



<http://www.diva-portal.org>

This is the published version of a paper published in *Reflective Practice*.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Rantatalo, O., Karp, S. (2016)

Collective reflection in practice: an ethnographic study of Swedish police training.

Reflective Practice, 17(6): 708-723

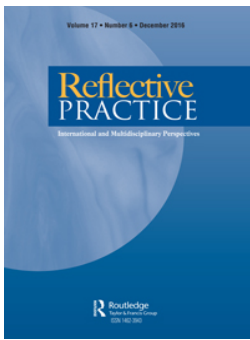
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2016.1206881>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-124131>



Reflective Practice

International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives

ISSN: 1462-3943 (Print) 1470-1103 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/crep20>

Collective reflection in practice: an ethnographic study of Swedish police training

Oscar Rantatalo & Staffan Karp

To cite this article: Oscar Rantatalo & Staffan Karp (2016) Collective reflection in practice: an ethnographic study of Swedish police training, *Reflective Practice*, 17:6, 708-723, DOI: [10.1080/14623943.2016.1206881](https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2016.1206881)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2016.1206881>



© 2016 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 20 Jul 2016.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 373



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)

Collective reflection in practice: an ethnographic study of Swedish police training

Oscar Rantatalo^a  and Staffan Karp^b 

^aPolice Education Unit, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden; ^bDepartment of Education, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

ABSTRACT

Although reflection has been viewed as an individual process, increased attention has been given to how reflective processes are socially anchored. The present article contributes to this knowledge through an examination of how collective reflection is enacted in the context of police education. The article is based on a one-year ethnographic study of police recruits undergoing training, and the main sources of data collection were participant observations and field interviews. The data were inductively analysed, and a model that differentiates amongst ‘specular’, ‘dialogic’ and ‘polyphonic’ reflection processes is presented. The findings suggest that collective reflection involving multiple individuals adds complexity to reflective processes and that these processes may take on more diverse forms than has been acknowledged, as previous research has mainly focused on dialogic collective reflection. The implications of these findings, such as how increased complexity may counteract the benefits of collective reflection, are also discussed.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 3 March 2016
Accepted 13 June 2016

KEYWORDS

Reflection; reflective practice; collective reflection; police training; vocational education; policing

The benefits of reflection and reflective practice in professional, organizational and adult educational contexts are well-documented. However, research regarding reflection has been criticized because the majority of studies have employed cognitively oriented perspectives on reflection, conceptualizing it as an individual ‘inward’ process (Reynolds & Vince, 2004; Segall & Gaudelli, 2007). In the studies that conceptualize reflection as a social or collective endeavour, reflection has been discussed from different theoretical perspectives, ranging from everyday common-sense assertions that reflection is social because it takes place in social settings, to more elaborate and theoretically infused descriptions of reflection, mainly from socio-cultural and practice-based perspectives (Collin & Karsenti, 2011; Høystrup & Elkjaer, 2006).

In a review, Høystrup and Elkjaer (2006) conclude that one of the most common ways to understand collective reflection is through an individualized perspective, wherein reflection is described as a cognitive individual learning process but one that takes place in social settings. As discussed by Boud, Cressey, and Docherty (2006), the role of social relations in reflection becomes fully instrumental from this perspective because the input of others mainly serves to trigger individual cognitive processes. Contrasting an individual perspective,

CONTACT Oscar Rantatalo  oscar.rantatalo@umu.se

Høyrup and Elkjaer (2006) define the social relations perspective on reflection in terms of a practice-based perspective in which reflective processes are embedded in social contexts. The authors state that 'individual agency is embodied in social structures and that social structures operate through individuals' (Høyrup & Elkjaer, 2006, p. 29). From this perspective, reflection can be described as a situated practice of collectively making sense of ongoing events through activities such as vision sharing, experimentation and assumption breaking (van Woerkom, Nijhof, & Nieuwenhuis, 2002).

Although these contributions provide theoretical insights and concept development regarding socially oriented reflection, there is currently a need for explorative empirical research that aims to operationalize *in what ways* reflection can be examined and understood as social or collective.

The present paper aims to build on the current research on this subject by making two main contributions: first, we add to the knowledge regarding collective reflection by presenting an empirically grounded model that describes different types and processes of social reflection; second, the paper discusses what implications and possibilities a collectively oriented conceptualization of reflection may have for further research.

The empirical basis for the study consists of ethnographic observations of a group of Swedish police students throughout their first year of police education. The case is well-suited for the purposes of this paper, because policing is an occupational practice that is highly dependent on the ability of individual officers to have a reflexive mind set to 'balance legitimate yet conflicting values and rights' and to make fair decisions quickly under often difficult circumstances (Marenin, 2004, p. 108). Developing reflexive police officers has also been a dominant ideal in the contemporary police educational discourse in Sweden and in other countries, and basic training is currently heavily impacted by the problem-based learning (PBL) philosophy, wherein students consistently work in groups that regularly face open-ended problems associated with the police profession (Lauritz & Hansson, 2013; Vander Kooi & Palmer, 2014). Thus, police education is viewed as a professional educational context that is largely group-based and in which field training and theory need to be interwoven. As such, it provides a case with the potential to provide insights into how episodes of collective reflection are formed in practice.

