessarily couched in standardised formats. (Atkinson & Pugsley, 2005, p. 231)*

The thinking behind giving voice to a number of students, and the inclusion of staff and parent voices is based on the understanding that social worlds are experienced differently by different actors. Campbell makes this point as she explains the use of interviews with a variety of actors in a study she conducted:

> *[A]s we gathered observational and interview data, we operated on the assumption that we would find different versions of what was understood, even of what was actually happening, as people we talked to spoke from different ways of knowing the workplace and the work…However, we also accepted that while people understand their experiences in organizations through discursive mediations, they remain bodily present and are active experiencers of the everyday/everynight world from their various locations in it. Indeed, where one stands determines what one experiences. (Campbell, 1998, p. 58)*

As is typical in ethnographies, interviews were loosely structured and conversational in tone. Participants were invited to be part of the process of attempting to 'understand the Clunes experience'. Photographs were sometimes used to stimulate conversations, especially during student interviews. While there was a loose outline of questions for different interviews – parents, students, Clunes staff and metropolitan staff, these were mostly used to ensure that no important aspect was left out of the conversation; the conversations flowed quite freely and followed the paths that suggested themselves. Interviews took place on all of Wesley's campuses, including Clunes, at any convenient room or office available. Interviews varied in length from 20 minutes to 90 minutes.

In all, 23 students, 16 parents[9] and11 staff members were interviewed.

Documentary analysis

Documentary analysis has a long tradition in social research. Texts are both products of discursive and sense-making practices as well as powerful tools which order practices. Consistent with the interpretive stance adopted in ethnography, social meanings are at the centre of documentary analysis, and attention is paid to the meanings are attributed to the contents of documents.

In this study, the main documents studied were the student reports written on the completion of each course of study. These reports were online documents which consist of a description of the activity followed by student self assessment report and the teacher report. The other documents studied were the school website and the Clunes brochure.

Situating the Researcher

Our understandings are invariably mediated through the theories we bring and the assumptions we hold. Post-positivist understandings have displaced the myth of the 'impartial researcher'. The researcher's positioning is therefore important to make explicit, particularly in studies which use an interpretivist methodology such as ethnography. How we construct our questions and decide what to observe, and what sense we make of our observations are contingent upon our conscious and

[9] As per the original study design, it was decided to interview parents in focus groups. This was tried with four focus groups. However, there was great difficulty finding a time which suited more than two or three parents at a time. In the interests of representing parent voice and giving consideration to parent convenience, further interviews with parents were on a one-on-one basis. While the focus group interviews went well and were very informative, the issue came up in post interview discussions with the project mentors with regard to student confidentiality. Since the researcher could have no control over what parents said, to what extent would they protect the confidentiality of information with regard to their own child, or that of some other student? It was felt that it would be well to consider this issue in creating future research designs for Institute projects.

unconscious biases. Since this is unavoidable, it becomes necessary to alert readers to the researcher's positioning and to invite users of this research to view it as no more than an additional resource that may add to other accounts of learning.

As an educator and long-time teacher, as well as a researcher in education, I straddled the position of both 'insider' and 'outsider' in this research. Having taught in the middle school for three years, and having played a part in the development of the Learning in the Middle Years program, I had visited Clunes on prior occasions, and interacted with Year 9 students (though not with this cohort of students). Being a colleague and a staff member, I had occasion to participate in a number of formal and informal meetings and conversations with staff members, both before and after starting this research project. While ethical considerations render data collected prior to ethical clearance 'inadmissible' in research, it is impossible to 'un-know' what is already known, and though every effort has been made to contain the direct user of prior knowledge, it would inevitably have played a part in directing my attention or framing my understanding.

In an ethnography, being an 'insider' is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, an insider perspective was invaluable in this study. Familiarity with colleagues and a measure of comfort in conversing with Year 9 students and parents based on my former teaching experience facilitated the development of trust between my informants and myself. On the other hand, I had to be exercise my imagination more actively to become a 'stranger', the better to observe and elicit my informants' views and understandings.

Chapter 4

Vignettes

This chapter provides a brief overview of the data, giving pride of place to the voices of the informants. It gives a vignette of responses that go towards answering the first of the research questions *'What do students learn at school? What do students (and parents and teachers) value in the program?'* Students, teachers and parents expressed themselves in interviews in strong, individual and wonderfully evocative voices. Although the interviews were loosely structured, responses have been clustered around themes as they emerged in the data, and these are presented in this chapter.

What do students learn at Clunes?

Learning about Self

Student insights encompassed a range of aspects – reflecting a growing sense of self, a growing confidence in their capacity to handle social and learning situations, and a strong sense of optimism, agency and purpose, as demonstrated below:

> *The biggest thing I learnt was who I am without my friends. They have always been there and they still are, but I did this all by myself and there was no one there standing up for me when I got into a fight or anything, so I discovered who I am without everyone else. And I found I was pretty strong by myself. (Student Interview 2, who was at Clunes in a different term to most of her friends from her campus)*
>
> *I have learnt a lot about myself. I learnt that deep down I care for the environment and want to help it. I have learnt a little about other people. I learnt that what's good and funny for some people isn't so good and funny for others. (Self Assessment, Student 13)*
>
> *I have noticed that I learn new things using different methods. Sometimes it suits me to write things down and sometimes it is better to discuss them with others. Everything I have learnt in this course will help me in the future, like how to work well in a group and give everyone an equal opportunity. I have learnt how to listen to people better but I also know when I need to take charge and use a more autocratic approach. (Self Assessment, Student 6)*
>
> *I think the Clunes experience has made me responsible and I'm starting to learn to stop when I've done something wrong and not to keep going. (Self Assessment, Student 12)*

To live in a small country town for eight weeks without your family and your pets, to have to cook and clean and take care of yourself and your friends, and to adapt to a completely different way of life is not easy, and simply completing the stay successfully is a huge achievement in itself for some students. Parents speculate about what they think the stay at Clunes meant for their children:

> *[I]t reinforces the fact that they are adaptable and flexible (being able to get on without mobile phones…). (Parent Interview 1)*

I think [my daughter] seems more aware of what sort of environment she needs for learning and she gives herself more time, and she doesn't try and study with people…(Parent Interview 1)

I think [my daughter] learnt a lot challenging herself with the running, that she was able to do…I think she probably also learnt that it is difficult to focus with other people around, and the home is extremely nourishing and provides resources – and she has learnt to appreciate what the home has to offer. (Parent Interview 1)

Getting Along with Others

Living with others in the house was cited almost universally by students, staff and parents as the most significant aspect of the Clunes experience. Managing a house cooperatively, understanding how important it is for each to do his or her part, finding ways to negotiate reasonable outcomes without hurting or offending others, learning to handle it when your housemates accuse you of slacking off, and knowing how to take care of yourself when things were getting too sticky are just some of the things students learnt at Clunes. Several of the courses also aided the process of learning to work in groups and learning to trust others. Learning to have fun with others is another lesson students learn at Clunes!

Many students cited the '24/7' nature of the house experience, where they had to learn to 'be themselves' as it was impossible to maintain a front consistently for eight weeks. There was no privacy – nowhere to hide, since even bedrooms were shared between two students. Students were around others all the time. Negotiation, understanding, compromise, and letting things go were some of the strategies students had to learn.

During this course I have learnt how to cooperate with different people and work together as a team to reach goals. These skills were tested during 'The Amazing Race', when we had to support and encourage each other, while faced with different challenges and pressures. (Self Assessment, Student 1)

I come from a very small family and sharing everything – sharing the food – one has to be considerate – and communal washing and things – I guess sharing was one of the biggest things for me. (Student Interview 2)

I feel that my experiences at Clunes have changed me in many different aspects of my personality. They have changed me mainly socially and the way I look at people when I first meet them. I have learned not to judge a book by its cover, but to get to know them instead and put myself in their shoes to see how they are feeling. (Self Assessment, Student 7)

I learnt that other people also have emotions and feelings and stuff – because I normally thought only of myself. (Interview, Student 7)

When members of the house shared the common goal of getting along and minimising problems, a plan could be developed to deal with issues swiftly and then get on with the business of enjoying Clunes, as this reflection indicates:

If there was ever a problem in the house, which was quite rare, everyone would pull together and talk about it to solve it as quickly as possible. We would either organise an immediate house meeting with our House Leader, or just talk about it with each other in our free time. Everyone listened to everyone else's opinion, but also weren't afraid to say what needed to be worked on in the house. Everyone was willing to make the house as good as possible and make it work. I believe I displayed patience towards everyone in the house because I knew that everyone had something different to say which would help us in some way. Our house was full of different personalities, but I eagerly accepted these, as did everyone else. We knew that each girl had an individual personality and we were accepting of each other's different backgrounds. Everyone was close in our house, but we also branched out and made many new close friendships with other houses that I will never, ever forget. (Self Assessment, Student7)

The best aspect of our house is our family feeling. We all get on really well and love being together. We have a lot of fun although sometimes too much… We didn't have many problems in our house so we didn't have many problems to resolve. We all forgave and forgot. If we had any little problems we would just talk to each other about them and then it would all be fine. I believe I displayed pretty good patience and tolerance but if things got too much I might crack a little. The best part of Clunes was meeting everyone… I was always keen to include others in conversations and make new friends. I always tried to make everyone comfortable and I was prepared to move out of my comfort zone to meet others. (Self Assessment, Student 9)

Sometimes, getting along with others was not that easy…

To solve problems I asked people politely and if that didn't work I went to my house leader. I negotiated difficulties by listening to others and hearing their problems, like [one time] when I did this with the councillor and house leader. I found it a little hard to get on with the different nationalities inside my house. There was a clashing of cultures…(Self Assessment, Student 3)

Another problem that I had to overcome was that when friends got into misunderstandings it was hard for me to help and sort things out because I was scared I would lose them as friends. (Self Assessment, Student 14)

I think it is quite taxing to be living with other people – I think they learnt that you need to keep some private space and the off time and [that] down time is nurturing and important, and in that situation, particularly difficult to claim. (Parent Focus Group 1)

Where students in a house got together at the very outset with the goal of not letting house squabbles diminish their enjoyment of Clunes, they seemed more successful at having fewer problems and being able to stay buoyant and happy throughout the course. Where such agreement was difficult to achieve or to maintain consistently, students experienced some amount of stress and difficulty. Nevertheless, every

student spoke of the friendships forged at Clunes as being the most significant and important part of the Clunes experience.

Participating in Community and Learning about Community

The notion of 'community' within the Clunes experience operates at a number of levels. The immediate community of the student house groups is probably the most intense community engagement experienced at Clunes. Some aspects of living in houses and learning to negotiate and compromise and smooth things over have been detailed above.

A formal program of community service is part of the fare on Fridays, when students can participate in a number of different types of community service programs. Those who participated in music the entire day missed out on this important part of the program. Some did music for half the day and community service the other half.

As is evident from responses below, students engaged in this aspect of the program with varying degrees of enthusiasm and sincerity. Not unsurprisingly, those who participated wholeheartedly got the most out of it.

Some students also saw themselves as participants in the community and felt an obligation to contribute in some way to the community.

> *I did a lot of the Community Service. I liked them all but especially liked working at the creek. Walking with the elderly was good because I got to talk to people I wouldn't normally talk with. I found out that one of them knew my dad through footy. Community Service was a good experience that I learnt a lot from like how old people are and about their opinions and stuff. (Self Assessment, Student 12)*

> *I participated in some of the community services better than others. I did well at the Healthcare Centre, Primary School and the London House Cafe but for the senior citizens walk I didn't talk to the old people much because I didn't want to. I was tired that morning and needed more sleep. If I did the walk again I would definitely make more of an effort to talk. I think that I added to the sense of community around the Wesley College campus by not complaining all the time and enjoying myself. Some of the highlights of my time at Clunes would be getting to know the people from all the other campuses and getting to know some of the kids from St. Kilda Road a lot better. (Self Assessment, Student 10)*

> *I willingly helped out with the community whenever I had to. My favourite community service was most definitely the Clunes Newsagent; I had a lot of fun working there because I learnt how to use the cash machine and we got free things. (Self Assessment, Student 8)*

A very important new addition to the Clunes fare (since 2006) is the program called '*Collective Potential*'. *Collective Potential* is set up as a challenge to see what students can achieve as a group when they put their minds to it. The result of these three-day activities was a contribution to community in some way – painting community picnic tables, planting native plants to rescue a river, a long and gruelling bike ride to raise funds, or helping out at the local primary school.

As will be evident in the next section, the most valued activities included those in which students felt they had contributed something of significance or of lasting value to the community.

Which experiences do students value the most?

During interviews, parents, students and teachers were all asked for their opinion on the many experiences students had at Clunes, and to mention the ones that they thought were particularly personally relevant to the students. Students often found it very difficult to single out experiences. Save an odd mention of a course or two, students enjoyed and appreciated every experience on offer at Clunes. Self Assessment Reports allowed students to elaborate, and in these, it was apparent that some of the courses were seen as less relevant or not as interesting as some of the others. They were also able to identify particular aspects of the experience they enjoyed and those they did not. Students did not articulate a strong negative feeling towards any of the Clunes experiences. Teachers and parents, however, had strong views on some parts of the program.

The responses are summed up briefly below so as to get an overview. In later chapters, the practices surrounding some of the very popular aspects of the program are elaborated and discussed.

Living in Houses

Without exception, the opportunity to forge some really strong friendships was cited as the single biggest positive feature of the program, by students, parents and teachers alike. Living in the houses, and sharing the collective challenge of running the house and ensuring everyone's well being seemed to draw students together. As we have seen above, things were not always smooth and in some cases, quite significant issues arose within house groups. Nevertheless, students cited sharing a house and running it together, and making many wonderful friendships, especially across the campuses, as the most valuable parts of the program.

The Mt Beckworth Run

The distance to the top of Mt Beckworth is 12 km. Students train over the course of the eight weeks of their stay and race to the top of Mt Beckworth in the final week of the program.

Almost everyone who did the Beckworth Run mentioned that as a highlight. Many who had never run before had decided to challenge themselves with the run, and felt a great sense of accomplishment when they achieved their goal. Being involved in the run meant training regularly. Many students appreciated the rules surrounding the run and the way it was organised. Although for many it was a personal goal, the run itself epitomised team energy and team spirit. Training involved running at the speed of the slowest runner, and being able to talk when running. Students who completed the run on the day of the race were encouraged to run back down and spur on students who were still struggling to complete the run. Overall, there was not a single negative remark in the interviews on the Beckworth Run.

