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**Is Play the Way? Investigating the Effect of an Experiential Learning Program on
Self-Awareness**

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Abstract

This study explores ways that teachers can develop their students' personal and social capability according to new curriculum requirements (ACARA, 2013): strategies that go beyond behaviour management processes. In doing this, the social-emotional learning program *Play is the Way* (2012) is tested, in terms of its impact on self-awareness in Year 4 students. The program is one of experiential, cooperative, dialogic learning, consisting of challenging physically active games coupled with empowering reflective discussion. It intends to intrinsically motivate students to become aware of and manage themselves emotionally and socially, not just behave appropriately for the purpose of gaining a reward or avoiding a punishment: extrinsic motivation. The opportunity for this study arose from a gap in current literature regarding the effect that student-centred approaches such as this have on self-awareness specifically.

A qualitative case study was conducted to address this topic. Six Year 4 students participated in the study. Data collection took place over three sessions, and embodied both observations and interviews wherein dialogue was prompted using Arts-based stimuli. The participants' self-awareness was evaluated based on the perceived quality of their reflective practice. They had opportunity to reflect both internally and externally during data collection. Each session began with observations of their participation in the experiential program, including both game and group discussion. This was followed by a time for quiet, internal dialogue, as students reflected on their experiences by drawing a picture. Their artworks were then used to prompt external, reflective dialogue in an individual interview.

Through coding, categorising and conceptualising, results were drawn from the raw data, and conclusions formed. It was found that each child improved in their reflective practice, deeming *Play is the Way* (2012) an effective program for use in teaching self-awareness. Components of the program that were most advantageous seemed to be the games' persistence tasks, which mirror real life challenges, and the honest, tactful dialogue promoted in the reflective discussions. Opportunities for future research present themselves regarding the program's effectiveness on other elements of personal and social capability (such as self-management), and also the benefits of arts-based reflection. For teachers, this study illustrates the importance of investing time to authentically develop personal and social capability in their students, and embrace experiential learning opportunities like *Play is the Way* (2012) in doing so.

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Keywords

learning, experiential, self-awareness, social, emotional, cooperative, reflection, children, dialogue, student-centred

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the effectiveness of experiential, cooperative, dialogic learning in enhancing personal and social capability. More specifically, focus is placed on the social-emotional learning program *Play is the Way* (Play is the Way, 2012), and its impact on self-awareness in Year 4 students attending a primary school in the south-west suburbs of Brisbane. These students' self-awareness levels were assessed through the perceived quality of their reflective practice.

It is evident that a need exists for personal and social capability to be explicitly taught in addition to embedment within classroom management processes that use external coercions to control student behaviour (Kohn, 1999; Marshall, 2010; Newby, 1991; Porter, 2007; Rivard Gobbo, 2008). *Play is the Way* (2012) holds potential for achieving this through its reflective, student-centred approach. Such an approach affords students time to learn about the intrinsic worth of controlling their emotions and behaviour, rather than having their decisions blindly driven by extrinsic motivators: quick fixes rather than long-term solutions (Kohn, 1999). While studies have been conducted regarding the impact of this program and other student-centred methods on personal and social capability (Cubukco, 2012; Hoppe et al, 2004), this research is warranted due to an absence of studies that focus specifically on the development of self-awareness.

My thesis aims to fill this gap by exploring the impact of *Play is the Way* (2012) – experiential, cooperative games with a strong dialogical and reflective focus – on self-awareness in Year 4 students. To do this, a qualitative case study was conducted with a multi-age Year 2-4 class from which six Year 4 participants were selected. Over three consecutive weeks, I observed their participation in a challenging cooperative game and a subsequent reflective group discussion about this game. Following this, participants reflected internally on personal experiences, emotions and behaviour by creating an art piece that was later used to stimulate dialogue in an interview with me. Results of the study showed that each participants' self-awareness improved in some way, indicating that *Play is the Way* was effective in enhancing this dimension of personal and social capability (2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study speaks to theoretical concepts pertaining to how children authentically learn, exploring the effectiveness of advocated pedagogy when applied to the learning of personal and social capability as required by the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment & Reporting Authority, 2013). In particular, the benefits of student-centred, experiential, cooperative, dialogic learning are explored, as well as their relationship with intrinsic motivation, with the intent of presenting and justifying *Play is the Way's* potential to improve self-awareness (2013). The review of current literature also analyses self-awareness itself in detail, drawing upon indicators that will assist its detection through observation and dialogue in this study.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY WITHIN THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