Collective reflection

To explore how social contexts operate in reflective processes, Dyke (2006), in a review of reflection theory, discusses how collective reflection can be conceptualized on different levels, such as micro day-to-day perspectives and macro-oriented social perspectives. From a micro day-to-day perspective, reflection can be described as spurred by an individual's engagement and social interactions with others that expose the individual to 'difference' (Dyke, 2006). Through communicative discourse and dialogue, reflection based on experiences with others enables individuals to disentangle themselves 'from their biographies, their social world, past experience and the impact of representations on these experiences' (Dyke, 2006, p. 118). This emphasis on communication and dialogue to foster collective reflection is mirrored in Raelin (2001), who, using the concept of 'dialogic practice', discusses how individuals are confronted with themselves as they are exposed to alternative interpretations of social reality through the input of others. In addition, Ohlsson (2013) describes how dialogue and communicative discourse shape collective reflection because these enable

groups of individuals to construct shared understandings and notice conflicting ideas. Connecting reflection to the notion of depth, and specifically the concepts of single- and double-loop learning, Ohlsson (2013) introduces the concept of 'collective reflection loops' as a way to describe how collaborative reflection can be of double-loop nature, directed at a premise level of assumptions, as it is spurred by the individual's exposure to alternative interpretations of social reality. Central to these accounts of collective reflection, is the notion of how social relations and communicative action provides access to difference, conflicting ideas and alternative conceptualizations. This focus on difference is also present in the sense-making perspectives of reflection, such as the framework presented by Bjerlöv and Docherty (2006). Drawing on Piaget, the authors provide a detailed framework of collective reflection that takes place through iterative processes of differentiation (in which individuals collectively engage to distance themselves from individual subjectivity), decentration (in which the recognition of diverse experiences enables the collective to make sense of a multitude of possible perspectives) and perceptual (re)formulations (in which perspectives are shifted). As with other frameworks of social reflection, the authors highlight dialogue as incremental for these processes because communicative actions make diverse experiences available as triggers and frameworks for sensemaking.

In addition to micro day-to-day frameworks of collective reflection, Dyke's (2006) review also describes how social reflection can be conceptualized from organizational and culturally oriented perspectives, in which the role of social structures and cultural contexts is highlighted as the input for reflection (see also, Boud & Walker, 1998). From this perspective, reflective processes tend to be viewed as collective in the sense that broader social, political and cultural assumptions are embodied in micro practice (Høyrup & Elkjaer, 2006; Reynolds, 1999; Reynolds & Vince, 2004). Moreover, the emphasis on contexts and structures that facilitate processes of collective reflection has been a reoccurring subject of examination in organizational research, where one central question has been how firms can 'organize reflection' (see Jordan, 2010; Reynolds & Vince, 2004). In other words, this research revolves around how organizations can work to create and uphold institutionalized arrangements that foster collective reflection (Jordan, 2010). Keevers and Treleaven's (2011) study of reflective practices in a community centre provides one example of an empirical study with this focus. The authors identify multiple forms of reflexive practices (anticipatory, deliberative, organizing and critical) that allow different viewpoints and different types of learning and activities in practice. Interestingly, the authors also highlight temporal phases of reflection as important. Much in line with van Manen's (1995) notion of anticipatory reflection, Keevers and Treleaven (2011) describe processes of collective reflection that are future-oriented, as opposed to retrospective reflection involving past experiences. The authors also highlight how anticipatory reflection, which is characterized by brief moments of 'stop and think' in the midst of practising, are important to consider in organizing.

Collective reflection, as viewed from this perspective, can be concluded to hold an emancipatory potential because it provides opportunities to make visible social and cultural premises of a particular context that are often taken for granted. As such, the process of reflection can be conceptualized as collective because it involves more than one individual, but the premises for reflection can also be viewed as inherently collective because they are permeated by cultural historical meaning (Reynolds & Vince, 2004). Collin and Karsenti's (2011) socio-cultural framework on reflection provides an example that highlights this connection. Building on Vygotsky's (1962) socio-cognitive theory of semiotic mediation, the

authors present a model of interactional reflective practice that conceptualizes collective reflection as being sparked by action, mediated by communication and taking place at both the interpersonal and intrapersonal (interacting) level, where social and cultural norms and premises in addition to social interactions form reflective processes.

In addition to sociological, cultural and educational accounts of collective reflection that focus upon conceptual development, a number of psychologically oriented studies of collective reflection have aimed to operationalize how social reflection plays out in practice on an observable level. For instance, Schippers, Den Hartog, and Koopman (2007), building on West's (2000) work, identify two dimensions of collective 'team-reflection' in activities directed towards the evaluation of learning and activities directed at discussions of group processes. Behaviours connected to evaluation of learning are, among other things, discussions about different trajectories towards goal achievement and incorporation of different perspectives into the considerations of team learning. Behaviours related to the discussion of team processes are, among other things, exemplified by after-action review of team activities – that is, team revision of objectives and discussions regarding efficiency in problem-solving (see also, Schippers, West, & Dawson, 2015). A similar framework is presented by van Woerkom and Croon (2008), who drew on Mezirow's (1998) concept of critical reflection and sought to develop a model to identify accompanied behaviours and activities. The authors define critical reflective work behaviours as 'connected activities carried out individually or in interaction with others' and discussed constructs such as opinion sharing, openness, feedback, challenging of group think, experimentation and career awareness as behaviours related to critical reflection (van Woerkom & Croon, 2008, p. 318).

In summary, different approaches to collective reflection can be placed on a continuum ranging from individualized perspectives (in which social reflection mainly involves instrumental aid in reflecting) to behavioural and psychological frameworks (which mainly focus on the establishment of measurable constructs and the operationalization of theory) and social relations perspectives (in which collective reflection involves the co-construction of meaning). This indicates that social or collective reflection may showcase different degrees of complexity in terms of interaction patterns and how social space is regulated. This conclusion dovetails with research regarding collaborative learning and group work, in which different approaches to the regulation of social space in groups have been conceptualized. For instance, Volet and colleagues (Volet, Summers, & Thurman, 2009; Volet, Vauras, & Salonen, 2009) described coordination and regulation of interactions in social learning and distinguished between 'other regulation' and 'shared regulation' of social space. The previous discussion is descriptive of situations that are 'momentarily unequal' (Volet, Summers, & Thurman, 2009, p. 129), in which one or a few social agents within a group take on a more active role, thereby rendering the others more passive. Conversely, 'shared regulation' refers to the joint activity of framing and sensemaking in which several members of a group interact simultaneously. Drawing on our review, we conclude that similar interaction patterns can be anticipated to occur in collective reflection processes.