The Clunes Project

The Clunes Project (also referred to as the Personal Project) is perhaps the longest single activity at Clunes. For the Clunes Project, each student chooses a topic to investigate over a course of several weeks, culminating in a speech and display on Presentation Day. Students are assisted by their Learning Mentors who guide them through the process. There are five components to the project – a thousand word essay, a speech to be made to an audience of parents of the mentor group on Presentation Day, a log book to be used to chart their progress on the tasks and describe the processes used, a website, and a representational artefact such as a sculpture, a painting or a model.

In addition, students are asked to reflect on the project in their self assessment reports:

> *Students are required to reflect on the four aspects of the Clunes Project: Theoretical (where students pose a question and explore it by research and inquiry); Practical (where students construct something that shows their understanding); Public (where students present their learning to an audience on Presentation Day) and Private (where students record the progress of their Clunes Project and reflect on their learning). As well, students are required to think beyond Clunes and highlight areas of their personal learning journey that might be continued once they return to Melbourne. (Clunes Assessment Report)*

Student reflections are part of the Clunes Assessment Report.

The Clunes project is seen as a very significant part of the Clunes experience. Students research a topic that is relevant to the area in some way, or to is focused on the topic of community. However, keeping in mind that student interest is important, and that local resources and hospitality should not be strained, students are given some latitude with their topic choice. The topic is negotiated with the Learning Mentor who is responsible for assisting a group of students with their individual project. Every student is expected to complete this project in time for the Presentation Day, and present their project to an audience of parents and other family members on the appointed day.

A component of the Clunes Project is an introduction to Art Costa's *Habits of Mind.* Students are actively encouraged to focus on the habits of mind they bring to their projects. In their presentations, students highlight the research and learning process, including what they learnt about their habits of mind. Whilst acknowledging the value of process, some parents felt that the emphasis on process appeared to have been achieved at the cost of the product.

> *It was fairly repetitive hearing every child repeat the process – I find process interesting, and very valuable to look at as well, but everyone spent a lot of time telling you about the process and nothing about the project itself.*

> *There was quite a bit of that – lacked content. There was one at the end which was about her family tree which was actually about content – a bit more emphasis on content [would be good] … one-third process and two-thirds content [perhaps].*

The variety of topics and the effort some students had put into their Clunes Project was astounding. On the day, a vast majority of students spoke of poor time management which led to incomplete or rushed work.

> *I don't think [my daughter] got much out of it – she enjoyed it, but the social thing just took over completely – she had not got the speech written till 6pm the previous day…(Parent Focus Group 1)*

This was an issue that came up in several parent interviews and some teacher interviews. The comment was made that the students had large blocks of time to do research, and many students were unable to keep to task and were distracted, especially since they were at their laptops, where they could also play games or watch movies. They felt mentors should play a larger role in monitoring students' time management. Others, however, felt that it was good for students to learn the lesson that not doing the work steadily could lead to failing to do the job well, or even being unable to complete it.

Did students learn from the embarrassment of having to stand before a crowd and admit they had wasted time? Some students reported that they were now (upon returning from Clunes) more on-task, did their homework independently and on time, and had learnt to manage their time better. Several parents, however, reported that skills such as time management have not carried over to their children's current routines of school work and homework.

Many students reported being very stressed at the thought of speaking before a large audience. On (rare) occasions, some students opted out of the opportunity altogether, in negotiation with the Mentor.

Some students had a strong sense of their choice of project topic and had started to prepare for it even prior to going to Clunes. Others could not decide on a topic and ended up doing something suggested by a friend or the Mentor Leader. Some became quite interested once they started on the project. Students often reported that the element of choice was a very important factor in their enjoyment of the Clunes Project.

Some students reported being very pleased with their project and reported a great sense of satisfaction at accomplishing such a major task independently. Others reported that they felt less than satisfied with their efforts. Some students who did not complete all of their work; nevertheless felt they had put in their best effort and were pleased with what they had completed.

Teachers are quite sharply divided on the value of the Clunes Project. Some found that Clunes is not an appropriate location in which to learn to write essays, particularly a thousand-word essay, and that it is better taught in English classes on the metropolitan campuses. Some felt that including the Clunes Project in the program is a capitulation to parent pressure to provide some 'academic learning' at Clunes. Others felt that the Clunes Project was quite central to the program, and that it focused students' efforts on a project of sustained duration which was of great benefit to them.

Most parents feel that the Clunes Project is a very important element of the program.

Researcher's Observation

Although this could not be empirically confirmed in this study, it is possible that students whose research was less Internet-based, and focused more on gathering data from primary and secondary sources and from members of the Clunes community, or from the land and the surroundings, appeared to be more satisfied with their projects, stayed on task more, enjoyed their projects more, and derived a greater sense of accomplishment.

> *Interviewing people – she definitely enjoyed that. She was very proud of her presentation – she worked very hard and she did very well. (Parent Interview 5).*

Parents also found that when students were left to themselves on the computer for long stretches, they would find it difficult to stay on task.

> *There seemed to be a lot of time on computers – that was a disappointment. They're meant to be out rural Australia, the country environment, away from technology, supposedly, on the whole, but there seemed to be a lot of time spent on the computers – supposedly researching their projects, but a lot of it was … I would* ***love*** *to see other forms of research happening, and this just seemed to be unsupervised study time when they were supposed to be working on their projects and there are not many students, with their computers in front of them, that are going to motivate themselves to stay on task and complete their project rather than play a game, watch a movie or whatever. (Parent Intterview 8)*

However, given the small sample and the limited scope of this study, this is something that the College may wish to investigate further. Given that the primary value of such an experience lies in its particular location, projects that were intimately connected with the place, and projects that used empirical data connected with place might use the facility to greater benefit.

Another interesting point illuminated by the data is that the log book and the timeline that students are meant to develop at the beginning of the Clunes Project appears to be far less effective in regulating student behaviour than the weekly roster which is a similar device for regulating student activity. A comparison between regulatory practices that appear to work and those that appear less effective is elaborated in Chapter 7. Some students who were very pleased with their projects also reported that they did not really use the timeline – that they just got 'stuck into' their projects and kept working at them. Perhaps the timeline is either ineffective or ineffectively used as a regulatory device for the Clunes Project. And the log book appears by and large not to serve the purpose of self-regulation.

The Circus and Music Programs

Without doubt, the circus and music programs are the highlights for anyone involved in these programs. Parents are impressed by how adept the performers are and the confidence and coordination involved in such a show. Several parents were astonished to see their child perform in the circus or music programs. Many students who are shy and may not have dreamt of performing before such a large audience seemed willing to give it a go at Clunes.

Students themselves expressed great enjoyment and satisfaction with the program. Many consciously push beyond their 'comfort zones'[10] to perform, sometimes solo, in the music or circus programs.

Community Service

Community service programs ran on Fridays, at the same time as the music program. Those who did music all day were unable to participate in the formal community service program, although there were other opportunities to serve the community in some of the courses and programs.

Some students expressed great enjoyment and satisfaction doing community service. Students could choose to rotate through different activities over the weeks, or stay with one activity.

A couple of students who did not participate in community service on account of music practice expressed the wish that they didn't have to give up one for the other. Parents felt that this was a good part of the program and was to be encouraged.

Collective Potential

In Collective Potential, students are challenged to see what they can achieve for the community when they work as a group. Some of the activities in this segment of the program were greatly enjoyed and appreciated by students. In particular, the *River Rescue* project was mentioned by many students and parents. Some students had a profound sense of contributing something meaningful to the community. One student in particular had a sense of leaving a lasting legacy – the idea that the plants they planted would still be there after group 33 had left Clunes, and that other hands from other groups would continue to care for the plants once this group had returned.

> *She felt she had really done something major (Parent Interview 5)*

Courses

Although a lot of thought is put into the courses, response to courses was quite mixed. Some of the courses that were mentioned many times as enjoyable and significant were '*Boys to Men'*, '*Taking a Risk'*, '*I am Woman'*, and *'Am I a Leader'*.

In course assessments, a striking feature was that the most valued part of the course was often that which involved physical activity of some sort. For example, as part of the *'I am Woman'* course, students experience a yoga class. Almost invariably, this is mentioned as the highlight of the course, even when it is incidental – even tangential - to the central idea of the course. Similarly, the *'Boys to Men'* program had lessons of great significance, but many students mentioned the karate manoeuvre they learnt during the course.

[10] The phrase 'comfort zone' is a motif that is repeated by Clunes staff and students alike, and even by some parents. It is clearly part of the Clunes discourse which exercises powerful influence on students, who construct certain activities as being outside this 'zone' and their reluctance to approach those tasks as a reluctance to 'step out of their comfort zone'. The ability and desire to step out of this zone is constructed as a positive and desirable emotion.

In the course Eat Green, I really enjoyed the visit to Donegan's Farm. I enjoyed looking at the animals, learning about how the potatoes are grown on that farm and how important it is for them to help out the surrounding farms. For next time, I would change the way people collected the information about where all the food is from, so it would be easier to find and help out more with the recipes. (Self Assessment, Student 21)

To me I think the most valuable activity was the rock climbing exercise. I found that it was just what the course meant 'risk taking'; we had to take a risk and go outside our comfort zone to reach the top of the wall. (Self Assessment, Student 23)

Clearly, students in this study show a particular preference of learning practices which involve physical action and direct engagement the learning.

As is to be expected, students' enjoyment of the course and the value derived from it were closely associated.

Many students who opted out of learning situations in the main metropolitan campuses have been more ready to participate in courses and activities at Clunes, as the novelty of the situation, the element of choice in the course or activity they will undertake, and the focus on independence and on group learning seem to suit a variety of students.

'Success' and 'Failure' at Clunes

At Clunes students are constantly required to evaluate their own behaviour and performance. Given that no grades are assigned, and learning is collaborative rather than competitive, students cited different reasons for wanting to attempt and persevere in challenging activities. The motivation was intrinsic. Those who did not 'push' themselves expressed regret in their self assessments or in their interviews, and wished they had 'stepped out of their comfort zones' more than they had done.

During interviews, some students mentioned the goals they had set themselves and the pride they felt when they achieved them. Students had set goals such as 'make friends' or 'complete the Mt Beckworth run'. For some, just completing the eight-week stay away from home was itself an achievement. Not a single student interviewed reported a feeling of having 'failed' Clunes. Some students expressed some regret at missed opportunities – such as not having completed their practical component of the Clunes Project to their satisfaction. Even students who had got sent home – in one case, twice – did not have a sense of having 'failed' Clunes. Only one of the students interviewed has been sent home as a consequence of poor behaviour, but this does happen on occasion at Clunes.

The type of relationship that Clunes staff develop with the students is also cited by students as being responsible for the way they approach their challenges and the measure of effort they put into their work.

[The Leaders] talked with you and not at you; they treated you as an equal …[they] recognise that you are maturing; so you can choose to do the Clunes project, you are expected to do the Clunes project but they are not going to say you failed if you

didn't do it. That's just letting yourself down and not pushing yourself to your own abilities. (Student Interview 1)

Of course, what constitutes 'success' is defined differently by (and for) different students.

The main goal I wanted was to complete Clunes – and I think if I were to repeat it that would still be my goal. That first week, my house leader said that I was such a frail person he didn't think I was strong enough to stay there and the first week I was really uneasy and he was really proud that I stayed that time. (Student Interview 2)

Even if a student appears to be deciding to quit the course after a week, the House Leader does not term this a failure – simply that it is perhaps the right decision at this point in time, and that he is proud the student has been able to attempt this challenge. In this case, the student then stayed on to complete the entire eight-week course, which was a very huge accomplishment for her.

Clunes staff do their utmost to make the outcome a success for every student. For example, in one case, a student developed both anxiety and a health problem which resulted in her opting out of presenting her Clunes Project on Presentation Day. An alternative audience of peers was arranged so that the student had the opportunity could feel the outcome was positive.

Students receive 'strikes' for misdemeanours such as arriving late to classes – and a collection of strikes leads to a 'village payback' whereby they have to 'pay back' to the community in some way. Students seemed to find this system fair – and did their best not to lose the chance to sleep in on a Sunday on account of a village payback.

Students see at close range the difference attitude and approach can make to the intensity of experience that Clunes affords.

People who went in thinking 'I am not going to apply myself to everything' may have come out not happy with their experience but I found that I got into everything I could – I got involved with everything and found that I wouldn't change anything about my experience because I had done everything that they had offered and loved every part of it (Student Interview 1)

Teachers also explain their notion of 'failing' at Clunes as a failure to make the most of the fantastic opportunities students are offered at Clunes. They find that students who are open-minded, enthusiastic and wanting to make the most of their eight weeks at Clunes have the most successful time. Clunes staff in particular also recall fondly the students who were generally not 'stand out kids' on their metropolitan campuses, but became known for some talent at Clunes, and enjoyed popularity that was not part of their experience prior.

Tensions: The Balancing Act at Clunes

Running a program for nearly a hundred fourteen- or fifteen-year-olds, designed to encourage independence and responsibility, whilst being responsible for their safety and well-being, needs a fine balancing act. To what extent should students be allowed to make mistakes, so that they experience the consequences of poor judgment? This decision is complicated when the consequences are not limited to the students making

the mistake. To what extent should students' self-discipline be tested? Should students be trusted to do the right thing (such as stay in their houses after curfew), or should a 'lock-down' system be put in place? Rules have to be clear and uniformly enforced to eliminate any ambiguity, but at the same time, different students need different approaches.

Student discipline and the possibility of their 'getting into trouble' were preoccupations of parents to different extents. Some parents felt the newly introduced 'lock-down' system (whereby an alarm goes off if students leave home after a certain time) was unnecessary. Others felt reassured it was in place. Some parents reported they were not worried about their children getting into any trouble, whereas others worried about peer pressure and whether it would be too much to resist.

Monitoring the use of time during Mentor time – when students were meant to work independently on their projects – was another area where parents disagreed on the extent to which students should be allowed to 'fail' and face the consequences.

What would Parents, Teachers and Students Change about the Program?

Most students would change nothing at all about the program!

Staff have a mixed set of answers to the question 'If you could change something about Clunes, what would it be?'

Most parents and teachers interviewed think the program has been wonderful for students. Even those who had strong criticisms of some aspect of the program felt that over all, the program was outstanding.