The critical need for children and adolescents to develop emotionally and socially has been recognised by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2013), through their inclusion of “personal and social capability” as a “general capability” in the Australian Curriculum. This capability, to be addressed across all learning areas, ensures students are able to “understand themselves and others, and manage their relationships, lives, work and learning more effectively” (ACARA, 2013, p.64), with the intention of equipping them “for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members” (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs, cited in ACARA, 2013, p. 64). Within the curriculum, personal and social capability has been broken down into four interconnecting elements: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social management (ACARA, 2013). I chose to focus purely on self-awareness, as in itself it is a complex dimension and an appropriate breadth for the scope of this study. It is also of note that an understanding of oneself improves regulation and interpersonal competency (ACARA, 2013). This is relevant to my study in terms of the hierarchical approach to personal and social capability, wherein I studied self-awareness in depth with an awareness of its essentiality to self-management, social awareness and social management (ACARA, 2013).

SELF-AWARENESS: A KEY ELEMENT OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY

As my study focuses explicitly on self-awareness, it is important to know what this element of personal and social capability comprises in and of itself, according to literature. Self-awareness involves metacognition (Fisher & The Highland Council, n.d.): “reflecting on and evaluating one’s learning, identifying personal characteristics that

contribute or limit effectiveness, learning from successes or failures, and being able to interpret one's own emotional states, needs and perspectives" (ACARA, 2013, p. 68). Recognition of emotions, personal qualities and achievements, and learning tendencies, and the development of reflective practice constitute self-awareness in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2013).

Through an assessment of reflective practice, recognition of emotions, abilities and behavioural strengths and weaknesses could perhaps also be ascertained (ACARA, 2013). Reflective practice relates to reflective function, that is, the meta-cognitive ability to think about the thoughts and behaviour of oneself and others (Fonagy & Target, 1997). It is deemed crucial by Neville and Schmidt, who highlight the importance of reflecting upon emotions experienced so as to re-engage with them in a meaningful and safe way (2011). Shanker (2010) also stresses the importance of being able to comprehend and articulate emotions and behavioural strengths and weaknesses: a capacity that can be developed through reflecting. Taking this into consideration, I will assess students' self-awareness through the lens of reflective practice, using it as an indicator of their metacognitive processes regarding emotions and behaviour.

The question of how to assess the quality of one's reflective practice accurately is central to this study. A study of Year 5 children's reflections on negative experiences verified that reflective practices are most beneficial when a self-distanced perspective is taken (Ayduk, Duckworth, Kross & Tsukayama, 2011). This means that the student recalls the experience as if they are watching it happen, isolated emotionally from any hardships experienced. Alternatively, a self-immersed perspective takes place through the student's own eyes. They become re-involved and display observable characteristics, including distress and a tendency to blame others for negative emotions and experiences or a reluctance to recall them at all (Ayduk, Duckworth, Kross & Tsukayama, 2011). Avoidance is also evident when students cannot articulate reasons for their behaviour; when students can explain their behaviour, they begin to understand it and achieve self-awareness (McCaskill, 2002). This information is relevant to my study because the absence or presence of self-immersion traits could be used to detect students' self-distancing ability, which in turn will be a valuable indicator in determining the overall quality of their reflective practice.