Based on the review, it can also be concluded that previous conceptualizations of collective reflection have defined reflection on different levels, in regards to not only depth but also its context. Mezirow (1990, 2000) conceptualized depth in reflection processes when demarcating differences amongst content, process and premise (presupposition) reflection. In short, content reflection regards the ingredients of experiences, the immediate events, as experienced and acted upon by an individual or a group. Process reflection entails turning the

attention to the subject itself and the process via which the individuals think, feel, act or learn. Premise reflection entails assessments of the foundation of one's outlook on the world, such as the assumptions and axioms of thinking. Although Mezirow did not explicitly discuss collective reflection, this division has had an impact on conceptualizations of collective reflection (see van Woerkom & Croon, 2008). Finally, it can also be concluded that different conceptualizations range from situated perspectives to cultural perspectives on social context. In situated perspectives, the notion of sociality tends to be defined in terms of 'here and now' interactions between individuals in the immediate social environment, whereas macro-oriented perspectives on collective reflection emphasize the importance of culturally established meanings or organizational arrangements as baseline inputs for reflection.

Overall, the review indicates that an emerging body of literature on collective reflection has conceptualized these processes from a number of different angles. However, there is currently a need for more empirical research that holds potential to assess theoretical claims and to extend our knowledge about why and how collective reflective processes are enacted in practice. The present article aims to contribute to the understanding of collective reflection by exploring how collective reflection processes can be characterized as they are naturalistically enacted in practice. With these questions as a basis, this paper sets out to construct an empirically grounded model that describes different types and processes of collective reflection relative to each other.

Methods and materials

The data for this study were collected using ethnographical participant observations (Spradley, 1980) and field interviews, in which the authors followed a group of Swedish police recruits (PRs) from admission into the police academy training programme and throughout their first year of police training. In total, 38 occasions of observations, 23 informal field interviews and two focus-group interviews with students in base groups constitute the empirical material of the study. The field interviews and focus groups were conducted in direct connection to observations. In addition, a number of documents with instructions, schedules and syllabi functioned as secondary data that provided a contextual understanding for both the observations and the interviews. Fieldwork served to capture and provide rich descriptions of the social practices of collective reflection that recruits come in contact with during the progress of police training. Previous observation studies have indicated difficulties in 'seeing' and interpreting the in-the-moment reflection that is embedded in actions (Keevers & Treleaven, 2011). However, as this study targeted collective reflection, this problem could be overcome because collective reflection by definition involves social interactions and as such has both a performative and an observable component. Because we also complemented observations with interviews, specific observed episodes could be followed up on with an immediate connection to the observations.

With a sample consisting of PRs, the setting of the study was a police education programme in Sweden. As previously mentioned, this setting is influenced by the PBL methodology, something which means that open-ended assignments are commonplace and that students work collaboratively with assignments in groups during a large portion of their training. In this specific case, the authors followed a subclass ($N = 25$) within a larger class of PRs ($N = 75$). Within the observed subclass, students were further divided into four base groups, and of these groups, the authors focused especially upon one ($N = 5$). The base

groups and subclasses were selected by the teachers at the start of the education programme, and the groups were coherent throughout the first year, which enabled repeated observations of specific groups of students within the larger class of PRs.

The sample of observations was made to target a variety of educational settings and content within police training, ranging from recruits' experiences with theoretical lectures and seminars to practical scenario training and exercises. A common denominator in many of the observations was a focus upon educational courses, in which experience was followed up in some respect and in which students had opportunities to work in groups. Field notes were used to log and outline turns of events during the observations, and these were compiled into more extensive narratives in direct connection with the observed events (Wolfinger, 2002). In addition, notes were also kept on the structure and alignment of the observed educational settings. Table 1 provides an overview of the data collection process.

The collection and analysis of data was conducted simultaneously and had been inspired by grounded theory techniques. Data analysis was performed through the computer-assisted

Table 1. Fieldwork undertaken.

Term 1 observed context	Interviews	Observed activity
Course intro		Course introduction 'police in society'
Law intro		Course introduction law
Law lecture		Criminal Law lecture
Conflict management training	Field interview	Practically exercising techniques
Law seminar	Field interview	Seminars criminal law
Mental preparation		Seminars on feedback and related concepts
Preliminary investigative methods	Field interview	Course introduction
Preliminary investigative methods		Group tutoring – theoretical case
Group processes	Field interview	Self-directed group development exercises
Preliminary investigative methods		Group tutoring
Preliminary investigative methods		Group tutoring
Preliminary investigative methods		Group tutoring
Preliminary investigative methods	Field interview	Group tutoring
Preliminary investigative methods		Prep. and conducting oral presentations
Preliminary investigative methods	Focus group int.	Group tutoring and focus group (6 students)
Preliminary investigative methods	Field interview	Prep. and conducting oral presentations
Term 2 observed context	Interviews	Observed activity
Group processes	Field interview	Seminars
Order and security		Seminars
Case 'Corner Shop Burglary'	Field interviews	Practical exercises (crime scene investigation, etc.)
Case 'Corner Shop Burglary'		Group tutoring
Basic police tactical training	Field interview	Practically scenario training
Field training follow-ups 1	Field interview	Seminars
Field training follow-ups 2	Field interview	Seminars
Case 'Corner shop burglary'	Field interview	Interrogation exercise 1
Case 'Corner shop burglary'		Group tutoring follow-up on interrogation exercise 1
Case 'Corner shop burglary'	Focus group int.	Interrogation exercise 2
Focus group interview		Student group (6 students)
Case 'Corner shop burglary'		Group tutoring follow-up on interrogation exercise 2
Case 'Corner shop burglary'	Field interview	Scenarios: house warrant, apprehension, interrogation
Weapons and tactics training	Field interview	Arms training, shooting with FX in scenarios
Case 'Corner shop burglary'	Field interview	Seminars: oral presentations and case conclusion
Case 'hate crime'	Field interview	Interrogation exercises
Mental preparation	Field interview	Follow-up seminars reflections on weapons training
Case 'hate crime'	Field interview	Group tutoring, follow-up on interrogation exercises
Case 'hate crime'		Interrogation exercise 2
Case 'hate crime'	Field interview	Group tutoring, follow-up on interrogation exercises
Conflict management training	Field interview	Practically training self-defence techniques
Conflict management training	Field interview	Practically training self-defence techniques
Crowd control and arrests		Scenario training
Crowd control and arrests	Field interview	Seminars based on experiences from scenarios