However, some aspects were found wanting by some parents and teachers. The Clunes Project elicited several comments and suggestions.

> *The project thing though – the thing that I think could be done better – if the staff were more involved in helping them structure – not in making them do it, but to structure it better. I think it is a lot to expect from a 15-year-old – okay this is a big project and it's due on this date and you get used to it – I think they need to be given mini deadlines along the way – get the student to break it down – what do you think is achievable to get done in the first week – I'm going to check if that gets done in the first week – a then perhaps a consequence – if the idea is that they are learn from this experience, then they need to be shown how to do it. And I don't know that it happens at school, and Clunes is a perfect opportunity to do it – in now way do it for them, but monitoring that it is happening along the way.*
>
> *From the presentations that we saw in our group, I felt quite bad for the students because I thought what are they getting out of this, except that they've go to stand up in front of a group and say 'This is my really bad project that is unfinished and not done very well' and I don't know what you actually get out of that.*
>
> *Maybe [the Clunes Project] could be scrapped altogether – as a parent, I don't think it would be a disaster if they weren't doing any academics for eight weeks – I know teachers here worry about them getting behind in their maths or their LOTE or whatever, but I think there are so many other – it's the perfect opportunity to*

learn in other ways … learn from being there and doing things… the practical side of the Project can be great if it is managed well, but the written thing – I don't know if it is even necessary…(Parent Interview 8)

Other areas included the severity of discipline, some suggesting that a little more lee-way may be granted the students, others advocating more monitoring.

Some parents and teachers wished for greater focus on environmental issues and sustainable living, including growing a vegetable garden. Parents too wished for a more 'outdoor' experience.

Discussion also centred around allocating house groups – with a couple of parents feeling that the allocation should be completely random so that students had to manage regardless of who was in the house. Others felt the reassurance of having some good friends in the house was very welcome.

Some parents were extremely happy that students were assisted in 'settling back in' by the metropolitan campus staff, and that they were quickly reminded of the ways of being that would serve them well at the campus. Depending on the part of the year, some students come straight into choosing VCE subjects and this helped to re-focus quickly on aspects of their academic learning and future careers.

However, there were some suggestions with regard to how the changes initiated in Clunes could be nourished and encouraged on metropolitan campuses, rather than 'written over':

Probably my biggest thing is – I don't know what the answer is, but I'd love it – the settling back in – I don't know – when they come back to school, and I see it with every group that goes, they just have to come back and school's just the same, nothing's different – they still wear the uniform, they still sit in the classroom, they're still expected to do the same things – they've had supposedly this great experience, they've learnt and grown and become independent, and then we just expect the same of them, in a way. I don't know what the answer is, but it would be fantastic to have something that somehow respected where they'd been and what they'd learnt and built on it. (Parent interview 8)

The issue of whether Clunes has a lasting impact, or it is just an eight-week adventure which may be fondly remembered in later years, but which has added little to students' growth, is examined in the chapter 'Stories of Change'.

Conclusion

Students, parents and teachers see Clunes as a powerful program that appears to affect students in significant ways. Many students enjoy and exploit the opportunity to explore and build their capacities by challenging themselves physically, emotionally and socially. Many go out of the way to make friends with those they normally may have ignored in their city settings. Participating in some very challenging activities such as reading a personal letter out loud to the group, or overcoming fear to climb a rock, are shared experiences which bring people together in a very special way.

The openness and positive anticipation with which students approach each set of experiences makes for a better learning outcome. In 'regular' school settings, students

can easily anticipate what the next lesson brings – indeed, such clarity and order and predictability are considered good practice in teaching, whereas at Clunes, no one day is similar to the next. Courses are short – lasting only three days – and this means even those students who do not get their first choice of course, or become disinterested once the course starts, are able to endure it with good grace, and to learn from it.

Having a sense of purpose – to be able to complete the run, or to make a very good presentation – appears to spur students on to give of their best. Students vary in the length of time to which such motivation can sustain them, with some being less successful with long-term projects such as the Clunes Project. Having a collective sense of purpose or collective goals – such as making sure their house is squabble-free and runs smoothly, or trying to rescue the river, are very powerful motivators.

While teachers and parents have different opinions about what the program accomplishes or ought to do, students unanimously endorse the program most emphatically. The only thing some might change is their own engagement and participation in the program.

Chapter 5

Disjunctures and the Focus on Self

Clunes showed me who I am, and why. (Self Assessment, Student 19)

I like the idea of their being plucked out of the capitalist city centre and being plonked into just a little country town where people's priorities are quite radically different. (Parent Focus Group 1)

There were some characters in the house that were very moody and broody and dramatic. [My daughter] had not dealt with people like that before and it was interesting for her to see – because that obviously works in their own family constellation in some way, but taken out of that, and put into this, it isn't working, so they had to renegotiate their own behaviour, because it kept bouncing up against the others, because they weren't tolerating that. (Parent Focus Group 1)

Introduction

The Clunes campusl represents a dramatically different environment to anything the students have experienced before. What are the implications of this difference for students and their learning? What happens when students are 'plucked out' of one environment and 'plonked into' another? When their usual ways of being 'bounce up' against others? How do students' 'habituses' interact with the different 'field' within which they find themselves? How do programs and practices at Clunes attempt to encourage thoughtful and deliberate responses rather than unthinking, near-automatic ones? These are some of the questions examined in this chapter.

Clunes represents a quite different 'field'(Bourdieu, 2000) to what students are used to as 'school' and indeed as 'home'. Many dualities are disturbed in the arrangements of space, time and relations at Clunes. 'School' and 'home' are blurred as students find everyday activities which occur at home – sleeping, cooking, eating, making beds, doing dishes, hanging out the washing – are also the focus of learning at Clunes. Dressed in casual clothes and calling teachers by their first names also aids the breaking down of known ways of being and relating at school and at home. 'Lessons' run for several hours at a stretch, and require quite different activities, often involving the whole body. 'School' itself is on '24/7' – a phrase that is sprinkled throughout student and staff interviews. Relationships between the teacher and the students, and between students themselves, are redefined and have to be negotiated anew. As the Clunes website describes it,

The daily education program is unlike a school experience we have all been used to. There are no bells or normal subjects, and the curriculum is negotiated between students and leaders in a collaborative manner.

Clunes places great emphasis on being reflective, thoughtful and responsible about one's choices and actions. The novelty of the field heightens the awareness of the self and of the field, and brings focus to one's actions and its impact on the field.

Plonking a Habitus into a New Field

According to Bourdieu's theory of habitus, we develop over time a set of dispositions which allow us to react to our 'fields' (environments, or social worlds) in near-automatic ways. We expect things to be arranged in certain ways and we are so accustomed to these arrangements, that we hardly notice what they are and what they represent. Over the course of their lifetimes, students would have developed a set of dispositions, their habitus, mediated by their myriad of experiences at home, at school and elsewhere. Now, confronted with the new field at Clunes, students have to reconstruct their habitus and learn to respond in different ways. The disjuncture between the new field and the fields of home and school highlight the specific features of the new environment (and indeed the old, made visible against a new backdrop) and provoke an awareness among students of the ways in which they – and their peers – are responding to the new fields they encounter. Things they would have hardly noticed or questioned before about school or home – for example, how the laundry is done at home, or why mathematics is taught eight times in the two-week cycle – now become visible as practices characteristic of the place.

It is important to note the difference between the notion of 'habitus' and that of the more commonly used term of 'personality'. Personality generally signifies a genetically or physiologically determined and fairly stable set of dispositions, which may be difficult, if not impossible, to dislodge. 'Habitus', on the other hand, is a learned or acquired set of dispositions which have become practiced ways of responding and acting within familiar fields. Habitus is actively constructed in relation to the field, and acts on the field even as it responds to it. Habitus, then, is dynamic, cumulative and emergent. At the same time, being in the same environment for an extended period reinforces certain ways of responding and being – and the patterns of response become stable and almost instinctive. When faced with a new situation, the old ways of responding may have to be abandoned and new ones adopted.

At Clunes, confronted with a new world, in which spaces and times are configured differently, producing different practices, students have to make sense of their new 'field' and learn how to act within and upon it. This process involves comparing the new world they encounter with the familiar worlds of home and school, and negotiating their way through those worlds. The growing understanding of Clunes is thus simultaneously a growing awareness of self and an understanding of the other worlds they inhabit.

At Clunes, students' reflexivity is encouraged through formal arrangements such as self assessments and house meetings, as well as in spontaneous conversations. As students negotiate their way through their new world, they report being surprised by what they learn about themselves, and changed by the new experiences they have had. In the process, the habitus itself becomes an intense site of reflection and action.

Preparing for Clunes

Students (and their families) anticipate their time at Clunes with great excitement, in some cases for years. Everyone in Year 9 knows someone who has been to Clunes before. Stories – both delightful and worrying, circulate amongst students and parents.

At home and at school, students are prepared in different ways to make a success of their time at Clunes.

At school, different campuses adopt different practices. The 'Ticket to Clunes' program provides students with a list of activities to complete before setting off for Clunes. In some cases, a resilience camp is organised at the end of Year 8, where former Clunes veterans address students with regard to what to expect and how to make the most of the Clunes experience.

While students are given tasks to complete prior to their departure, such as learning how to operate the washing machine and cooking a meal or two, the extent to which they take on board these instructions depends on their habitus:

> *[My son] has always been the kind of child – if he is asked to do something, he's got to make sure it is done. So when he got the packages, there was a list of things they had to achieve prior to going and [my son] made sure he stuck to that (Parent Focus Group 2)*
>
> *[My daughter] is very lazy and she was just going to wing it…(Parent Focus Group 2)*

Preparations at home include everything from packing the bags to advice on what to do and what not to do at Clunes.

> *It was quite a kerfuffle getting her there – just to get her bag packed – it was a thrill just to have that done – bag-**Z,** not just one bag…it is surprising the things they feel they must carry with them…(Parent Focus Group 1)*

> *We were really only worried about their safety…We sat down and talked to him and said 'Don't do anything that is risky, and don't listen to your friends – I was a bit concerned because peer pressure on boys is a bit different to girls – and I know he always wants to belong – so I was [going] 'Don't do anything to risk your life, and don't get into trouble, because if you get into trouble,' I threatened him, 'if you get into trouble, then you are out of Wesley'. (Parent Focus Group 2)*

Teachers and parents speculate about how the interplay between habitus and field may play out for different students even before the bus ride to Clunes has begun.

> *My son was the third in the family to go to Clunes and I was not worried about any of those things [safety, homesickness]. [He] is the sort of person who is incredibly self-sufficient, incredibly responsible, and I had absolutely no doubts that he would enjoy it and he'd be fine, and the only tiny thing I was concerned about was would he get involved with some of the boys, whether there would be a lot of peer group pressure where his judgement would be a little bit lacking. (Parent Focus Group 2)*

Sometimes, they are surprised by how things turn out.

> *[My daughter] did not want to go, and it was quite a job to get her to go. She is an only child and she is very close to me and my wife. And the two of us do a lot for her – Mum does these things and Dad does this… The first couple of weeks were difficult. When we went up to see her at Clunes, she was a changed girl. She*

showed us around the campus, saying this is what we do, and this is how we do this, and she wanted to live in Clunes! (Parent Focus Group 2)

Among staff, there is an extensive exchange of notes so that Clunes staff are well briefed about various details about individuals which may be relevant – everything from allergies to particular home situations, vulnerabilities, strengths and the experiences that are likely to challenge them are detailed in these notes.

Students themselves often brace for the experience with a conscious determination to try everything and to make a success of the program, and to have as much fun as possible. Sometimes they are full of apprehension, particularly with regard to sharing a house with peers from other campuses, whom they have not met before.

Clunes – A Whole Different World

Every environment has its own culture, its own ways of doing things. Particular features of an environment lend themselves to certain practices and constrain others. But the environment does not simply act on the individual – individuals and groups attempt, with varying degrees of success, to appropriate resources and interact with the environment. Bourdieu's habitus can respond almost automatically in environments to which it is accustomed. But the students in our study have to reconfigure their habituses in relation to the new environment they encounter, and the new insights they gain. As Roth et al explain,

> *Each cultural field is characterized by material, social, and schematic structures that are appropriated by—and therefore enable and constrain—participants as they enact culture. Here, we understand culture to denote the ensemble of standard practices, artifacts and tools, and agential possibilities that define a particular society or community. (Roth et al., 2007, p. 116)*

The Clunes environment is neither home nor school, neither 'boarding school' nor 'day school'. The practices that 'work' at Clunes emerge through the particular ways in which time, space and relations are arranged. The Clunes environment provides a contrast against which taken-for-granted features of the home and school environments become visible through contrast.

Learning at Clunes: Life-wide

Clunes dissolves boundaries between home and school. The kitchen, students' sleep habits, what students eat – all these become practices that can be monitored and regulated. Parents report that students made very little contact with them while at Clunes, even though email contact was available to the students all the time. Very few students reported being homesick. Clunes in effect became 'home' for many students – so much so, that *home* needed adjusting to when they got back. As one student reported when she returned home during the two-week term break during the Clunes term:

> *Coming back home – that was a really weird experience. I walked in and everything seemed so different. And because we were going back again in two weeks, I felt that that [Clunes] was my home and this was just a holiday house. (Student Interview2)*

When learning is life-wide, every place is a classroom. Hanging out the washing was a lesson as was running up Mt Beckworth; the volcanic crater was as much classroom as ‘the Jube’ or the Masonic Lodge. ‘The pit’, which was the living room of the houses, and a place to hang out with friends, was also the site of house meetings where sticky issues might need to be resolved.

Most importantly, the self itself was a learning space, seen as bounded within a zone of comfort which students were encouraged to strive to expand and push beyond. Students experienced varying degrees of success in this.

> *I wasn’t happy to move out of my comfort zone very much and I kept to myself most of the time. (Student Interview 3)*

> *Clunes was an amazing experience that offered so many different activities and things you could do that would push you outside your comfort zone. (Self Assessment, Student 1)*

At Clunes, learning was expanded into something life-wide – the body, the soul, the environment, the land, relationships, the emotional self – all these became sites and spaces of study and intervention. Learning became a bodily experience – often involving climbing, walking, drawing, planting trees, cooking, or in some way acting in the world.

The Self as a Site for Intervention

Who Am I?