DEVELOPING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY: EXTRINSIC VS INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

While the importance of personal and social capability is no longer in question, there is much debate surrounding the means by which it can be effectively developed. Rivard Gobbo's study (2008) shows that many educators are heavily reliant on the use of extrinsic motivators (such as rewards and punishments) in generating behaviours that

are conducive to learning within the classroom environment. It is argued however, that the use of extrinsic motivators is only a short-term solution to induce compliance, rather than develop self-directed behaviours (Kohn, 1999; Marshall, 2010; Porter, 2007; Rivard Gobbo, 2008). Extrinsic motivation has been found to correlate negatively with on task behaviour (Newby, 1991) and student perceptions of their own self-regulation (Luis, 2011). External coercions enhance discipline rather than self-discipline as required by the curriculum (ACARA, 2013), where students “[assume] social and moral responsibility for [their] own actions, and [do] so under [their] own volition” (Bear & Ducquette, 2008, p. 10). It is important that the limitations of extrinsic motivation be discussed in the lead-up to my study, as it justifies my investigation of methods that seek to do more than induce compliance in developing personal and social capability.

In terms of motivation and social emotional learning, Alfie Kohn believes that: “Good values have to be grown from the inside out. Praise and privileges and punishments can change behaviour (for a while), but they cannot change the person who engages in the behaviour – at least, not in the way we want” (1999, p. 161). As he suggests, development of personal and social capability requires intrinsic motivation, particularly where the internal satisfaction of managing one’s emotions and behaviours is sufficient reward (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Baumeister and Vohs (2007) refer to studies in which extrinsic motivators, especially those that seek to control behaviour, undermine intrinsic motivation by decreasing interest in the activity itself. Implied in their work is a need for alternative approaches if personal and social capability is to be genuinely developed in ways that move beyond external behaviour management. Both Newby (1991) and Luis (2011) found that activities relevant to real life increased intrinsic motivation and desired behaviours. The need for a power shift enabling greater student responsibility over making behaviour-related decisions has also been identified as a way to enhance personal and social capability, a need which I explore further in this study (Marshall, 2010; Porter, 2007).

PLAY IS THE WAY: AN ALTERNATIVE TO EXTRINSIC BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Play is the Way, developed by Wilson McCaskill, is a student-centred behaviour education program that uses “wisdom, not force” to experientially develop personal and social capabilities (Play is the Way, 2012). Its process consists of cooperative physically active games coupled with reflective group discussions. The process aligns with Kolb’s (cited in Carlisle, 2009) cycle of experiential learning, in that children are firstly given the opportunity to learn through concrete, authentic experiences, and then reflect on these experiences through discussion, forming generalisations that can be applied to future experiences both within the program and in life (Play is the Way, 2012). The process is dialogue rich: not only does reflection on emotions and behaviour occur, but cooperative

learning “engages students in collaborative discussions” as they work together to achieve a shared goal (Salkind, 2008, p. 188). The games are “persistence” tasks, in that they require perseverance in the face of frustration and challenge to achieve success (Eisenberg & Sulik, 2012). They hold relevance in the way they mirror the personal and social challenges children are likely to be exposed to in all aspects of life (Play is the Way, 2012).

A study by Hoppe et al. (2004) investigated the effectiveness of *Play is the Way* (2012) on social behaviour in primary school children using a pre-test, intervention, post-test design. The program was found to improve pro-social behaviour, implying that it is a successful means of developing the intrapersonal skills that lead to enhanced interpersonal skills, as required by ACARA (2013). It has also been asserted that persistence tasks can be used to measure self-management in children (Eisenberg & Sulik, 2012). However, the program’s effectiveness in developing self-awareness skills specifically is yet to be evaluated, presenting an opening for my research project.