qualitative data analysis software package Nvivo10, and the data were analysed in three main steps following the recommendations for compiling data structures in qualitative research (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). In detail, this meant that the authors first constructed codes out of the empirical observation notes. Similar to open-coding procedures, codes were descriptive of observed courses of events or informants' narrated experiences. In the construction of the codes, the objective was to formulate them to closely match the perceived courses of events in observations and field interviews (i.e. the codes were informant-centred). In the second phase of analysis, the codes were analysed in relation to each other to identify emergent 'second-order' themes with the potential to inform the theory on reflection (i.e. theory-centred categories). Categories were assessed in regard to overlap and coherence. With the codes and categories as a basis, the third step of analysis sought to group the second-order themes into theoretical 'aggregate dimensions', which can be defined as overarching theoretical narratives with explanatory power (Gioia et al., 2013). The results of these three analytical steps are visualized in a data structure (see Figure 1) that was used as an analytical device and a graphical representation of how theoretical inferences are drawn from empirical findings.

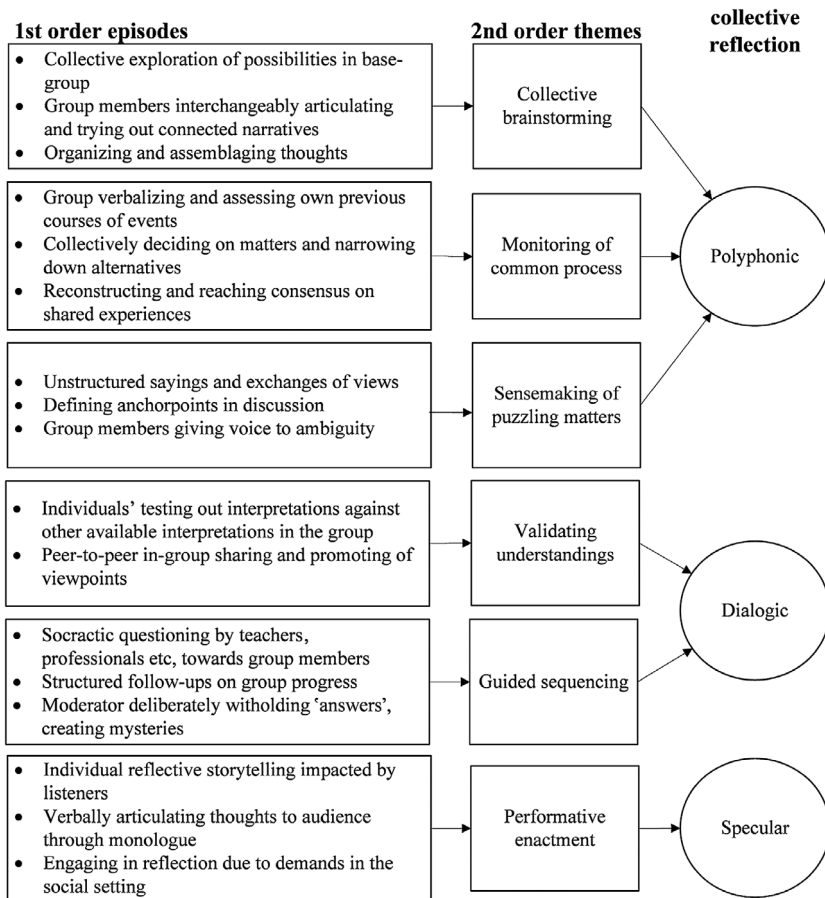


Figure 1. Data structure.

Findings

Collective reflection at police basic training was a recurring feature of the recruits' day-to-day activities in group work. As an overview, collective reflection was based on the interplay and tensions between collective reflection in more formalized settings and informal micro-sequences of collective reflection between formal activities. In Figure 1, the main features of collective reflection as observed in this study are described on three aggregated levels. The figure describes first-order concepts and material practices of collective reflection, second-order themes that arrange a number of first-order codes, and aggregated theoretical dimensions of collective reflection. This way of working with ethnographic observational data on several levels of abstraction enabled us to analyse various exemplified practices of collective reflection in terms of six types of activities and three main types of collective reflective processes, namely, 'polyphony', 'dialogic' and 'specular' reflection. This conceptualization is aimed to promote theoretical contributions in regards to the question of how reflection can be seen as socially and collectively enacted in various settings and practices. In the following sections, we provide in-depth descriptions of each form of collective reflective process. The Findings section then concludes with an analysis of common denominators and differences between the types of collective reflection.