From the outset, the Clunes program explicitly emphasises its focus on the self. Apart from the statements in promotional and information literature, courses at Clunes, and the practices surrounding teaching and learning, underscore this focus in several ways. Courses designed under the organising theme ‘Who am I?’ aim to encourage students to be reflective about how they ‘fit into’ the world, as is made explicit in the course description of *‘I Am Woman’*

> *In their second course, students explore the many answers to the question "Who Am I?" The courses focus upon themselves in relation to other people and society. This course "I Am Woman" is being offered to girls. The girls will be given the opportunity to explore their own uniqueness in this ever changing world. They will become more aware of their own talents and identify personal strengths and differences in themselves and others. The girls will be encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings and hopefully gain a sense of self, a sense of purpose. A variety of activities will be included. This is an opportunity to reflect, question, research and discuss issues and ideas in search of the answer to the question of what it means to be a woman in the Twenty First Century. This course is offered to gain a further insight into themselves, what makes them tick and gain acceptance and pride of themselves and others.*

Being and Becoming

Clunes provides not only a new environment in terms of its location and practices, it encourages students to ‘be’ different things, take on different roles and experiment

with and explore their own being as a site of research. Activities sometimes literally require students to take on different roles, using ‘scenario’ and ‘initiative’ tasks that require them to ‘step out’ of ‘comfort zones’. By raising the subject of the self as an unknown, it is positioned as something that is to be discovered. By subjecting their selves to the test in different situations, students learn more about themselves throughout the course. At the same time, the self is not seen as pre-determined and awaiting discovery, but something that can be developed and improved.

A very significant part of the Clunes experience is the mixing up of social groups. Because Clunes house groups are multi-campus groups, students are plunged into a different milieu where there is not a prior expectation of who they are and how they will act. Those who are often overshadowed by a more dominant personality at the metropolitan campus or at home by a sibling may find they behave quite differently when that influence is removed. Those who shine in the classroom setting may find themselves in the unfamiliar territory of being inept or lacking in confidence when confronted with tasks at which they may not outshine their peers. Known hierarchies are disturbed at Clunes, and students are freed to a great extent from the practiced patterns of behaving that they have developed over time at their metropolitan campuses and at home.

Students from different campuses are placed in the same house and develop a strong sense of camaraderie through sharing of tasks, organising and participating in events together, and just ‘hanging out’ and having fun. They witness their mates going through homesickness or strife of one kind or another. They help each other out with their project work and other tasks.

> *In the house, if we noticed that someone was down we would always help and try to cheer them up. (Self Assessment, Student 21)*

> *The aspects of our house that really worked well were our ability to keep a humorous mood 24/7. We used appropriate ways to deal with our problems, such as an assertive approach to the person that was doing the thing wrong. We listened to each other's views on everything that happened and worked out our problems from there. I developed friendships with most people at Clunes, though there were some uneasy relationships, but they were overcome. (Self Assessment, Student 13)*

Courses such as *‘Taking a Risk’* and *‘Boys to Men’* cast students in challenging situations, and the sense of shared challenge draws groups together in a powerful manner. Students have the opportunity to see a variety of aspects of ‘being’ up-close at Clunes – vulnerability, struggle, strength of character, determination, sadness, fear – all these are on display – students cannot hide away even in their own rooms, which are shared with another student. In the process, students develop a much more complex and nuanced understanding of human nature, with an attendant re-examination of their own ways of dealing with things**.**

Desired Identities

The very purpose of setting up the Clunes program was to provide an opportunity for students to become more reflective, thoughtful and aware members of the community. This is reflected in its curriculum statement:

The aim of the Wesley College residential learning village project is the education of the whole person in a community... In turn we aim for all learners to be reflective, passionate, enthusiastic and active…

…Living in this environment helps provide students with a greater understanding of what it means to become more adult and gain a truer understanding of their place in the world.

…the emphasis is upon personal relationships and community rather than just academic pursuits. Students are required to reflect on themselves as learners and examine ways to enhance the learning process.

The notions of dimensions of being and the complexity of intelligences or capacities have been equally important in its development…

Reflection, responsibility and awareness are themes that run through the language and also the practice of learning at Clunes. While there is, to some extent, the idea that students will 'discover' their identities, which suggests it is viewed as pre-formed and buried deep, awaiting uncovering, metaphors of 'development' also exist, whereby the desired behaviour is seen as arising naturally as a result of being placed in situations that promote reflection and an active fashioning and management of self, and, as we shall see below, the production of the future self.

'Schooling' by definition focuses on the self as a site of intervention – where students are disciplined, schooled, trained and so on, so much so that Foucault compared schooling practices to those of the prison and the hospital, which posit subjects (in this case students) as sites to be disciplined and governed. In Foucault's view, pedagogic and monitoring practices constitute surveillance technologies, whereby the panopticon is trained upon the actions of students (Foucault, 1977). More recently, the spate of practices that promote self declaration, such as journaling and self assessment, have been analysed as the turning of the panopticon inwards, so that regulation is achieved not as much through intervention from without, through disciplining from within. Reflection has been described as a confessional or self-analytical process that involves the subject in producing the disciplined self.

While such practices are often referred to in critical sociology in a negative light, as manifestations of intensified governmentality, for Foucault himself, power was always as much a positive force as a negative one. It could be argued that practices of self-analysis and reflection empower students and draw their attention to the deployment of power in their environments and to the range of responses feasible within it. At Clunes, students seemed not only eager to learn more about themselves, but also often re-constructed themselves as more capable, more independent and more responsible individuals.

The focus on the self is achieved both deliberately and incidentally, through organised practices as well as spontaneous learning. Some traits are certainly seen as more desirable, and others less so. The discursive construction of the desired self is very effectively performed through teacher conversations and assessment reports[11].

[11] Assessment appears to be a powerful device and is used very effectively at Clunes to focus attention on learning, change and growth, and direct student attention to their own responsibility in learning. The frequency of feedback is a critical factor in its effectiveness. In the eight weeks that students are there,

Students are cast as having *positive attitudes* or being *caring*, *lacking maturity* or *becoming responsible* and *independent*. These ideas are conveyed through formal and incidental conversations as well as through the student reports at the end of each course.

Student reports reflect this sense of the desired habitus:

> *[This student] was an **active** and **enthusiastic** member of this class. She **participated actively** in all aspects of this course including visiting the Yoga Ashram and Sovereign Hill. At times, [she] found it difficult to **focus** in class, however, she generally was able to **adjust her behaviour** after a brief discussion. (Teacher Report, emphases mine)*

While being active and enthusiastic are to be commended and encouraged, lack of focus is to be discouraged. Undesirable behaviour is to be *adjusted*. Thus student behaviour is seen as needing to be aligned to a desired set of dispositions.

The next example shows how the push towards desired identities can work in quite subtle ways:

> *[This student] is a vibrant and friendly student who has made the most of many of her opportunities during her time at Clunes. At first [she] seemed quiet and reserved although it did not take her long to come out of her shell, pushing beyond her comfort zone and making many new friends from all three metropolitan campuses. (Teacher Assessment of Student 18)*

Phrases such as 'coming out of her shell' are so frequently and almost unthinkingly used in everyday parlance, that we seldom think about the implications of such a phrase. In this particular case, it appears to imply that there is a 'real' person trapped inside a shell, that is to be coaxed into coming out and being sociable. Shyness is not just a characteristic of a person, but a handicap, a lack of 'social skills'. Clearly being quiet and reserved was not as desirable and is placed in contrast with 'making many new friends'.

To what extent this way of thinking reconciles with the notions of accommodation and acceptance, of learning to 'be', and of respecting difference, is a matter for further reflection on the part of the College. However, in all the interviews conducted, parents' and teachers' views of what is more desirable appear to coincide, and there is consensus that students should be 'outgoing' and 'bold' and able to widen their social circle.

Similarly, the term 'comfort zone' is used extensively at Clunes, by students and staff alike, and always in the context of something that must be 'stepped out of'. Again, the possible consequences for vulnerable or fragile students of 'stepping out of the comfort zone' must be kept in view.

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students write five self-assessments and teacher also write five assessments on each student. In addition, one-on-one interviews also provide opportunities to exchange information on how students are doing. The effectiveness of frequent feedback is already established in educational research and reinforced in the Clunes study.

Self-knowledge as Empowerment

Autonomy and self-knowledge are major themes in the Clunes program. Thus the self is not merely a site for intervention by teachers, but one on which students keep constant watch, and upon which they can choose to impose discipline. Linguistic and discursive devices make it possible for students to make sense of themselves in certain ways, such as being *impulsive*, or *easily distracted*, or *highly driven*. Once these features of self are identified, students can work at remedying any problems. The programs and experiences at Clunes offer several opportunities for students to learn about themselves[12]. One example is the self-assessment that students complete after each course. Some of the understandings of self reflected in the assessments include:

> *I have noticed that I learn new things using different methods. Sometimes it suits me to write things down and sometimes it is better to discuss them with others. (Student Assessment 6)*

> *The biggest thing I learnt was who I am without my friends. They have always been there and they still are, but I did this all by myself and there was no one there standing up for me when I got into a fight or anything, so I discovered who I am without everyone else. And I found I was pretty strong by myself. (Student Interview 2, referring to the fact that most of this student's friends from her campus did not go to Clunes in the same term as she did)*

Although similar understandings may have been (and indeed *are*) emphasised on the metropolitan campuses, the displacement and disorientation provided by the short, intense experience of Clunes stimulates such insights more effectively and perhaps even spontaneously.

> *Overall I think that Clunes has taught me a lot of amazing life lessons that I definitely would not have learnt if I had been at school. I loved the whole experience and I am very glad that I went with the group of people that I did. (Self Assessment, Student 5)*

> *Some of the courses open your eyes to the bigger issues and you become more aware of yourself and [of] your capability [for] doing stuff. (Student Interview 1)*

Producing Future Selves

Courses such as *'Boys to Men'* and *'I am Woman'* focus on maturity, growing up and becoming men and women, part of the adult world. The description of the course Boys to Men states:

> *The key focus of the course requires the boys to look at the emotional changes they face on the path from being boys to becoming men. An integral part of the course is the overnight camp. Whilst at the camp and during class sessions topics such as peer pressure, the importance of role models, stereotypical male behaviour, statistics relating to males, and men and the media are discussed at length. The*

[12] Students are also encouraged to keep a journal. At first, these journals were to be examined as part of the data set. However, except for one student, no one had maintained their journal and students were therefore reluctant to share their journals. The spectacular success of some regulatory practices and the failure of others is a subject of discussion in a later chapter.

input from a number of fathers, stepfathers, and/or significant adult males, who attend the campout and share their thoughts on what it means to be boys and men, further enhances the value of these discussions. (From the Clunes Assessment Report)

Courses such as *'Am I a Leader?'* focus on skills that can be used in group settings in the future.

Students gained a deeper understanding of themselves and their interactions with others, essential to becoming a leader. This was done by participating in many scenarios and initiative tasks that slowly allowed students to learn and practise the skills needed for both leadership and to understand group dynamics. Some of the passive as well as active tasks explored and analysed their potential as a leader or their role within a group. This culminated in all students participating in an "Amazing Race" and each student leading others in an activity. Overall, there were many moments of fun, tension, pressure, self-enlightenment and personal satisfaction. ***All of which will now be packaged and taken away as tools for a bright future****. (Clunes Assessment Report, emphasis mine)*

Activities at Clunes are set out as being relevant to 'real-life', where 'life skills' are learnt. In every activity they undertake, students are encouraged to assess the value of what they are doing in terms of its application in their future. Several student self-assessments reflect this forward-looking focus:

Because of what I have learnt I believe I can now work together with my family and friends to create a water-safe, sustainable future. With this knowledge I want to cut my home electricity and water bills drastically. I also want to try and buy more local and seasonal foods. Unless one person stands up, says something and everyone else follows nothing will get done to fix our planet. (Self Assessment, Student 11)

I also enjoyed getting involved in some Aboriginal painting. I liked learning about the different techniques and think they may become of use in the future. Apart from this, I don't think this course will help me in the future because I don't think that I will be doing anything in this area but it was very interesting while it lasted. (Self Assessment, Student 15)

An important difference between the focus of the metropolitan campuses and the Clunes program is the *active agency* assigned to students in the production of their future selves. It is a large canvas, and the goals go far beyond TER scores.

What I want to bring into my life when I am an adult is a larger sense of what is wrong and what is right and really define those boundaries. Throughout this course some of the lessons I have learnt have been that risk is something that changes dramatically and you always have to keep judging how it changes. From the elders at the campout I learnt that you should always be honest to yourself and to others so that they will trust you back and you will not have to face the consequences of lies. (Self Assessment, Student 8)

And,

> *The course got me thinking about how every woman is needed in society and about what I would like to be and do as a woman today. (Self Assessment, Student 4)*

At Clunes, students' future is cast as something over which they can exercise choice, and over which they have control. While this may be, in general terms, the philosophy in the metropolitan campuses, systems, structures and programs mitigate against the agentic self, encouraging, instead, the compliant (or, to use Foucault's more provocative term, the 'docile') self. Success is predicated upon *making the choice to conform*; the sense of 'dreaming large' and 'pushing boundaries' is more the hallmark of Clunes.

Conclusion

The confrontation with the Clunes environment is also a confrontation with self. Being 'plonked into' Clunes is like going to an exotic foreign land, where practices are so different, they hold up a mirror to students' taken-for-granted practices. The disjuncture between the world students are used to at home and at school, and the world of Clunes means that automatic responses of the habitus have no currency; responses must perforce be considered and deliberate. In addition, many of the courses and practices at Clunes deliberately set out to shake students from set ways of being, and encourage them to extend themselves, have a go, and take a risk. Further, reflection is a theme throughout the course, again encouraging thoughtful action.

Chapter 6

Stories of Change

> *Clunes may only last eight weeks, but the changes will last forever. (Self Assessment, Student 4)*

Clunes is a rite of passage – one that is anticipated with great eagerness, in some cases for years. With the incorporation of Year 10 into the Senior School, Year 9 is the senior-most class in the Middle School, with its own School Captains and other school leaders. Clunes is a graduation of sorts, coming as it does in the final year of Middle School.

Students in Year 9, generally 14 or 15 years of age, are at the cusp between childhood and young adulthood, with the minimum legal age for a variety of activities just round the corner. For some parents and students, it marks the beginning of a change in the relationship with their children, who now become more independent, more private or more capable on their own.