THE BENEFITS OF STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING

Play is the Way (2012) is a student-centred methodology for learning personal and social skills. Therefore, it is necessary that the potential benefits student-centred pedagogy in the context of social-emotional development be evaluated according to current literature. Studies show that student-centred learning is valued by teachers for its psycho-social benefits (Cubukco, 2012) and perceived by high school students to enable a deeper understanding of themselves (Harper, 1997). Experiential learning provides a real context within which student-centred learning can actively take place (Carper et al., 2010), and opportunities for sense to be made of the “trials and tribulations of participation in the education system”, which is deemed necessary for the development of reflective function (Neville & Schmidt, 2011, p. 44).

Student-teacher relationships play a central role in an effective student-centred environment (Nichols, 2006). Ideally, the student adopts a role of empowerment and the teacher one of “perceptive guidance” (McCaskill, 2002, p. 8). Particularly in an experiential learning process, the teacher and student should learn together as they engage in, observe and reflect upon experiences (Carper et al., 2010). This holds relevance to the *Play is the Way* process (Play is the Way, 2012), as reflective discussion is based on recent experiences rather than pre-planned topics, requiring the teacher to take advantage of spontaneous teachable moments as they appear in an authentic context. Not only do balanced student-teacher relationships facilitate meaningful learning, but also establish trust and attachment which contribute to a student’s capacity to self-reflect (Australian Institute for Health & Welfare, 2012; Neville & Schmidt, 2011). I will need to keep this information in mind as I prepare for my role as facilitator and observer within the experiential process.

Play is the Way is a unique blend of play-based, physically active, cooperative and experiential learning (2012). These approaches have been found to enhance the risk-taking, adaptability and creativity that extrinsic motivators inhibit, particularly because the program is structured in a way that not only encourages play but also reflection upon play (Brown & Patte, 2011; Carlisle, 2009; Kohn, 1999). Shoval and Shulruf's study (2011) highlights that cooperative learning integrated with physical activity demands personal and social capability for success, indicating that ineptitude in this area will be made obvious by emotional and behavioural reactions. These bodies of literature suggest that *Play is the Way's* approach to learning holds notable potential for enhancing self-awareness (2012).

THE ROLE OF DIALOGUE

Further to the student-centred learning permitted by *Play is the Way* (2012) is the fundamental role that dialogue plays, which is of utmost significance to my study due to its links with reflective practice (Tsang, 2007). Cooperative learning has been found to improve personal and social capability in middle school students through increasing self-regulated, independent behaviour (Emde et al., 2001). However, students need to engage with each other in rich exploratory dialogue if they are to personally benefit from this approach (Mercer, 2007; Salkind, 2008; Webb, 2009). Exploratory dialogue involves all members in decision making processes based on constructive criticism, and allows interpersonal experiences to transition into intrapersonal understanding (Mercer, 2007). When participating in the cooperative games (*Play is the Way*, 2012), students have the opportunity to experientially learn the skills of exploratory talk. Webb (2009) maintains, however, that simply placing students in a cooperative learning environment does not guarantee that the dialogue they use will be conducive to learning, indicating that the games alone will not be sufficient in generating dialogue that cultivates self-awareness.

Herein lies the function of the reflective discussion that takes place as an imperative part of *Play is the Way's* experiential process (2012): where students can "review and appraise experiences of...relationships...and emotions... [in order to gain] a sense of how they relate to the world" (Neville & Schmidt, 2011, p. 49). External dialogue is identified as a vital component of self-reflection (Tsang, 2007) and deliberate dialogue been found to hold benefits in resolving conflict and maintaining relationships, important elements of social capability (ACARA, 2013; Chakraverti, 2009). The use of deliberate, external, reflective dialogue permits unproductive communication during the games to be revived, and the students' ability to achieve self-distancing to be observed (Ayduk, Duckworth, Kross & Tsukayama, 2011). McCaskill (2002) advocates the use of "straight talk" in these discussions: honest, tactful conversation between students and teacher about emotions and behavioural strengths and weaknesses. "Straight talk" has been found to be effective in enhancing social capability through challenging racial

discrimination and maintaining intercultural relationships (ACARA, 2013; Kirkland, 2000). Implications can be drawn from this regarding its potential across other sensitive discussion topics, such as those involving emotion and behaviour. Hence, an opening presents itself for my research, which will take into account the effects of “straight talk”, as part of McCaskill’s experiential process, on self-awareness (*Play is the Way*, 2012). Evidently, deliberate, external dialogue will play a valuable role in my study, as both a key component of the experiential program being tested (*Play is the Way*, 2012), and an indicator of quality reflective practice.