Polyphonic reflection

Social reflection characterized by polyphony can be described as relatively informal collective reflection that was exhibited *in situ* without an apparent goal orientation. Here, we use the notion of polyphony with inspiration from Cunliffe and Coupland (2012) and Cunliffe (2004), defining it as a process in which competing narratives of group members interplay in a fluid and multivoiced manner. With these characteristics, this type of reflection was observed in micro-sequences involving several actors voicing their views and discussing various subjects in a rather unstructured manner. One type of polyphonic collective reflection entailed *collective brainstorming*, which was showcased when the PRs engaged in exploration of new knowledge. This type of reflection was often proactively oriented, reflecting before something was about to happen and trying to anticipate courses of events. A specific example of this process was when recruits collectively constructed narratives describing the group's interpretation of some subject. These narratives were often voiced interchangeably, with recruits building cumulatively on each other's statements, underscoring and helping each other towards a common interpretation. Another example of polyphonic collective reflection was when groups were *monitoring common processes*. This type of reflective process was mainly directed at the group and its social relations and learning trajectory rather than issues or matters outside the group. Examples of collective reflection directed at the group were assessments of the group's progress, narrowing down and deciding on collective standpoints, navigating the groups progress through process-oriented questions such as 'Where are we now?'

Finally, a third polyphonic reflective process entailed *sensemaking of puzzling matters*. As with descriptions of sensemaking (cf. Weick, 1995), the significant features of this process were how collectives addressed equivocality and tensions related to situations characterized by messiness and ill-defined problems. In response to such situations, we frequently observed how groups discussed problems and made associations in a quite disorganized manner, using this conversation as a map to make sense of what had just occurred. This seemed to

be a resource for the group, as an ongoing conversation functioned to propel solutions and sometimes unexpected interpretations and insights that emanated from an ambiguous situation. An illustrative example of collective sensemaking around a puzzling matter that involved five individuals (including the researcher) was a discussion that broke out after an interrogation exercise that was conducted. This exercise was performed as part of a case in which a burglary was investigated by the recruits on a group level. In this setting, the students discuss with each other and with the researcher in a relatively unstructured manner and come to reflect on some of their assumptions about the case in question. More specifically, regarding the whereabouts of one of the suspects (Alfred):

PR1: These interrogations, they are so hard to plan because, really, there is no way to know. I didn't know anything beforehand, so my only choice was to be ready for whatever...

PR2: I would have to say that I agree, it is...

PR1: [interrupting, continuing the reasoning] ... Still, it was pretty nice to know in advance what we needed to find out from this person.

PR2: ...It is really hard to plan an interrogation. Remember the last one? We knew nothing about that one. For this one, I felt we had some previous knowledge. We knew that he could have seen something, or we could suppose that there would be a logical timeline to his observations. The last time [we interrogated someone], we did not even know who it was, what type of person it was.

Researcher: No?

PR1: [directed at PR2 and PR3]: I guess for you guys it was even more difficult to know where to begin in your interrogation – how to plan it.

PR3, PR4: Yes [nodding].

PR1: For this particular interrogation, I guess it was more about corroborating stuff that we already knew about ... but on the other hand, of course, we can't really think like that and use beliefs as a point of departure. Come to think about it, even if we believe it, we don't actually know if the witness saw Alfred.

PR2: That's true.

PR4: ...So, we can't really know if Alfred was there at all [whether the person was seen at the crime scene].

PR1, PR2, PR3, and PR4 start laughing and talking simultaneously as this insight dawns upon them: It might not even be Alfred who was there to begin with!

This example illustrates making sense of a puzzling matter that took place in a micro-sequence and was non-goal-oriented. Rather, the example showcases how everyday discussion as part of an ongoing conversation leads to recruits unlocking and thinking about some of their assumptions regarding the subjects of the conversation. This entails a social building of knowledge in which different perspectives and past experiences are put in relation to each other by a number of actors who take part in verbalization of their experiences.

Dialogic reflection

A number of observations regarded dialogically structured reflection. This type of collective reflective process took on two main forms in *validating understandings* and *guided sequenced*

reflection. In regards to the former, validating understandings were mainly observed in episodes where group members were testing interpretations against each other in a relatively structured back-and-forth form of reasoning. This type of peer-to-peer sharing of experiences and interpretations was interpreted by the observers as a process via which group members linked and assessed outlooks and views in a cumulative manner. These types of reflective processes were regularly focused upon concrete shared experiences and could be described as a form of verbal experimentation with several participants.

Another general form of dialogic collective reflective process were episodes in which the dialogue was moderated, guided or facilitated by someone within the immediate social situation of the group. This type of dialogic reflection differed from the previously described validation dialogues in regards to how reflection was socially regulated. The most commonly occurring guided sequences of collective reflection that were observed within the material consisted of reflective dialogues between PRs and police officers serving in the capacity as police teachers. These dialogues often took place in the form of tutoring or conversations relating directly to some aspect of course content within the police basic training programme. Police teachers often engaged in more or less consciously designed techniques to encourage reflection and exploration in students' thinking in groups, such as the use of rounds or more articulated group exercises, such as 'happened, felt, learned' or 'rear-view mirror'. Another, less-structured but nonetheless guided, form of collective dialogic reflection would be when teachers engaged in the open-ended questioning of students in groups (i.e. 'Socratic questioning'). The dynamic between student groups and these teachers was of a dual nature. On the one hand, teachers often gave micro-cues regarding how to think and how to reason in these social episodes. As such, guided dialogic reflection is a constrained process that, to a certain degree, is impacted by the asymmetrical power relations in the social context (such as that between student and teachers; see Cunliffe, Cunliffe, 2002). On the other hand, however, the involvement of teachers or role models with anchoring in practice also functioned to problematize group interpretations and solutions to problems. As such, these dialogues, in a way, created 'mysteries' and affordances for reflection. One such example can be illustrated with an episode of group work (five PRs) with a police teacher (PT) present in the room sitting listening to the group discussion and fostering the development of the discussion through open-ended questions. In the excerpts, the group works with a case that actualizes a number of laws regulations and legal interpretations.

...After a while, PT breaks his silence with a question to the group: what does the process look like when a prosecutor brings charges to a suspect?

This question directs the attention of the PRs who, with some guidance, start looking for the answer in the law book. A discussion breaks out around the table with the PRs trying out various interpretations and ways to describe the process of bringing charges.