> *Not only are you sending them away, but they do come back different, and it is a level of letting go on a very deep level … it is a bit of their childhood getting chipped away – it is happening all the time, but sometimes it's just big chunks, and this was a big chunk, and it was a very relevant chunk – I felt quite grief-stricken when I left her off at the bus. (Parent Focus Group 1)*

Change is a major theme running through the Clunes program. Whether studying the past to see how the landscape and living have changed over time, or focusing on how students have changed as they engage with the activities at Clunes, the theme of Change runs right through the activities at Clunes. Student assessments and self assessments also reflect how students have changed. Indeed, change is presented as something that arises from self understanding, something that is desirable, and something to strive towards.

Clunes as an Opportunity for Change

The eight week period of time at Clunes is described with a metaphor of 'journey'. The course is divided up into portions that go in a trajectory from orientation and introductory courses towards culmination with Presentation Day, the Beckworth Run, and a re-orientation to the city campus. Students all walk up Mt. Beckworth during the first week of the term at Clunes, and again at the end of the course – the first time at sunrise and the second at sunset – to symbolise their journey.

This way of setting up the eight-week course as a journey focuses students' attention to change and achievement. Clunes is thus transformed into an 'opportunity' – something that will disappear unless timely use is made of it. Students, teachers and parents alike spoke of Clunes as a time for 'seizing the moment', and taking the opportunity to change and grow, to 'mature' and 'step out of the comfort zone'.

The discursive framework of a change trajectory helps focus on the extent and ways in which students are transformed, and provides a device for 'mapping' this change. Students are encouraged to set goals to focus their use of the time at Clunes. Student

and teacher assessments alike often reflect the sense of Clunes as a time 'set aside' to achieve particular goals and change in specific ways.

> *Early on Katherine set herself the goals of becoming more confident in relation to her music, meeting new friends, getting fit and becoming a better friend. Katherine achieved most of these goals and many more during her time at Clunes. (Teacher Assessment of Student 22)*

The time at Clunes is seen as an opportunity to change in significant ways so that it can more closely align with the desired self.

> *[This student] is a vibrant and friendly student who has made the most of many of her opportunities during her time at Clunes. At first [she] seemed quiet and reserved although it did not take her long to come out of her shell, pushing beyond her comfort zone and making many new friends from all three metropolitan campuses. (Teacher Assessment of Student 18)*

During student interviews a few students talked about particular events as the achievement of goals they had set themselves. Although goal setting is a quite commonly-used pedagogic strategy in metropolitan classrooms, the fixed and relatively short duration of the Clunes experience, and frequent interviews with mentors and house leaders as well as formal feedback from teachers, keeps the goals in focus at Clunes.

Goals such as completing the Mt Beckworth run are made by many students. The camaraderie that develops when hardship is experienced collectively and students genuinely start to celebrate each-other's success appears to sustain them and help in achieving their goals. The achievement of quite difficult goals changes students' perception of self and they see themselves as capable and empowered. Indeed, just completing the eight-week course can be the challenge that strengthens and changes a person.

> *I think I have changed and broadened my perspective and got a lot stronger. The main goal I wanted was to complete Clunes – and I think if I were to repeat it that would still be my goal. That first week, my house leader said that I was such a frail person he didn't think I was strong enough to stay there and the first week I was really uneasy and he was really proud that I stayed that time. (Student Interview 2)*

The stories of student learning and change are very varied. Students appear to gain deep insights and learn important lessons about how to take care of themselves, how to show concern for others, and how to deal with adversity.

Confidence

One recurrent theme emerging in the data is that of confidence. Confidence seems to come from several experiences – from learning certain basic life-skills which enable them to take care of themselves, from managing their friendships and maintaining harmony within their houses, making friends from different campuses, and from accomplishing challenging tasks.

> *I have become more confident as a person, in my learning abilities, and also how I make new friends. I now believe in myself and instead of doubting myself all the*

time. I have decided to take risks and put myself out of my comfort zone more. (Self Assessment, Student 7)

The Clunes experience has changed me in a way, where I have become a more confident person, not as afraid to try new things, and [it] has taught me to just be myself. (Self Assessment, Student 14)

I think the Clunes experience has made me responsible and I'm starting to learn to stop when I've done something wrong and not to keep going. (Self Assessment, Student 12)

I developed a confidence in myself to do the things I set my mind to, like the Beckworth Run (Student Interview 1)

This confidence with which students returned was noticed also by parents:

[I think my daughter has come back] more confident, stronger, [with] a sense of achievement – they didn't come home, they didn't get sick, they had a sense of accomplishment. (Parent Focus Group 1)

I think she has come back more self-sufficient, actually. In terms of study, focused, wants to do things for herself, has the tools, goes out and does them … That's been more the go than 'Dad, show me how to do this' – she gets her books or gets on the Internet and away she goes. Who makes her bed? Is it a horizontal wardrobe? It is, Mum and Dad will take care of it when they clean the house, but in terms of study, she is definitely more self-sufficient. (Parent Focus Group 2)

Other parents echo the observation – students may revert to their lazy ways when it comes to being tidy or helping out around the house, but there is a strength and a confidence in them that appears to stay.

[S]he's a stronger person, there's no doubt about that, and a lot more confident I think. [But] I seem to be back doing everything, but it's exam time (how do we let that happen?) – but I know she is capable and if it's a priority she will do it.

In some cases, this increase in confidence was so dramatic as to amount to a change in personality. Many parents are quite amazed at their children's performances on Presentation Day.

I was shocked to see at the very end, the program they had … the circus – it seemed as if she was not my daughter – she seemed to have come out of [her] shell and she was very – she's a little bit shy – now she seems very comfortable speaking in front of people as well as performing – because that is not her strength … when she came out and performed and shouted like that, I was so shocked, I couldn't even control my video camera! She was sort of leading that group. (Parent Interview 5)

I never thought my child could do that (Parent Focus Group 2, about the Circus program)

But this, of course, does not happen by accident, but is what the program is designed to do. As one Clunes staff member put it,

There are other parts [of the program] that are purely about self esteem and gaining confidence – things like the music program, have a kid get up and sing before a couple of hundred people, and they've never sung before, and succeeding and having everyone want them to succeed, and having everyone cheer you on is the greatest buzz, and that self belief just continue to grow. Same with the circus – kids who feel too nervous to speak and perform the most amazing juggling and tumbling… (Staff Interview 1)

Collective celebration of achievement and the security of the support of adults and peers appears to be key to the extraordinary success of the program in building student confidence. And unlike the desire to share in the house-hold chores, confidence was cited as an enduring change by parents.

Attitude

Some students reported a change in attitude. Students reported that they had overcome fears and prejudices, learn to respect others more, or form deeper and more mature relationships with parents. Others developed a different perspective and learnt to look at things in a new way. These changes would serve to enrich students' lives, see them through difficult times and make them more caring of others.

The biggest thing I have learnt in this course is being open minded …Because of what I have learned I believe I can now express more interest in religion which I didn't have much interest in before and I didn't know much about religion or spirituality before this course[13]. (Self Assessment, Student 12)

From the elders at the campout I learnt that life isn't just fun and there will be down times so you just have to keep pushing through them and keep your head high…In the future I hope to show all the skills I have leant from this course, such as knowing how to respect other people. (Self Assessment, Student 8)

What I want to bring into my life when I am an adult is a larger sense of what is wrong and what is right and really define those boundaries. Throughout this course some of the lessons I have learnt have been that risk is something that changes dramatically and you always have to keep judging how it changes. (Self Assessment, Student 8)

I feel the Clunes experience has changed me a lot. I no longer judge people on what they look like. I feel that is a good skill to have. (Self Assessment, Student 13)

[13] The 'course' referred to in this assessment is called 'People Places, Soulful Spaces', which 'explored individual needs for spaces that are calming and nourishing to the soul. It had two main objectives; firstly to participate in activities that would be calming and relaxing, and secondly to use this experience to allow students to reflect on the activity, and think deeply about themselves and their future.' This is an example of how the themes of self and change are threaded throughout the Clunes program.

This insight was reported by students but did not emerge as a strong theme in parent or teacher interviews.

Relationships

For students, the friendships they made were without doubt the most important highlight of their time at Clunes. Students emphasised that living together in the same house as other children, seeing them struggle through difficult times, and overcoming challenges together with friends forms the kind of bonds which are not possible within a regular school day in the metropolitan campuses. Many made statements about 'really getting to know' others.

> *Another great thing about Clunes was that there was a lot of time to talk with everyone which was why you got to know people on a whole new level. (Student Interview 1)*

But it is more than just time to talk that builds close relationships. One staff member points to the role of collective goals and achievement and of mutual support through challenges that draw people together.

> *[There is a] collective sense of achievement … having two kids get through the caving together, one kid absolutely petrified – there is a certain kind of bond that comes from that, And hardship, overcoming hardships together really does bond [people together]. Getting through tough times, together - so it might be that they haven't done a great shop and they're having to be really resourceful to work out what to cook for dinner, but doing that as a team. Beckworth Run for instance – absolutely feeling like they are going to drop, having each other's support to get through that – really builds it. (Staff Interview 1)*

Shared challenges also appear to encourage the development and display of empathy.

> *Teenagers can be quite good at empathy too, and I think that came out at quite a bit Clunes, and quite a lot of anecdotes [my daughter] would tell us about where they counselled each other really very maturely and successfully, it seemed to me – and there was quite a bit of looking out for other kids. (Parent Focus Group 3)*

This is particularly significant because the apprehension that some people express is with regard to peer pressure, and counsel and advice is usually seen as residing with adults.

This ability to relate to others in a less superficial way is sometimes reflected in changed relationships at home:

> *[B]efore she went away, [she] was getting a bit of an attitude – kind of you know – didn't see any common ground between us – and since she's come back – she's still got her own world and there's things she won't tell me and that's fair enough, but I do get a lot more information and conversation and she's - that gap isn't there to the same extent and she has a sense of - she just has a bigger, broader, better idea of what I do, how you manage your time and how you manage yourelf – I don't think she had an appreciation to the same extent as she has now – she is more open to the adult world, moving into the world and becoming part of it…she just doesn't see herself as being that different, she sees herself as being part of the unit together. We all have jobs – we've always has jobs in the house – so she*

slipped quite easily into that – she now more proactive in doing the bits she's got to do.

There's an openness, and a greater appreciation of not just what I do, but what I represent, and how we support her emotionally and what the family represents as a place to be supported and accepted a springboard to then go out into the world. (Parent Focus Group 2)

Some families reported a change in their relationship with their children:

When we went to the visiting weekend, she fell right back into the family, but there seemed to be like a gap. Coming back home after the end of it, there was still this feeling that I have been surrounded by my peers for this period of time and there were a few little barriers towards me and sort of being open and honest with me and I though – hmmm – work on chipping those away… and then once the holes began to appear, then it did just collapse and probably became greater than it had been previous to that.

The ability to form deeper relationships appears to transfer from the Clunes situation to relationships at home, and back on the metropolitan campuses. Although the frequency of meeting peters off over the weeks and months, most students and parents reported that contact with newly made friends from across campuses was ongoing many weeks after returning.

Returning from Clunes: Back to 'Normal'?

The issue of whether the learning that students undergo at Clunes is durable or transient is of interest to educators and parents alike. Clearly, students learn some profound lessons at Clunes. What happens when students return home and are back at 'regular' school? Does the change last? Or does the habitus get 're-set', responding again in near-automatic ways to familiar fields?

Student self-assessments that were written throughout the course of eight weeks – five assessments by teachers and five self-assessments – told stories of how students experienced Clunes and what they perceived as their own change and growth even as they were experiencing it. Interviews with students occurred roughly between four and seven weeks after they had returned – when they had started the new term at the metropolitan campuses. In the case of Group 34, there was a two-week break between Clunes and the start of the term[14]. Parent interviews were conducted towards the end of the new term – between six and nine weeks after the students had returned. The timing of the interviews was such as to allow students to 'settle' into term routine, and to have some distance from the Clunes program when reflecting on it.

What was striking in the data was the difference between the sense of profound insights leading to deep change, reflected in the student self assessments at Clunes, and the casual statement that students often made – *'I haven't changed that much, really'* – that many students responded with during the interviews, conducted a few weeks later.

[14] Group 33 had the unusual situation of a term break within their time at Clunes – students returned home after six weeks for their term break, and then went back to complete the two additional weeks at Clunes.

Invited to think a bit harder to see if they did things any differently, now that they had been to Clunes and learnt so much, some students reported that perhaps they talked more now, or watched less television (since they went out and meet with their friends more often) and were less helpless at home – if they were home alone, they could get themselves a snack, and in general saw themselves as having more choices of activities available to them.

Most students could not think of any change in their behaviours or actions as learners in the classroom or at home, upon returning from Clunes.

Reverting to 'Old Ways'

"Has your child changed since going to Clunes? Do you notice him/her doing anything differently now, since their return?" This was a question that I asked parents during interviews. This extended excerpt from an interview is quite representative of what many parents had to say:

> *Yeah, but again I think in a very few days that is back to normal. [There are a] few things – of course she seems to be more independent – when I try to help her with her homework, she says, no, Daddy, I can do it myself, I want to do it my way, and even when she was preparing her City project, I was asking her to give her presentation [as a practice] in front of me, but she wasn't even concerned, she seemed to be pretty confident.*
>
> *Coming back to typical habits, I think she went back to her old habits – we were expecting, you know, for example, you have to make your bed – when she got back she got back to her old habits.*
>
> *She seems to be pretty independent. She thinks certain things she can do even without us – it can be good and bad – because sometimes you don't want to make a major mistake and then realise that you are too independent*
>
> *Before we send kids to Clunes – this was mentioned quite a few times: "You will see kids completely different when they come back" – I didn't see that. (Parent Interview5)*

One parent talked specifically about lessons students might have learnt from their failure to manage their time well with regard to the Clunes Project:

> *Parent 8: Managing his time was the biggest challenge – the written task, however many weeks he had to do it – he hadn't broken it up into smaller bits and done all that, and it was all "Quick! I've got to do it by tomorrow."*
>
> *Interviewer: Being through those experiences – has it changed the way [your son] approaches his work now?*
>
> *Parent 8: No! I would love to think [so] – you know, everyone hopes and everyone says they need to fail, and they'll learn from it - I don't think they do! I wish! Maybe some kids do. At the time, for 95% of them, getting the project done is a massive, massive thing, but it doesn't transfer, when they come back they don't apply it.*
>
> *Interviewer: What about at home, is he any different at home since he has returned?*

Parent 8: No. With the whole doing the housework and the washing and the cooking and all of that – he isn't any better, and I think it is a common story as well for most people. But I still think that they know that they can do it… Probably the whole family reverts to how they were operating before. (Parent Interview 8)

The most-noticed feature of the 'lack of change' appears to be in the areas of being tidy and helping with the day-to-day chores. The most enduring changes appear to be those that may not be very easily apparent in actions – greater confidence, greater (need for) independence, and possibly a greater understanding of and respect for others, and the capacity to develop deep and enduring friendships.