McCaskill (2002) outlines that quality self-awareness involves a strong vocabulary of “feelings words” (p. 40). A study of emotional intelligence in pre-adolescents measured empathy by the students’ use of emotional descriptors in response to pictures of facial expressions (Burnside et al., 2009). This indicates that, if use of emotional descriptors determines recognition of emotions in others, it could also be used to determine recognition of emotions in oneself. Students’ use of “feeling words” during reflective dialogue will be used as another indicator of their developing self-awareness.

“Self-awareness....can’t be achieved without time spent in the very good company of yourself” (McCaskill, 2002, p.166). In alignment with McCaskill’s view, Tsang suggests that external dialogue, while valuable, is interdependent on internal dialogue if reflective practices are to truly enhance self-awareness (2007). Internal dialogue uses “self-speak” (McCaskill, 2002, p.166) to engage with oneself, make meaning from experiences, and reflect upon feelings and behaviour (Tsang, 2007).

While the *Play is the Way* (2012) process allows for external dialogue, it doesn’t seem to provide time for students to be by themselves and partake in its internal counterpart that completes the “core of reflective practices” (Tsang, 2007). Metacognition can be promoted through keeping a personal journal (Fisher & The Highland Council, n.d.) that expresses and reflects upon emotions and evaluates behaviour. Similarly, self-expression and personal narratives can be represented through visual art, providing an enhanced awareness of oneself (Mulcahey, 2009; Jeanneret, O’Toole & Sinclair, 2009). Coholic (2011) found that a creative, arts-based approach to mindful reflection can in fact improve self-awareness. If my research is to thoroughly examine the effect of *Play is the Way* (2012) on self-awareness, there is a need to incorporate opportunity for students to calmly engage in “self-speak” (McCaskill 2002, 166), which I will seek to do in my research methodology.

SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE AND ITS RELEVANCE

By reviewing current literature on the topics of self-awareness, motivation and student-centred learning in detail, a gap has become evident. Many studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of student-centred, experiential, play-based, and

cooperative learning, dialogue, and the benefits of intrinsic motivation. Likewise, information about self-awareness and reflective practice is plentiful. However, I have been unable to locate studies that specifically explore the effectiveness of student-centred, dialogic, intrinsically motivating learning on self-awareness. This not only presents an opportunity for my research, but has also added definition and direction to my topic.

RESEARCH QUESTION

My overarching research goal was to investigate the effect of the experiential program *Play is the Way* (2012) on self-awareness in Year 4 students. From this, a more specific sub-question was developed to shape the study further: does *Play is the Way's* blend of experiential, cooperative, play-based games and reflective group dialogue laced with "straight talk" (McCaskill, 2002) improve reflective practice in Year 4 students?

METHODOLOGY

DESIGN

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research was chosen as the most appropriate design for this study, as its strengths come to light when investigating social phenomenon and offering interpretations that contribute to a holistic understanding of how humans make meaning from their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). My study was well suited to the holistic nature of qualitative research, as it demands an approach with the potential to sensitively and descriptively embrace human complexity and diversity (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I was looking for indications of students' reflective capacity as a measure of their self-awareness. Many of these were intricate, subtle and greatly varied according to participant diversity and my own interpretations. Qualitative research allowed me to attribute value to the uniqueness of human experience, acknowledging that my students' reflective capabilities cannot be merely reduced to a quantity, but instead should be engaged with perceptively and fluidly. In this sense, my study was a mixed-paradigm one, as I valued both the voices of my participants and my own interpretations of results (Riemer, Quartaroli & Lapan, 2012).