After a while, PT continues: 'Ok, so what is the definition of a plaintiff?' He adds that issues such as this might get the recruits 'to feel confused' [thereby affirming PRs feelings of 'being lost'].

The PRs incorporate the question of plaintiffs in their discussion, bouncing ideas and questions regarding both plaintiffs and suspects back and forth, trying out different ways forward. In the discussion, other issues surface: 'would this qualify as a crime scene investigation or a house search?'

...PT [getting questions from PRs] is avoiding direct responses saying things like 'that would be one way to see it,' later adding, 'are there any alternatives?' These non-answers seem to be confusing the PRs, provoking them to find alternate ways of viewing the case.

As the excerpt presented above indicates, the police teacher in the example guided the discussion through micro-cues about what was important in this case (i.e. defining the plaintiff, defining the process) without giving direct answers to these issues but rather to create mysteries and questions that encourage the PRs to discuss and reflect on their interpretations with each other, trying out several different understandings of a particular issue.

Specular reflection

A third main type of collective reflection, conceptualized here as 'specular reflection', entailed episodes in which individuals were engaging in reflection in a performative manner, such as verbally reflecting through monologues or storytelling in front of an audience of peers who primarily listened. This type of reflective process was the most individualized version of collective reflection observed in the material. However, it is defined as a collective process rather than an individual process because the collective within the setting functioned as co-producers and counterparts who impacted the reflective process, even though the role of the listeners was largely passive and non-verbally engaging. As such, this form of collective reflective is evidence of an instrumental role of 'the other' in collective reflection (see Boud et al., 2006). Typical examples of performative enactment of reflection include experience-based seminars and follow-ups, wherein PRs discussed their takes on various experiences in front of their peers. These situations were often structured by a teacher, but they would not qualify as dialogic in the same way as guided sequenced collective reflection. Instead, specular reflection was, to a greater extent, based on monologues and storylines of individual PRs that were 'performed' in front of others. One illustrative example of this type of reflection is from a follow-up regarding the PRs' first contacts with the policing profession through field training. In this particular example, PRs in groups of five to seven individuals recapitulate and narrate their experiences for each other:

A female PR tells the others about her experience of an incident concerning the death of an individual who had collapsed at home, likely due to cardiac arrest. The daughter of the deceased had contacted the police after she found her parent dead. The PR says that she had had no previous experience with death and did not know how she would react to the situation. At the same time, she wanted to find this out about herself, so upon arrival, she took the chance to help her fellow officers with the deceased individual.

Her thoughts when doing this were that the corpse itself was not in any way horrible. 'There was no odour and only a little nosebleed, but it was a weird experience.' Upon leaving the apartment, the PR met the neighbouring family, who were unpacking groceries from their car. As the event took place on a Friday afternoon, the PR made the interpretation that they were preparing for their weekend and their Friday dinner. The PR says that she reflected upon the absurdity of this. To her, the situation was surreal: 'Life is going on in parallel everywhere. I know that there is a dead person lying up there on the floor, but they [the neighbours] will be in the apartment below, making dinner and preparing for the weekend, never knowing anything about what happened.'

In this episode of storytelling, the PR outlined both the events of the situation and reflections in the form of her feelings and thoughts about the unfolding event. In the situation in which this was shared, the mood in the room was that the group members (the other present PRs) listened with attention but without interrupting or actively participating in the story. The role of the others in this and in similar observations was that of an audience of peers who were largely passive, listening and interacting non-verbally through micro-cues, such as nodding or small signs of recognition with the individual engaging and sharing her reflections verbally with a group of peers.

An emergent model of collective reflection

In the findings presented above, the differences between different forms of collective reflective processes were emphasized. However, looking at these processes in light of each other, an emergent model for collective reflection processes can be extracted. Drawing on the previously presented review of collective reflection, we now turn to the endeavour of differentiating forms of collective reflection based on the notions of 'depth' and 'interaction level'. In regards to depth, we draw on Mezirow's (1990, 2000) concepts of content, process and premise (presupposition) reflection. In regards to interactions, we draw on the works of Volet, Summers, and Thurman (2009) and Volet, Vauras, and Salonen (2009) to distinguish between 'other regulation' and 'shared regulation' of social space in groups. When grouping the empirically identified forms of collective reflection on these dimensions, some important relationships become apparent (see Figure 2).

As is visible in Figure 2, we define polyphonic collective reflection as being characterized by a high degree of interactions and a content orientation. As evidenced by our findings, polyphonic processes of reflection were primarily based on micro-sequences and unstructured spontaneous 'polylogue'. Thus, with several actors contributing and keeping the reflective process open, this reflective process depends on co-regulation in group interactions, that is, the joint activity of framing and sensemaking, in which several members of a group simultaneously interact with each other. Furthermore, based on our observational data, we can conclude that these processes were often content-oriented, in the sense of being focused upon issues in the immediate proximity to the group rather than focused upon group processes or the premises of thinking (cf. Mezirow, 1990). In this regard, this type of reflective process has similarities with the notion of brief moments of 'stop and think' in the midst of situated activities, as described by Keevers and Treleaven (2011). Examples showcased in our findings include drawing inferences about the nature of a variety of subjects, such as the above-exemplified difficulties of conducting interrogations, or the whereabouts of certain suspects in a case that the PRs were working on.