The importance of time management, one of the lessons that almost every student purports to have learnt as a result of the Clunes Project, is not a lesson that appears to transfer to other learning situations.

Teachers on metropolitan campuses also report that the changes in students do not last for long. Sometimes the students return noisier and more voluble, but they don't necessarily act more mature or behave more responsibly[15].
Students themselves focused on rather more profound changes than whether students did the dishes or made their beds. They seemed aware that the changes the learning they experienced at Clunes affected them very deeply. Responding to the question: 'How have you changed as a result of all you experiences at Clunes?', a student replied:

A bit – I know more about doing stuff around the house – I have changed quite a bit – I have learnt a lot more stuff about just life …Probably [I have learnt that] you have to listen more at school – [with] Year 10 subjects and choices for Year 12 – you have to try really hard to get those subjects. I learnt more about taking it when an opportunity comes because you may never get it again – about making choices. I know how to cook more. I learnt more stuff about later on in life and how to deal with it but there weren't any huge changes. (Student Interview 12)

Whilst not noticing any category change – no sudden transformation from disorganised student to well-organised student – this student (and many others) refer to learning 'stuff about life' and 'stuff about later on in life'.

Despite wanting lasting change in students, parents were also eager for students to 'get back on track':

I think the teachers [on the metropolitan campus] were great, getting them back on track – as soon as they got back, how they had to settle down and it seemed to help them focus a lot more.

[15] In one instance, Clunes appeared to provoke a transformation in the behaviour of a student who struggled for success prior to going to Clunes. He completed the program successfully, and spoke in glowing terms about the many gains he had made as a result of Clunes. His teachers described his Clunes experience as having been an epiphany, and said he had been transformed in a wonderfully positive way and was experiencing great success at the metropolitan campus upon returning. However, by the time I interviewed his teachers about 10 weeks from his return, they reported that he had reverted to his behaviour prior to Clunes. While following up such 'stand out stories' would add significantly to our understanding of student behaviour, motivation and the relationship between the environment and the outcomes for students, it is beyond the scope of this study.

> *Settling back really helped - I think that definitely turned the page, that was the Clunes chapter, because there is a lot happening to go on with – and there has been a system in place that makes them look forward rather than back – I'm not sure, they still enjoy reminiscing, but they definitely look forward. (Parent Focus Group 1)*

The clear distinction marked between 'Clunes' and 'now', between behaviours that are valued at Clunes and those that are valued in the metropolitan campuses, makes it more difficult for students to hold on to the gains they made at Clunes. Clunes becomes something to reminisce about, rather than something that can inform their current situations actively.

> *You've got this sense that once you finish with Clunes, that is the end of good time – and [my daughter] is seeing that 'Now I've grown up, I've just got Year 12 study looming ahead, this was the quintessential good time that's now come to a close, probably that is how a few of them look at this – as a moment between childhood and the serious stuff where you have a scope to do things that might then disappear. (Parent Focus Group 3)*

The life of exams and career choices and VCE subject selection is constructed as incompatible with, and 'other' to Clunes, so that the lessons learned at Clunes are not seen as applicable upon return. These metaphors of difference which inhibit the transfer of learning and are just as powerful as the ones which produced the learning at Clunes, particularly if such discourse is reinforced by teachers and the students themselves. In order to make the gains of Clunes enduring, the Deleuzean notion of 'differentiation' could to be employed to advantage.

Differentiation Rather than Difference

The issue of the extent and nature of change is critical to understanding the value of the Clunes program. If, at the end of an intense eight weeks, students just return to *status-quo ante* in terms of their behaviour in class and at home, how that does reconcile with the reportedly profound learning experiences that teachers and parents and above all, students themselves report in their assessments during the Clunes course? Does the anxiety upon return that students 'settle back in' negate gains made?

The French philosopher Deleuze's concept of 'differentiation' provides the tools to understand how it is that students (and parents and teachers as well) report on the one hand that there is nothing different about the students, while at the same time reporting that they are deeply, and enduringly changed by the Clunes experience.

Put simply, when we think of change, we often visualise it as being different to something that was before – some kind of category difference. We might think of someone who was shy becoming confident, someone who was quiet becoming talkative, someone who was irresponsible becoming responsible. This requires that students stop being one thing in order to be the other.

Deleuze holds that change is not a movement from one way of being to another. Change does not occur in discrete shifts. Rather, he encourages us to think in terms of *differentiation* – which Massey describes as 'a continuum, a multiplicity of fusion' (Massey, 2005, p. 21). Such a way of thinking implies that change is *an expansion of the repertoire or range of things one can be*.

Differentiation is a matter of 'intensities' and change is 'evolution' rather than 'succession' (Massey, 2005, p. 21). Clunes affords many opportunities for intense engagement, where 'smooth spaces' invite students to experience 'lines of flight'. These intense engagements defy categorisations that hold us back in other situations – we are no longer 'shy' or 'afraid' or 'inept' or any other fixed category which are the hallmark of 'striated spaces'. Clunes allows the opportunity for students to 'forget themselves' and 'let themselves go'. Many students report this as a pre-meditated intention – they set out to 'make the most' of their time in Clunes because 'it was never coming back' – the approach to the experience was one of 'trying everything':

> *Just learning that this is a really precious time and I want to do everything I can … like just really being positive about everything because there is no point really wasting time being sad.*
>
> *I was very happy and carefree and happy with who I was at Clunes without all the stresses of Melbourne and back at school. (Student Interview 1)*

Different environments afford and invite different ways of being – the Clunes experiences expand the range of ways of being available to students. Students who have never performed before experience the 'high' of performing successfully before an appreciative audience. Students who were very dependent on their family find they have managed on their own for eight weeks. These experiences may not mean that students abandon 'old' ways of being – what they facilitate is a wider range of ways of being.

As one of the parents said, even if students don't exhibit a change in behaviour (for example, helping with the household chores), they gain the awareness that they are capable of performing those functions, and able to take care of themselves should the need arise. The *capacity* for a wider range of ways of being appears to result from the Clunes experience. There is also a sense of on-going benefits of the experiences at Clunes, as this parent found:

> *I see him thinking three or four years ahead, and I see him thinking about thing that adults think about, like maybe moving into an apartment and feeling confident that 'I'm going to be able to do that, and it's a going to be a great thing to do as I move into adulthood … Yes, it has come to a close, but he intrinsically knows that somewhere in the future he is going to be able to have a part of it again, because it does exist and it's okay. (Parent Focus Group 3)*

Conclusion

From all accounts, students appear to undergo profound changes, of which they seem to be intensely aware while at Clunes, where repeated assessments and self-assessments as well as many of the courses and activities keep the issue of self and change always at the forefront. Some of the more profound changes appear to remain when students return from Clunes – a sense of confidence, and new ability to forge deeper relationships and 'really' get to know people, and a more open-minded, less judgemental attitude. In some cases, the newly acquired confidence is expressed in terms of independence. However, students appear not to have learnt any lasting lessons with regard to time management or taking responsibility towards household chores.

In many cases, there is a discursive construction of Clunes as an ideal but 'one-off' space, and the metropolitan campus as the 'reality', and coming back from Clunes is seen not so much as a rich experience which would enrich their ongoing experience of school, but as something they had to leave behind, perhaps recalling it sometimes nostalgically, as they buckled down to work, back in their home campuses.

> *I sort of wondered what it would be like not to be doing French and English and Maths and Biology and stuff like that and it's been a bit of a rude shock, second term, getting back into it, and there was a bit of a melt-down realisation that 'Oh, my god, it's back to that' – but that's par for the course, I don't see that as a problem, that's to be expected, and actually a bit of a reality check – that it can be like that, and it was like that, but this is what you've got to get back to, work. 'Welcome to the real world' [laughs]. (Parent Focus Group 1)*

> *I think the teachers were great, getting them back on track – as soon as they got back, how they had to settle down and it seemed to help them focus a lot more. (Parent Focus Group 1)*

For some parents, there was a sense of accepting some wild or out-of-control behaviour at Clunes, but there was an expectation that when they returned, students should resume the disciplined persona that was more suitable to the spaces of home and the metropolitan campuses.

> *The shock for me that I wasn't expecting, was this feral child that came back that was just so wild, even at the table, she was just like 'RRAH' (laughs). Yes, she was hyper, and [I was] peeling her off the ceiling, because she was so high …So it is a really hard situation for her I think. I was like that as a child, I was very social, and it was very hard for me to focus on work when there was any socialising to be done. I understand that, I learnt that about myself – I often had to do things well away from people to get anything done. But I am very pleased with the way she has come back and settled down, and [the Cluster Leader] has been really terrific in helping her coming back … reacclimatise here…(Parent Focus Group 1)*

Here parents make a categorical separation between the space of Clunes and the other spaces, and between student subjectivities that can be occupied in these spaces.

'Settling down' after Clunes is seen as requiring a shutting out of that experience and 'turning the page', as some parents suggested:

> *Settling back really helped - I think that definitely turned the page, that was the Clunes chapter, because there is a lot happening to go on with – [but when they get back]… there has been a system in place that makes them look forward rather than back – I'm not sure, they still enjoy reminiscing, but they definitely look forward. (Parent Focus Group 1)*

> *When she got back she'd say 'oh **god** it's so **boring** sitting here, we'd be dancing on the tables at this time' So she did, she settled down, once they knew this exam*

> *business was happening, she seemed to really knuckle down – B+ average, VCE subject selection – so that sort of got her going. (Parent Focus Group 1)*

But the Deleuzean notion of 'differentiation' offers an alternative to this either/or way of thinking. Rather than requiring that students abandon one way of being for another, it invites us to think of change in terms of evolution or expansion, so that more possibilities for being are opened up, possibilities that can be maintained upon return from Clunes.

Clunes appears to provide the opportunity for students to experience this becoming, which Roffe describes as

> *a moment of de-individualization, an escape to some degree from the limits of the individual …[and] the constitution of new ways of being in the world, new ways of thinking and feeling, new ways of being a subject. (Roffe, 2007, p. 43)*

As Davies explains, such a conceptualisation of difference

> *… does not seek to fix subjects or objects in place, or tie them to static, individualistic, or binary identities, but opens up a space where creative energies are mobilized through ongoing relations within the spaces that are generated. Within the space of becoming, new ways of being and thinking are generated. This movement is not based on a rejection of the already-known, but on an assertion … that life generates and is generated through movement and invention; it both draws on the already known, and it generates something new. (Davies, 2008, pp. 3, 4)*

The obvious question of interest to educators and researchers is *how* Clunes is able to afford these generative spaces where 'creative energies are mobilized' and 'new ways of being and thinking' are made possible? The particular arrangements of space, time and relations which characterise learning practices at Clunes subject are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Examining Practice: Arrangements of Space, Time and Relations at Clunes

> *Because it was a different environment people approached the learning differently, like it wasn't the maths and stuff. I had to get used to shutting myself up and doing my essay and stuff without any help from my parents but I didn't find that hard and the courses were interesting. I found that I learnt well in that environment and most people found the respect of the leaders a lot higher than here. (Student Interview 1)*

It is evident from the last chapter that students gain deep understandings and profound insights at Clunes in the short span of eight weeks. What is it about the Clunes program that makes such learning possible? A study of the learning practices at Clunes highlights the arrangements of space, time and relations that encourage certain learning practices. These are explored in this chapter.

Spatial Arrangements at Clunes

All the World's a Classroom

At Clunes, learning seemed to take place everywhere. There was nothing to distinguish 'learning spaces' from spaces for relaxation or any type of 'non-learning' activity. Indeed, relaxation was itself the subject of some of the courses.

Students often had direct access to the objects of learning.

> *What I enjoyed in this course, "Colour in Clunes", was going down to Fraser Street to draw the buildings, and look at the different elevations and textures of the buildings. We then went back to the Jubilee Hall and drew our friends from different angles. (Student Assessment 14)*

During the exercise of drawing buildings at Clunes, Fraser St came alive with several students dotted all along the street, intently drawing, during their early days at Clunes. Later, the subjects of their art class would become very familiar as the lolly shop or the bakery or the green grocer's or the news agent's, and part of their everyday lives at Clunes.

Students commented on the power of being 'on location' – it lent a certain authenticity to the learning, even if the site is somewhat changed a couple of million years later…

> *To help us learn we were able to go on an excursion out to a Dinosaur Paddock, and also to a dormant volcano crater. This really helped me picture what it would have looked like millions of years before human civilisation, and was a better way to learn because it was more "hands on". We actually held real fossils from the prehistoric period and studied where they came from and what animals had formed them. (Student Assessment 7)*

Learning occurred everywhere at Clunes – in the houses, where the most profound learning appears to have occurred, in 'the Jube' and the church and any space that lent itself to activity.

> *There is not really a classroom. Yeah, there is a white board and some seats, but you are out in the bus and going around more. (Student Interview 2)*

The transformation of spaces from 'classroom' to practice circus arena to a disco to the music room appears to encourage students to free their own imaginations from fixed notions of what constitutes learning and where learning occurs. Multiplicities, inventiveness and improvisation are the go at Clunes – and resourcefulness is needed whether students are coping with the lack of a key ingredient when cooking their meal, or staff are dealing with an unexpected crisis.

When students directly engage with the subjects of their learning, the relationships between the learner, the teacher and the learning undergo a change. No longer is the learning mediated almost exclusively by the teacher, who has to translate far away places and events into resources with which students can interact in the classroom – usually in the form of teacher lectures, paper or electronic files, and possibly the odd specimen or two. Knowledge is distributed into a variety of things and people – experts, elders in the community, the ancient maternity tree, other students and teachers and the land itself. When all the world is a learning space, all ways of being and acting in the world constitute learning, and learning becomes truly life-wide.