CASE STUDY

In order to “draw forth the essence of qualitative understanding – that is, experiential knowledge” (Stake, 2005, p. 454) a case study was implemented. Data collection enabled a deep understanding of the participants in my case study: a pre-selected group of Year 4 students, and the way their self-awareness was influenced by a deliberate social context – the *Play is the Way* experiential process (Merriam, 2009; Play is the Way, 2012; Stake, 2005). The research project qualifies as a case study because of its intent to focus on an individual, bounded case (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005). While examination of the *Play is the Way* program was necessary and relevant to my research, my priority was to focus on the students themselves, and their responses to it (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005). Throughout this case study, my thought processes were laced with reflection, which shaped my journey as a facilitator of the program and as a researcher throughout the process of data collection and analysis. Such reflection is deemed crucial for this type of research (Lichtman, 2013; Stake, 2005) in order for initial impressions to be re-examined and connected to contexts and experiences to give meaning.

It was my intention that this research would allow generalisations to be made and implications drawn as to pedagogy that successfully promotes self-awareness. For this

reason, my case study was instrumental, as it played a “supportive role” in generating an understanding of a broad issue that can be applied across different settings (Stake, 2005, p. 445). I did not purport to gain only an in-depth understanding of the students within the case (as would occur in an intrinsic case study), but rather to gain insights that are generally representative of Year 4 students (Stake, 2005).

By consulting literature on self-awareness, particularly reflective practice, I was able to develop a means of measuring it in my participants. The literature enabled me to develop six predetermined indicators for the study. These guided my data collection as I formed perceptions of self-awareness levels (see Appendix 1), and were adapted to form thematic categories and concepts during data analysis (see Appendix 9). The indicators were: self-distancing ability (Ayduk et al., 2011), perspectives of success and failure (ACARA, 2013), identification of behavioural strengths and weaknesses (McCaskill, 2002; Shanker, 2010), use of emotional descriptors (Burnside et al., 2009; McCaskill, 2002), internal reflective practice (McCaskill, 2002; Tsang, 2007), and self-consciousness or willingness to externally reflect (ACARA, 2013; Neville & Schimdt, 2011). The latter was not developed based on reviewed literature but rather on the awareness that participants may be self-conscious or reluctant to reflect due to unfamiliar data collection circumstances, especially as they approach the years of early adolescence (Marshall & Rossman 2006). Instead of deeming this a limitation, I recognised that self-consciousness can imply a lack of confidence or an attempt to uphold an external image instead of openly reflecting. Therefore, I made the decision to include it as an indicator that would assist me in assessing participants’ quality of reflective practice (ACARA, 2013; McCaskill, 2002).

CONTEXT

Research was conducted in a small, co-educational state primary school situated in an outer suburb of Brisbane. I chose this school after having completed practicum there in September 2012, during which time I became aware of *Play is the Way*’s potential (2012). My familiarity with the school and the availability of resources relevant to my research deemed it an accessible, appropriate location from which to collect data. Accessibility is noted as a key factor to consider when selecting a case from which much can be learnt (Stake, 2005, p. 451). The Principal of the school prioritises the development of personal and social capability in students. She is experienced in implementing *Play is the Way* (2012) and suggested that, for the purpose of this study, participants chosen be those that she had not yet implemented the program with, thus allowing the raw impact of the program to be more accurately evaluated. The co-facilitator of the experiential process and reflective activities during data collection sessions was another teacher at the school who, while initially less familiar with implementing the program, had the opportunity to practise during scheduled pilot

sessions (see Appendix 1, Pilot 1). Ethical clearance was formally sought and acquired from both the University and school prior to the commencement of data collection.