In relation to polyphonic collective reflection processes, dialogic reflection can be plotted into an intermediate position (see Figure 2). These processes tended to be more structured in regards to social rules, with clearly defined turns being taken in conversations. Moreover,

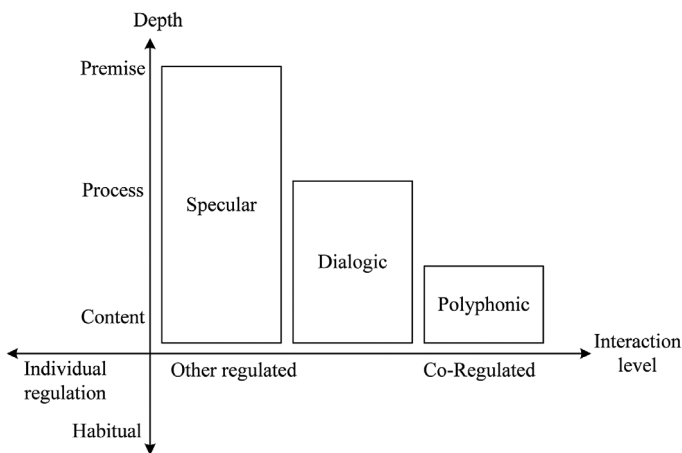


Figure 2. Types of collective reflection.

these processes were sometimes guided by an external party (e.g. an instructor, a supervisor or a dedicated group member) and, as such, were characterized by power asymmetries that could constrain the process (Cunliffe, 2002). On the other hand, guided collective reflective processes also offered possibilities for increased depth and were observed to be both content- and process-oriented, depending on the direction of the dialogue and the active involvement of a facilitator. This result is supported by the conclusions of Burchell and Dyson (2005), who described 'loosely structured' group reflections as promising because the loose structure combines possibilities for experimentation and open-ended discussions with themes, prompts or questions that vouch for depth.

Finally, specular reflection can be positioned as a reflective process characterized by low levels of complexity but a high degree of potential depth. In regards to complexity, these reflective processes were regularly characterized by monologues and, as such, were framed by a clear social agreement regarding the interaction order in the situation (i.e. who speaks and who listens). As such, specular reflection often provided the subject with space and time available to reason with oneself in front of others, thus making the social space of reflections individually regulated. This reduces the complexity of the situation because fewer individuals are involved in describing courses of events and providing reactions and interpretations of such events. Conversely, following Mezirow's division between content, process and premise reflection, specular reflection was one of the rare processes by which PRs in the study engaged in premise reflection, discussing the basis of their own knowledge or their outlooks on societal matters. Our interpretation of this occurrence is that social situations in which subjects in front of others (active listeners) are given an opportunity to reason under relatively ample time conditions provide good opportunities for retrospectively making sense of one's own and the collective's experiences. In this sense, our findings dovetail with Raelin's (2001) notion of speaking and disclosing as important facilitators of collective reflection as speaking entails 'articulating a collective voice from within oneself' (Raelin, 2001, p. 26). In short, reduced complexity of the social situation may be a material condition that supports depth in reflection.

Conclusions

Although reflection has attracted considerable interest within the research literature on vocational and professional learning, a hitherto overlooked area within this field of research has been the question of how social contexts and interactional relationships between actors in practice involve the process of reflection (Dyke, 2006). This article adds knowledge by providing a model that is descriptive of how collective reflection processes can be understood as practically anchored. The presented model challenges some widely held notions about collective reflection. One such aspect regards how collective reflection can be understood in terms of depth. In this regard, the current research regarding collective reflection indicates that this type of reflective process has great potential for in-depth 'double loop' reflections directed at the processes and premises of thinking because collective reflection exposes subjects to a wider base of experiences and involves mutual resources in reflection processes (see Dyke, 2006; Høyrup & Elkjaer, 2006; Ohlsson, 2013). Consistent with this literature, our findings suggest that access to a wide base of collective experiences can function as an important resource for reflection. However, complementing previous thinking on the subject, the empirical findings of this study also indicate that the incorporation of a wide experience base adds complexity to the collective reflective process, and this complexity

causes the potential synergies in terms of depth in social reflection to rarely occur. As evidenced by our findings, the involvement of multiple actors as co-creators of reflective processes was associated with content reflection rather than process and premise reflection. Premise reflection was rarely observed, and when subjects engaged in collective reflection of this type, it was in more individualized settings.

Further, our results also add knowledge to the question of what activities are associated with collective reflection. Previous research has emphasized reflective dialogue as a key activity propelling and channelling collective reflection (Bound, 2010; Gray, 2007). In regards to dialogue, our findings support the notion raised by Cunliffe (2002) that although dialogic exchanges of views are common in manifestations of collective reflection, learning through collective reflection can, on a practical level, be characterized as a messier and more unstructured process than the metaphor of 'dialogue' suggests. Cunliffe (2002) discusses this concept in terms of 'making connections'. This way of framing the subject has similarities with our findings that collective reflection may be much less structured than has previously been acknowledged, as we observed collective reflection characterized by 'polylogue'. On the other hand, a number of observations also highlight the importance of an instrumental role of the 'other' as a listener in 'monologist' collective reflection.

These findings enhance our understanding of the previously under-conceptualized collective dimensions of reflection and might provide a basis for research that could further explore how collective reflective processes are manifested in practice and how certain behaviours and social settings foster and connect to collective reflection.

Funding

This work was supported by the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare [grant number 2014-1980].

Notes on contributors

Oscar Rantatalo, PhD, is a senior lecturer at the Unit of Police Education, Umeå University, Sweden. His research interests include areas such as police education and organizational sensemaking in a context of policing.

Staffan Karp, PhD, is an associate professor in Pedagogy at the Department of Education at Umeå University in Sweden. His main research interest is learning processes in police education and police practice in relation to societal change.