Smooth Spaces and Lines of Flight

At Clunes, students seem to be much more prepared to give everything a try – students who have never performed before sing solo, students who have never shown any athletic prowess run the Beckworth Run, students who have never completed an essay satisfactorily on their own write a thousand-word essay. On a deeper level, students are sometimes confronted with, and have to deal with emotional issues which they could have avoided at the metropolitan campuses simply by going home at the end of the school day. At Clunes, issues with friendships have to be confronted and sorted out, since they have all to be together for eight weeks. Students have to deal with fears and insecurities which become visible in this novel setting.

Students and staff at Clunes often talk about 'stepping out of comfort zones' and 'coming out of one's shell' – at Clunes, fixed categories are broken down. You are no longer 'shy' or 'uncoordinated' or 'distracted' – you are recast as someone who can become anything you choose to be. The focus on 'who you are' is constantly juxtaposed with various possibilities of *becoming*. Living and learning become a matter of *a range of possibilities*, rather than a defining of fixed categories.

As Davies puts it, 'all subjects and objects are open to becoming different'(Davies, 2008, p. 3). Further,

> *Smooth space enables an immersion in the present moment, in time and in space, that often eludes us in the press of normative expectations, of habitually repeated thoughts and practices… One is no longer limited by a preconceived idea of self, but immersed in a moment of becoming. (Davies, 2008, pp. 6-7)*

This immersion in the moment, which Deleuze calls 'haecceity' is a similar to the notion of 'flow' – you become one with the environment and the activity. One student attempts to describe this sense of immersion, this complete 'being in the moment' that characterised her learning at Clunes:

> *Clunes was so concentrated and intense that I had no choice but to throw myself into it fully. (Self Assessment, Student 11)*

Smooth spaces escape the categorisations and codings of the 'striated spaces' more characteristic of 'regular' school. The predictability of the classroom routine, the regulation of ways of being, the discipline needed for learning spaces to function effectively on the metropolitan campuses inevitably bring with them constraints of many kinds.

In contrast to the 'lines of flight' possible in smooth spaces, striated spaces encourage 'molar lines'.

> *Striated space imposes binary thought, it cuts and divides objects into categories and divides people from each other and from the spaces they inhabit. Such divisions can become dangerous in their power to control and restrict possibilities. In striated space the binaries become naturalized—the world is divided that way because it is that way—and they can create apparently insurmountable impediments to change. In smooth space those concepts may be invoked, but they may also dissolve. (Davies, 2008, p. 6)*

While striated spaces may be structured, delineating discrete categories, and thus impose restrictions and limitations, they also enable us to take up identifiable positions from which to negotiate and interact.

Reconceptualising change as 'differentiation' rather than 'difference' not only explains the contradiction between stories of profound change and 'no real change at all', but point the way to practices that may lead to a consolidation and maintenance of change.

Implications for Practice

Understanding spaces as 'smooth spaces' and 'striated spaces' has implications for managing the transition from Clunes to the metropolitan campuses. It is clear from all accounts that most students are energised by the smooth spaces in Clunes that defy categorisation and binary modes of thinking and encourage intensities that enable lines of flight. At the same time, smooth spaces can make some students apprehensive. Lines of flight imply dangers, they require 'pushing yourself' and 'stepping out of your comfort zone'. For some students, this remains difficult even at Clunes:

> *I wasn't happy to move out of my comfort zone very much and I kept to myself most of the time. I willingly helped out around the campus by helping the Park Ranger every week. I liked doing this work because it made me feel like I was helping my Grandpa around his place. (Self Assessment, Student 3)*

Taking away the striated spaces can be intimidating for some, who may resort to finding spaces of comfort and familiarity as this student did, in working with the Park Ranger who reminded him of Grandpa.

When students return from Clunes, there is great emphasis on 'settling back' into the routine and giving in to the demands of the striated spaces of the metropolitan classrooms. For some students, this shift to striated spaces appears to mean a 'giving up' of the ways of being and the possibilities visualised while at Clunes.

> *It is quite hard just sitting [in the classroom] with your laptop – [Clunes] was a good experience but you have to put it behind you … I think I was such a happy person in Clunes and I still am but it is a lot harder being happy here than up in Clunes because up there it is more relaxed and things - people say they don't see me laughing like I used to but we were up in an environment that we could do that. (Student Interview 2)*

However, Deleuze insists that smooth spaces and striated spaces are not mutually exclusive – rather than having to put experiences behind you, you can carry them to new places. Smooth and striated spaces co-exist, each useful in its own way, each dangerous in either being too controlling or being too anarchical.

Perhaps including an understanding of ways in which we may find smooth spaces within striated spaces, and striated spaces within smooth ones, and introducing the notion of 'differentiation' may provide students (and staff and parents) with ways in which students can find spaces of comfort within Clunes and spaces for escaping the constraints of stratification when they return from Clunes.

Embodied Learning

At Clunes, so much of learning seems to be about 'doing'. Students are often fully and actively engaged in practice through touching, digging, running, cooking and other activities. There are a few times at Clunes where spaces resemble the classroom, and bodies assume the 'classroom mode' – but these are for a short duration and for a limited purpose.

Students report a greater sense of engagement and enjoyment when there is movement and physical activity involved in learning. Within courses, they often single out aspects of the course that involved physical activity as being most significant or enjoyable. Teachers remark upon it in their assessments:

> *[This student] showed persistence in his training for the Mount Beckworth run. He obviously enjoyed all physical components of his Clunes experience and was at his best when energy had been expended in this way. He was a keen member of the Collective Potential group adding his 'creative flair' to the painting of a sign at the Clunes Community Garden site. His willing assistance with more labour intensive tasks was also appreciated. (Teacher Assessment of Student 12)*

Student assessments repeatedly stress that they enjoy situations where they are physically involved in the learning situation:

> *The most valuable or challenging activity that I did in this course would be the rock climbing; I found it one of the hardest things I have done. (Self Assessment, Student 2)*

I also had to draw my plan for my painting, which was what I enjoyed the most because I was able to sit under a tree and draw myself in Clunes. (Self Assessment, Student 14)

Going to the Yoga Ashram was really calming and fun. It was definitely a highlight of the course. (Self Assessment, Student 9)

I think that I had a bit of an impact in this course when we did the compost on the first day when I helped build it and when we went to the organic farm and helped pick some of the grapes. (Self Assessment, Student 8)

Looked at purely from the perspectives of the ways in which the body was engaged in learning, at Clunes, students were encouraged to involve themselves wholly, to be up and about, doing things, whereas on the metropolitan campuses, the preoccupation for many teachers is the discipline of student bodies with the requirement that they stay still and be confined. Typically, regular classroom situations assume an oppositional duality between mind and body – the mind is engaged in learning, and bodies are often seen as getting in the mind's way – students are discouraged from fiddling, moving and so on, the better to focus on learning. In this respect, learning practices are very distinctly different between Clunes and the metropolitan campuses.

The suitability of the institution of schooling as it is currently practised, in terms of learning within classrooms, was questioned by one parent, who had looked forward to her son's Clunes experience because she believed that students needed to have more movement and outdoor engagement

Temporal Arrangements at Clunes

The eight-week period of the time at Clunes is translated into a change trajectory, during which students would experience many challenges and learn many things. Similarly, the weekly timetable segregates portions of work and rest, of relaxation and exercise, of time for different activities. Lights off times and cooking and eating times regulate the most personal and bodily lives of students. Disco nights and movie nights become things to look forward to. The Friday music or community service activities also provide changes in routine and a chance to inhabit different spaces. At the same time, the schedule provides a sense of routine, a way for students to feel at home as week follows week to a pattern. It gives students a way to make sense of this new way of practicing school which is not ruled by bells that provoke movements of students and teachers and regulate the preoccupations of individuals and groups.

Anticipation

To start with, students' sense of anticipation is built up as the time to go to Clunes approaches. Advice from parents, teachers and friends, including those who've been to Clunes before, heighten this sense of *momentousness* – students go to Clunes with a great sense of anticipation, often determined to make the best use of the opportunity, which they see as a once-in-a-lifetime event. Eight weeks seems far too short a time to achieve all they want to achieve, and from the outset, most students come to Clunes

with a sense of *urgency* and *purpose*, and the clear intention of making the most of every moment.

The Clunes routine is quite different to that of the metropolitan campuses. This is quite deliberately so – the idea is for students to experience the disjuncture between 'regular school' and this unique environment. The different ways in which the day and the week are divided allows students and teachers to focus on activities and concepts for long, concentrated stretches at a time. Courses may run for only three days, but for several hours each day, creating temporal arrangements which are novel to students.

Every morning, students meet for an assembly in 'the Jube', where their day is sketched out for them.

> *There something different happened every day – so we were like 'What is it going to be today?' (Student Interview 12)*

Not knowing what the next day would bring heightened the sense of anticipation – students looked forward to each day. At the same time, there was a published timetable in which regular and major events were scheduled – so students did have some sense of the overall picture of how their time will be spent at Clunes. In this way, smooth and striated spaces were simultaneously made available through temporal arrangements.

Time as a Resource to be 'Managed'

Courses typically run for a period of three days, with several hours devoted to focused learning each of those days. Sustaining activity and focus for long periods, and yet having a course finishing off in three days, created different patterns in students' learning practices, and heightened their awareness of it.

> *The most challenging activity in this course for me was planning and organising my time,* ***the courses are really short and go fast so it is important to make the most of the time*** *…The biggest thing I have learnt in this course is managing my time so I can have everything completed in three days. Because of what I have learnt I believe I can now take this home and use it when I get back to school and for later on in my life. (Self Assessment, Student 22, emphasis added)*

> *Learning was very different – here you have basic core subjects, up there you only have electives and mentor subjects, really, so you do about three periods in a day – six hours of work in a day, which is a lot. Here you do thing in bit of 45 minutes or so There it is six hours on one thing. Does it work? Yes, it does. It gets kind of annoying sometimes but it works. We got a 20 minute break. (Student Interview 3)*

Students created timelines and log books as a means of managing their time. During presentation Day, students reflected on their use of time, and on the process of learning even more so than presenting the topic of their research. Invariably, students stated that if they could re-live the experience, they would use the time better. Several students talked of not having realised how long it would take to write the essay, and expressed regret that their pacing of the project-related work was not successful.

Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Clunes is a time when students get away from the minutiae of day-to-day school, ponder the bigger questions of life, and consider deeply how they want to live in the world. Courses focus on history – even prehistory – and Clunes is a historic town. Living in such surrounds keeps the idea of historicity always active in students' thinking. At the same time, students are engaged in the immediate problems of sustainability – and of course the immediate issues of running household successfully. The focus on change makes the future a constant theme. The past, present and future are interwoven throughout the Clunes experience.

> *I learnt about the past and how it can effect the future, I learnt about what different things people consider important in their lives and I learnt how one little thing can influence things and become something really significant. During this course I was challenged to think about the past and how different everything was back then. (Self Assessment, Student 22)*

The processes of goal setting and self assessment constantly wove together the past, present and future. It cast the present into a vehicle for the future. The frequent self assessments demanded a continuous evaluation that required students to reflect on the time just spent, and to reassess the present and the future on the basis of those reflections.

Courses such as *Boys to Men* and *I am Woman* focus specifically on the students' future as men and women in the world. Skills that were being learnt at Clunes – managing a house, managing relationships, caring about others and the environment – were all seen as pertinent to students as they prepared for adulthood.

Finding a Place in History

In courses such a *Collective Potential*, students get a strong sense of leaving a lasting legacy. In this activity, students work in groups to do something important for the community – such as 'rescue a river' or create toys or equipment for the local kindergarten or paint picnic tables. In these activities, students are very aware that the tables will stay painted, that the children will continue to play with the equipment, that the plants they have planted will grow and other groups of Wesley College students will help tend them. The sense of making a positive change and belonging in some way to the continuum of humanity was expressed by some students at interviews.

As one staff interviewee pointed out, Clunes groups are numbered sequentially, so every group has a unique number (i.e., it does not get re-set to 'One' at the start of each year, for example). The cohorts interviewed were from Groups 33 and 34. One student expressed this sense of belonging to history in a very emotional way in his interview:

> *It is important for the program to be at Clunes because it is a historical place – there is a lot of history to it, and you feel a part of the whole thing. You do – like you are leaving a footprint in some sand, and someone else tries to get to that precise spot and then someone else and it is over time, and right now there is Gp 34 there and they are leaving their footprint for other people to come.*

For this student, the sense of community extended beyond those who were part of his cohort, to a sense of kinship with the school itself.

> *We're one big happy family – all of us – Wesleyan Year 9s – there's about 500 year 9 students so we are like one big happy community, really. Up there there are 80 kids – they are your family for 8 weeks.*

Charitable work, usually in the form of fund raising, is part of the student experience at Wesley College in the metropolitan campuses as well. Contributions are mostly through donating money for the privilege of wearing casual clothes on appointed days. At Clunes, the contributions require physical labour and time, creating a sense of contributing meaningfully, and promoted a sense of belonging within the human community.

Socio-material Artefacts as Regulators of Practice

An important focus of learning at Clunes is self-efficacy and self-management, and students are introduced to a variety of socio-material artefacts to regulate and discipline student behaviour and encourage responsible and prompt completion of duties. Not all these devices enjoyed the same level of success. The house roster and the self assessments appeared to be very successful; the Clunes Project timeline and the journal, on the other hand, seemed far less successful.

The Roster

One of the most frequently mentioned parts of the house report in students' self assessments was the roster. The roster was a weekly schedule that shared out the household chores amongst the students in the house. The collective responsibility for the running of the house became detailed and inscribed into particular jobs to be performed by particular students on particular days. Everyday, students consulted the roster which would allocate their jobs and decide how they spent part of the day. Proper following of the roster meant that everyone would be fed, the house would be clean, the laundry would be done and students would pass their house inspections and avoid a strike.

> *To ensure the smooth running of the daily household tasks, our House Leader helped us create a roster for the cleaning and cooking of the whole house. This really helped because there was no arguing over jobs as everyone was already assigned to their own individual job for that day. If someone was sick or could not complete their given job for some reason, someone else would always step in and help, which made sure we always passed our house inspections. (Self Assessment, Student 7)*

Ignoring the roster could lead to frayed tempers, awkward house-meetings and finger-pointing, and loss of privileges.