PARTICIPANTS

Case selection is of utmost importance to instrumental case study research, as the researcher has a predetermined issue that they wish to learn more about through examining the case, and the understanding gained is reliant on the quality of selection (Stake, 2005). Stake (2005) suggests that case study participants should be selected according to how much learning they will permit, and that atypical cases often fulfill this criterion extensively. This implies that, if studying students, a diverse cross-section should be selected so that they are as representative as possible of the general population for that age group.

The study participants that made up my case were six Year 4 students of mixed gender, selected from within a multi-age Year 2-4 class. I will refer to them by the pseudonyms of Andy, Lincoln, Vincent, Lydia, Loretta and Nick. The consent of these students and also their parents was attained before commencing the study, to aid development of positive, respectful relationships and ethical data collection. I required my participants to meet two criteria. Firstly, I wanted them to be no younger than Year 4, due to having a particular interest in students of the middle-school age group. Secondly, I required them to be unfamiliar with the *Play is the Way* program (2012), to enhance the validity of my results. McMurray, Pace and Scott (2004) would refer to my selection method as purposeful sampling, as participants were selected according to criteria that met the purpose of my instrumental case study, instead of being selected randomly. I agree with the technicalities of this term, however acknowledge that I needed to be somewhat flexible in my selection according to the school's class sizes and acquisition of parental consent.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

PILOT SESSIONS

Data collection commenced following four pilot sessions (see Appendix 1, Pilots 1, 2, 3 & 4). Pilot 1 involved familiarising the co-facilitator with the study and building rapport with potential study participants. In Pilot 2, potential study participants took part in modified activities similar to those used in data collection to enable the testing of observation schedules, and to introduce students to external and internal reflective dialogue. Consent and information forms were also distributed in this session (see Appendix 2). Consent forms were collected in Pilot 3, and practice interviews with non-participating students (from a different year level) were conducted to test the validity of my interview schedule. In Pilot 4, I facilitated the chosen experiential game with fellow

university students, and then interviewed them individually to practice facilitating dialogue based on real responses to a recent event.

DATA COLLECTION SESSIONS

Data collection took place in three sessions, conducted over three consecutive weeks and consisting of four phases (see Appendix 1, Data Collection sessions 1, 2 & 3).

Phase A

Each session began with *Play is the Way's* experiential process (Play is the Way, 2012). The entire Year 2-4 class participated in a chosen cooperative game: "Merry Go Round" (see Appendix 3; McCaskill, 2004), however data was only be taken from selected Year 4 participants. These students were deliberately grouped together to play the game so that they could be observed closely. "Merry-Go-Round" was used for every data collection session. Despite there being many games to choose from in the program, the students' slow progress in achieving the goals of this game warranted its repeated use.

Phase B

Participation in the game was followed by a group reflection on students' emotions, behaviour and success in the game through deliberate external dialogue (Chakraverti, 2009; Tsang, 2007). I sat with my study participants in a circle on the ground for this discussion, while the co-facilitating teacher conducted a similar discussion separately with the rest of the class. In facilitating the game and discussion, I provided guidance while ensuring that the process remained student centred. I used straight talk (Kirkland, 2000; McCaskill, 2002) and questioning during the reflective discussion to scaffold students in their reflection and adhere to the intentions of the experiential process (Play is the Way, 2012) (see Appendix 4). Throughout the game and discussion, students' emotions, behaviours and success levels were observed and recorded. The whole experiential process took one hour.

Phase C

After the experiential process was completed, the study participants had the opportunity to engage in internal dialogue (McCaskill, 2002; Tsang, 2007) through the creation of a reflective art piece. The art piece represented their emotional and behavioural encounters during the experiential process (see Appendix 5). They were given recommendations to complete this activity individually, without interpersonal interaction, so that they could meaningfully and internally self-reflect. Observations were made and recorded during this activity,

particularly regarding students' willingness to quietly and thoughtfully participate. This activity took thirty minutes.