ORCID

Oscar Rantatalo  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1440-0470>

Staffan Karp  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6080-173X>

References

- Bjerlöv, M. & Docherty, P. (2006). Collective reflection under ambiguity. In D. Boud, P. Cressey, & P. Docherty (Eds.), *Productive reflection at work: learning for changing organizations* (pp. 93–106). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Boud, D., Cressey, P., & Docherty, P. (Eds.). (2006). *Productive reflection at work: learning for changing organizations*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Boud, D. & Walker, D. (1998). Promoting reflection in professional courses: The challenge of context. *Studies in Higher Education*, 23, 191–206. doi:10.1080/03075079812331380384.
- Bound, H. (2010). Developing quality online dialogue: Dialogical inquiry. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 22, 107–119.
- Burchell, H. & Dyson, J. (2005). Action research in higher education: exploring ways of creating and holding the space for reflection. *Educational Action Research*, 13, 291–300. doi:10.1080/09650790500200280.
- Collin, S. & Karsenti, T. (2011). The collective dimension of reflective practice: the how and why. *Reflective Practice*, 12, 569–581. doi:10.1080/14623943.2011.590346.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2002). Reflexive dialogical practice in management learning. *Management Learning*, 33, 35–61.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2004). On becoming a critically reflexive practitioner. *Journal of Management Education*, 28, 407–426. doi:10.1177/1052562904264440.
- Cunliffe, A. & Coupland, C. (2012). From hero to villain to hero: Making experience sensible through embodied narrative sensemaking. *Human Relations*, 65, 63–88. doi:10.1177/0018726711424321.
- Dyke, M. (2006). The role of the 'Other' in reflection, knowledge formation and action in late modernity. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 25, 105–123. doi:10.1080/02601370500510728.
- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16, 15–31. doi:10.1177/1094428112452151.
- Gray, D. E. (2007). Facilitating management learning: Developing critical reflection through reflective tools. *Management Learning*, 38, 495–517. doi:10.1177/1350507607083204.
- Høyrup, S. & Elkjaer, B. (2006). Reflection – taking it beyond the individual. In D. Boud, P. Cressey, & P. Docherty (Eds.), *Productive reflection at work: learning for changing organizations* (pp. 29–43). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jordan, S. (2010). Learning to be surprised: How to foster reflective practice in a high-reliability context. *Management Learning*, 41, 391–413. doi:10.1177/1350507609357388.
- Keevers, L. & Treleaven, L. (2011). Organizing practices of reflection: A practice-based study. *Management Learning*, 42, 505–520. doi:10.1177/1350507610391592.
- Lauritz, L. E., & Hansson, J. (2013). Lära är livet – att vara polis i en föränderlig värld. [Learning is life – to be a police officer in a changing world] In N. Eklund & L. Landström (Eds.), *Polisen - verksamhet och arbete [The police – operations and work]* (1st ed., pp. 66–83). Malmö: Liber.
- Marenin, O. (2004). Police Training for democracy. *Police Practice and Research: An International Journal*, 5, 107–123. doi:10.1080/156142604200190261.
- Mezirow, J. (1990). How critical reflection triggers transformative learning. *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*, 4(2), 1–18. Retrieved from [http://184.182.233.150/rid=1LW06D9V6-26428MK-1Z64/Mezirow's chapter, How Critical Reflection Triggers TL.pdf](http://184.182.233.150/rid=1LW06D9V6-26428MK-1Z64/Mezirow's%20chapter,%20How%20Critical%20Reflection%20Triggers%20TL.pdf)
- Mezirow, J. (1998). On critical reflection. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48, 185–198. doi:10.1177/074171369804800305.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- NVivo (10.0) [Computer software]. <http://www.qsrinternational.com/product>
- Ohlsson, J. (2013). Team learning: Collective reflection processes in teacher teams. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 25, 296–309. doi:10.1108/JWL-Feb-2012-0011.
- Raelin, J. A. (2001). Public reflection as the basis of learning. *Management Learning*, 32, 11–30.
- Reynolds, M. & Vince, R. (2004). *Organizing reflection*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Reynolds, P. M. (1999). Critical reflection and management education: rehabilitating less hierarchical approaches. *Journal of Management Education*, 23, 537–553. doi:10.1177/105256299902300506.
- Schippers, M. C., Den Hartog, D. N., & Koopman, P. L. (2007). Reflexivity in teams: A measure and correlates. *Applied Psychology*, 56, 189–211. doi:10.1111/j.1464-0597.2006.00250.x.
- Schippers, M. C., West, M. A., & Dawson, J. F. (2015). Team reflexivity and innovation: The moderating role of team context. *Journal of Management*, 41, 769–788. doi:10.1177/0149206312441210.
- Segall, A. & Gaudelli, W. (2007). Reflecting socially on social issues in a social studies methods course. *Teaching Education*, 18, 77–92. doi:10.1080/10476210601151599.

- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Vander Kooi, G. P. & Palmer, L. B. (2014). Problem-based learning for police academy students: Comparison of those receiving such instruction with those in traditional programs. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 25, 175–195. doi:10.1080/10511253.2014.882368.
- van Manen, M. (1995). On the epistemology of reflective practice. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 1, 33–50. doi:10.1080/1354060950010104.
- van Woerkom, M. & Croon, M. (2008). Operationalising critically reflective work behaviour. *Personnel Review*, 37, 317–331. doi:10.1108/00483480810862297.
- van Woerkom, M., Nijhof, W. J., & Nieuwenhuis, L. F. M. (2002). Critical reflective working behaviour: a survey research. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 26, 375–383. doi:10.1108/03090590210444955.
- Volet, S., Summers, M., & Thurman, J. (2009). High-level co-regulation in collaborative learning: How does it emerge and how is it sustained? *Learning and Instruction*, 19, 128–143. doi:10.1016/j.learninstruc.2008.03.001.
- Volet, S., Vauras, M., & Salonen, P. (2009). Self- and social regulation in learning contexts: An integrative perspective. *Educational Psychologist*, 44, 215–226. doi:10.1080/00461520903213584.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- West, M. A. (2000). Reflexivity, revolution and innovation in work teams. In M. M. Beyerlein, D. A. Johnson, & S. T. Beyerlein (Eds.), *Product development teams* (pp. 1–29). Stanford, CA: Jai Press.
- Wolfiger, N. H. (2002). On writing fieldnotes: Collection strategies and background expectancies. *Qualitative Research*, 2, 85–93.