> *We were very good at making our house rosters, but not the best at following them and that's why we failed many of our inspections. (Self Assessment, Student 9)*

The roster inscribes responsibilities so to combat laziness or the tendency not to pull one's weight. Mere resolutions could be ignored but the roster was always there, pinned on the wall, reminding people of their jobs.

When we first started our house cleaning and cooking we thought that if we all chipped in that we would be able to get everything done easily and quickly. We soon realised that everyone was lazier than they thought and wouldn't help out all the time. I did my bit with our budgeting when it was my turn to go out and shop and also during the week when I was cooking and went out and bought the essentials. When it came to morning and night inspections I always did my job the best I could and tried to help everyone else whenever I could, apart from a couple weeks when I was feeling really tired and could not be bothered. (Self Assessment, Student 8)

This succinct comment from parents sums up the roster:

I think the system works really well, in terms of who did what. (Parent Focus Group 1)

Students clearly recognised the importance of the roster in maintaining order and preventing chaos, and even went beyond the call of duty to ensure that the house did not suffer:

I ensured the smooth running of my household by going shopping on days when I wasn't signed up because the boys in my house had to go to footy. I willingly cleaned the house and cooked when I was assigned to. I kept to the roster perfectly. I always did my rostered jobs. The part of the house that worked really well in my opinion was actually the roster because most people kept to it and as a result everything got done. (Self Assessment, Student 19)

The house roster at Clunes was, in most houses, a very successful regulatory device.

The Assessment Report

At Clunes, at the completion of each course and then at the completion of the Clunes Project, students are required to write self-assessments online. At the end of the eight weeks, they write a summative assessment of the overall experience. Course leaders, the project mentor and the house leader also write their respective assessments of the students. Five assessments in eight weeks amounts to a substantial amount of self-assessment. Students are given guidelines and suggestions as to the kinds of things they could include in their assessments.

Students appeared to take their assessment tasks seriously and the assessments were written with care and reflected deep insights and understandings. In their assessments, staff members often made references to what students had written. When students wrote, they are aware that the reports would be read by their parents and by the Cluster Leader and Home Room teachers on the metropolitan campuses.

The Clunes Project Timeline

The Clunes project is a substantial undertaking with several components – research, a thousand-page essay, a web site, a representative artefact. To help students stay on task and aid successful completion of the task, students are encouraged to develop a timeline so that they are able to distribute the jobs across the six weeks that are available for the work. In addition, they are required to maintain a log book in which

students can record the processes they have been using in the course of completing the requirements.

However, on Presentation Day, student after student confessed to the inability to keep to the timeline and get the work completed. Some never constructed a timeline, and others didn't manage to stick to it. Even very motivated students, who did get the job done very well and on time, the timeline was not necessarily always successfully used.

The Student Journal

Although special journals are printed for the purpose, most students reported that they did not keep a journal.

Discussion

What makes the house roster and the self-assessments so successful, when devices such as the timeline and the journal fail? How do the former two gain student loyalty? Why are the latter two were ignored?

The obvious feature that is common to the roster and the assessment is that both are collectively owned and jointly used devices. If one member of the party does not stick to the bargain, the project falls though for the collective. Teachers will immediately know if a student has not completed their self-assessment – only after the student has completed it can the teacher complete the teacher assessment. Otherwise, when they open the reports, parents will find pieces missing. With the roster, failure to comply will have consequences for the whole house.

Since inspections happened with relentless frequency, and assessments came up almost every week, the consequences of completing or not completing the tasks were almost immediate. Motivation to comply and complete tasks could be maintained as the goal was always within sight.

In the case of the timeline and journal, these devices were meant to be for the personal use of the students, devices that could aid their task completion. Both were for private use – and not part of any display, though the mentor may use the timeline for counselling students. The journal was entirely for personal use, and its aim was to aid reflection. Possibly students found the journal superfluous, as the self-assessments and the exchange of notes with friends and mentors were sufficient avenues for reflection.

While the journal might have been without discernible pragmatic value, the timeline is clearly less dispensable, since so many students struggle to complete their Clunes Projects. Perhaps this is an area in which some experimentation with different techniques could prove useful. Since a collective responsibility and collective use of regulatory devices seem to bear better results, one solution may be to assign students into groups of four, with group made responsible for the completion of the individual projects of each member of the group, with students mentoring and supporting each other. Perhaps at the beginning of the study and research time, the group of four could come together to discuss with the others what each would accomplish that day, and at the end of the day exchange notes on how things went and set up goals for the next session. Having all four timelines on the same page would ensure collective use of the

device. This experiment would be of interest to anyone looking for effective models for devising regulatory socio-material artefacts.

New Arrangements of Relations

What immediately strikes a visitor to Clunes is that students and staff alike are very casually dressed. Students call staff by their first name, and, since they are on campus at all hours, often see them doing 'non-teacherly' things such as eating, cooking and cleaning. Relational arrangements in Clunes are different to other situations at a number of levels.

Student-Student Relationships

Many students reported with surprise that at Clunes, they made friends with people whom they may have ignored at their metropolitan campuses. Students came together for a variety of reasons – they may have been placed in the same house, found themselves in the same band, been part of the Beckworth Run, depended on each-other when they went caving and so on.

Students mentioned that even the mere fact of having a lot of time to talk to their friends allowed them to get to know people at a much deeper level. Staff mentioned the camaraderie that was generated from undergoing hardship or challenges together. Parents commented on how the ability to relate at a deeper and more empathetic level was reflected in relationships at home after the students returned.

Relationship with Staff

Staff at Clunes have to double up as counsellor and parent, in addition to being approachable and friendly. They must gain the trust of students so that they are alerted to issues readily and are able to respond quickly.

One staff member described the balance between being approachable and maintaining distance in this way:

> *It is a very different setting to a classroom. I think we also, to a degree play a role of … that pastoral care role – almost like a parent, which is different to a classroom. That's a thing you are very careful with. Rob Grant used to say 'You have to be friendly but you are not their friend' – you have to make sure you're balancing that line very carefully. The way that we interact with them – we're playing games with them, we're out doing all these hardships, like the running program and participating in sporting activities with them... so there is a closeness that I don't think you have in the classroom. But yeah, you do still have to set those boundaries and that's something you always have to be careful about around here. (Staff Interview I)*

For students, their relationships with their house leaders and project mentors in particular are very special, since they support students through the ups and downs and emotional turmoils that are inevitable when eight teenagers share a house.

Engagement with Learning

In regular classrooms, learning is almost exclusively translated by the teacher and mediated through a few objects such as the whiteboard, the Internet or printed matter. At Clunes, student engagement with learning is active and often physical. The number of objects they handle in the course of their stay in Clunes would be far greater than what they handle at home and school together. Cleaning fluids, sponges, brooms and mops, food, soil, plants, fossils, circus equipment... On many occasions, sutdents engage directly with the learning context, and knowledge is distributed among a number of artefacts. Rather than the teacher knowing everything and translating or transmitting this knowledge to the students, students are able to directly learn from experience in many situations.

> *Whilst doing this course, one new way of learning that I experienced was being more hands-on. For example, learning about volcanos whilst being inside the crater of a volcano was something I had never experienced before. (Self Assessment, Student 4)*

> *I have learnt that sometimes in order to learn certain skills and aspects of leadership, I have to do the practical side of things rather than the written side. Things such as coping well under pressure, getting on with people I don't normally hang out with and working together as a team, are things that have to be directly experienced rather than spoken about. (Setf Assessment, Student 1)*

Similarly, the student who sat under a tree drawing herself sitting under a tree at Clunes experiences a one-ness with the learning, a direct engagement, rather than the disembodied, mediated version that is more common on the metropolitan classroom.

> *I also had to draw my plan for my painting, which was what I enjoyed the most because I was able to sit under a tree and draw myself in Clunes.*

Other students mention experts and elders who presented talks, the people from the community who taught them to cook, the newsagent who let them help out in the store and their own friends from whom they learnt so much. Just as all the world becomes a classroom, students start to see learning possibilities in many more people and things.

Conclusion

The learning practices at Clunes arise from different arrangements of space, time and relations, leading to more intense learning experiences. Students engage more directly with the learning, and knowledge is not just translated by teachers, but is distributed in a number of objects and people, and actively experienced by students.

The learning practices at Clunes are obviously extremely effective, as attested by students, teachers and parents. Many of the features of learning practices – such as involving physical activity, more direct engagement with learning contexts, and creating spaces for intense immersion are possible on the metropolitan campuses as well, and perhaps incorporating these more frequently into the program may be considered.

The success of the roster and the self assessments also has implications for practice in education and in regulating human behaviour more widely. Placing students in a team

whereby each member of the team is responsible for the success of the team, may have application in other situations.

Chapter 8

Reflections and Conclusions

Even before starting this ethnography, there was every indication that Clunes is a highly successful program. It has been running for nine years and has a very high rate of uptake – with the percentage of students who choose to attend Clunes remaining steadily in the high 90s. This year-long study has brought to view the experiences of staff and parents, and, above all, students. Overwhelmingly, the overall impression conveyed by those interviewed affirms that the program is highly valued, and that profound learning and insights occur at Clunes.

In the 2002 report, the direction that was chalked out by the then Principal, David Loader was to:

> *Move from an institutional connection to the Clunes community to the notion of joint projects with it.*
>
> *Review its behaviour management system to see whether it is now possible to re-institute the Student Parliament for some aspects of behaviour management.*
>
> *Develop further the intellectual depth of its courses – particularly its history and environmental courses so that students start to understand how the present is influenced by the past and that systems are political and that they affect the individuals who live within them. (Mason, 2002, p. 2)*

Two sets of student reflections were available – the reflections written immediately upon completion of courses and activities while students were still at Clunes, and the interviews that students participated in some four to six weeks after they returned to campus.

To some degree, the sense of excitement and the bright eagerness that shines through their self assessments is a bit more subdued in their recollections upon return. Many children indicated profound learning and yet, when asked, specifically in what ways they had changed, they found this difficult to answer, and said 'I haven't really changed that much'. At the time I was puzzled by this response. Were the insights gained and the lessons learnt at Clunes really short-lived? Was the school, in a bid to help them 'settle back' on the metropolitan campuses 'flushing out' the gains made at Clunes? Or were the children simply unable to articulate the changes they had undergone?

As I was pondering these questions, I realised that the problem lay not in the answers students were giving me, but in my question itself. By asking 'in what way is the student sitting in class today different to the one that was there prior to Clunes?', I was asking them to think in terms of opposing dualities – I was looking for a 'new improved' version, as if Clunes, like the lamp-seller in Alladin, would exchange new students for old.

Deleuzes' notion of differentiation is critical in understanding that Clunes does not change students from being one thing to being another. What it does is provide

‘smooth spaces’ where students are able to take off on ‘lines of flight’ which expand the range of possibilities for them and enables them to experience rich, free and intense moments of learning and being. These are not lost – they remain in students, side by side with their ‘old’ selves, so that the range of possibilities that are open to them in different spaces is expanded.

But school on the metropolitan campuses is not all striated space where the imagination and the intensities are always curbed. The discursive means by which we create the division between an ‘ideal’ Clunes and the dull, hard ‘reality’ of the metropolitan campuses makes it more difficult for students to maintain the gains made at Clunes. Parents in particular talk about the importance of ‘getting back on track’ so that students may undertake tough and real activities like exams. But as students report, they undertake many tough challenges at Clunes – overcoming fears, placing themselves in situations where they feel vulnerable, and undertaking arduous physical and intellectual tasks. By making a category difference between the two spaces, the ways of being that worked at Clunes are precluded from being acceptable in the metropolitan campuses. As much as parents and teachers genuinely seem to value the lessons learned at Clunes, they appear to see them as a luxury which student can indulge in for a short while, to be superseded in importance by the more conventional learning that leads to examination success. This view is also evident among some staff members. This opposition is artificial and unnecessary. Since this division is discursively constructed, it can also be discursively ‘over-written’. If the concept of differentiation is introduced in orientation and transition programs, it can prevent or reduce the impact of metaphors currently used, such as ‘turning the page’, ‘moving on’.

The practices at Clunes are very powerful in focusing students’ attention on the self and on encouraging them to think in terms of how they are changing. Continuous assessments and reflections, the themes of the courses and several of the recreational activities also encourage this focus. The advantages of continuous assessment and frequent feedback loops, combined with self-assessment, is a very powerful model for assessment, and one that would be of interest to many educators and educational institutions.

While staff, students and parents alike are extremely positive with regard to the goals of the program, perhaps the ethical warrant of setting up the ‘ideal adolescent’ who is sociable, a public speaker, a risk-taker and so on may be reviewed. Traits as shyness are seen as a ‘lack of social skills’ or a handicap to be overcome. How such idealised profiling fits in with the tradition of acceptance and valuing of diversity may be considered. There are frequent references to ‘stepping out of the comfort zone’ which has become part of the taken-for-granted vocabulary at Clunes – these metaphors and assumptions must be re-examined periodically during program reviews.

While it was beyond the scope of this study, there is much to be learnt by studying students whose experience at Clunes is not a happy one.

The Clunes Project is clearly the most debated aspect of the program – it is also the main project of the program. The many suggestions made include reducing or eliminating Internet research and setting up projects which are more closely

connected to Clunes, so that research involves primary data sources and active physical engagement.

The success of learning at Clunes appears to arise from the element of choice, the lack of routine, the challenge of the task and a sense of common purpose and of engagement in a meaningful enterprise. These ‘critical value factors’ are useful in planning learning in any type of school.

These special campuses have a clear advantage in encouraging intensity, since they represent change and are an eagerly anticipated but short-lived event. In the case of Clunes, the learning practices make excellent use of the opportunity in providing smooth spaces that allow students to experience what Deleuze termed ‘haecceity’, a deep and intense experience when you are one with the world and fully immersed in the activity.

Future Research

Every piece of research offers up more questions than it answers. In the course of this study, the following lines of inquiry suggest themselves:

- Are there gender differences in the way Clunes is experienced by students? Are some activities more appealing or more likely to gain success for one gender rather than another?
- Case studies of unusual cases may be very useful to pursue
- Students that were expelled from Clunes may also make interesting case studies to understand what kinds of learning practices can bring them success
- An astounding number of objects are involved in learning at Clunes. The role of artefacts in learning has been of interest for long, and the value of ‘hands-on learning’ is widely acknowledged. However, the ways in which objects mediate practice and afford or constrain learning are worthy of study

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