Phase D

The final phase of the session involved an individual interview with each participant. During this, students relayed to me their narratives of experience throughout the game and discussion, using their reflective art pieces as dialogue prompting stimuli. They explained the meaning behind their art pieces, with reference to emotions, behaviour and experiences during the experiential process. The verbal responses to the interview were recorded, as well as observations of non-verbal responses. Each interview took between five and ten minutes.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Both interviews and observations were used to collect data, with the intention of enhancing the reliability of each method individually (Silverman, 2005).

OBSERVATION

I chose to adopt the role of "participant as observer" upon Gold's typology of naturalistic research roles (cited in Punch, 2009, p. 157), so that, through participation in the experiential process, data quality would be enhanced according to the complex intentions of the study. In the game, I opted to let students' experiences unfold rather than actively influence their behaviour, and offered guidance where I thought it necessary and appropriate. During the discussion however, I played a central role as facilitator.

My observations of physical, verbal and expressive behaviours were intermediately structured, guided by the pre-determined indicators but remaining open to additional points of interest. By this, I was taking into account the limitations of using structured and unstructured observations in case study research and seeking to find a balance between the two (Punch, 2009). For, as Stake (2005, p. 453) states, "For many researchers, to set out upon an unstructured, open-ended study is a calamity in the making. A plan is essential, but the caseworker needs to anticipate the need to recognise and develop late-emerging issues". While the case my indicators were prearranged to guide relevant focus and reduce the density of data for analysis and recording purposes, I expected that additional focuses might emerge according to the situational responses of participants (Punch, 2009). I used an intermediately structured

observation schedule for each phase of the session, organised according to participant, session phase and the nature of behaviours exhibited (see Appendix 7).

Reflective dialogue in the group discussions was also audio-recorded using an iPhone. My observations of the game alone were not sufficient evidence to indicate self-awareness. However, these personal impressions assisted me in determining a level of honesty and accuracy in students' reflective dialogue (see Appendix 1), as I was able to compare their narratives with my perceptions of their experiences.

As indicated by Kohn (1999), the participants' awareness of being observed and evaluated had potential to impede their ability to naturally partake in the activities, which did suggest the need for observations to be as unobtrusive as possible (Taber, 2007). During pilot sessions, I made some observations and interacted formally and informally with my participants. Through this, I hoped to establish trust and familiarity with the methods and procedures that would be implemented in data collection phases.

INTERVIEW

The individual interviews conducted with students relating to their reflective art pieces were semi-structured, so as to guide the direction of responses while also providing opportunity for self-awareness to be demonstrated without interruption (McMurray, Pace & Scott, 2004). This also helped in the promotion of my role as a non-authoritative one, aiding in the establishment of trust and comfort with the process (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Open-ended questions were used where possible to obtain reflections on behaviour, experiences and feelings. As is deemed important in semi-structured interviews, active listening was demonstrated, and follow-up questions were implemented where necessary to clarify or extend responses (Punch, 2009). All interviews were audio-recorded with an iPhone, and a semi-structured interview schedule was used, providing a framework for opening and follow-up questions, and allowing space intermediately structured observation notes taken during the interview (Marshall & Rossman 2006) (see Appendix 6).

INTERVIEW STIMULUS

The purpose of the interview was to determine the aspects of self-awareness that contributed to each participant's art piece during their internal dialogical experience (Tsang, 2007). For this reason, the art pieces were used as interview stimuli to trigger memories and fuel reflective narratives (Taber, 2007). Art was chosen as an appropriate prompting tool because it allows meaning-making from experiences (Jeanneret, O'Toole & Sinclair, 2009), and sharing artworks via conversation is believed to extend reflective practice and provide valuable insight into the creator's life and perspectives (Coholic, 2011; Mulcahey, 2009).

INSTRUMENTS

The validity and usability of both interview and observation schedules was tested during pilot sessions (see Appendix 1) (Taber, 2007). Additional instruments included a schedule outlining the proceedings of the sessions (see Appendix 8) and detailed game instructions (see Appendix 3).

DATA ANALYSIS

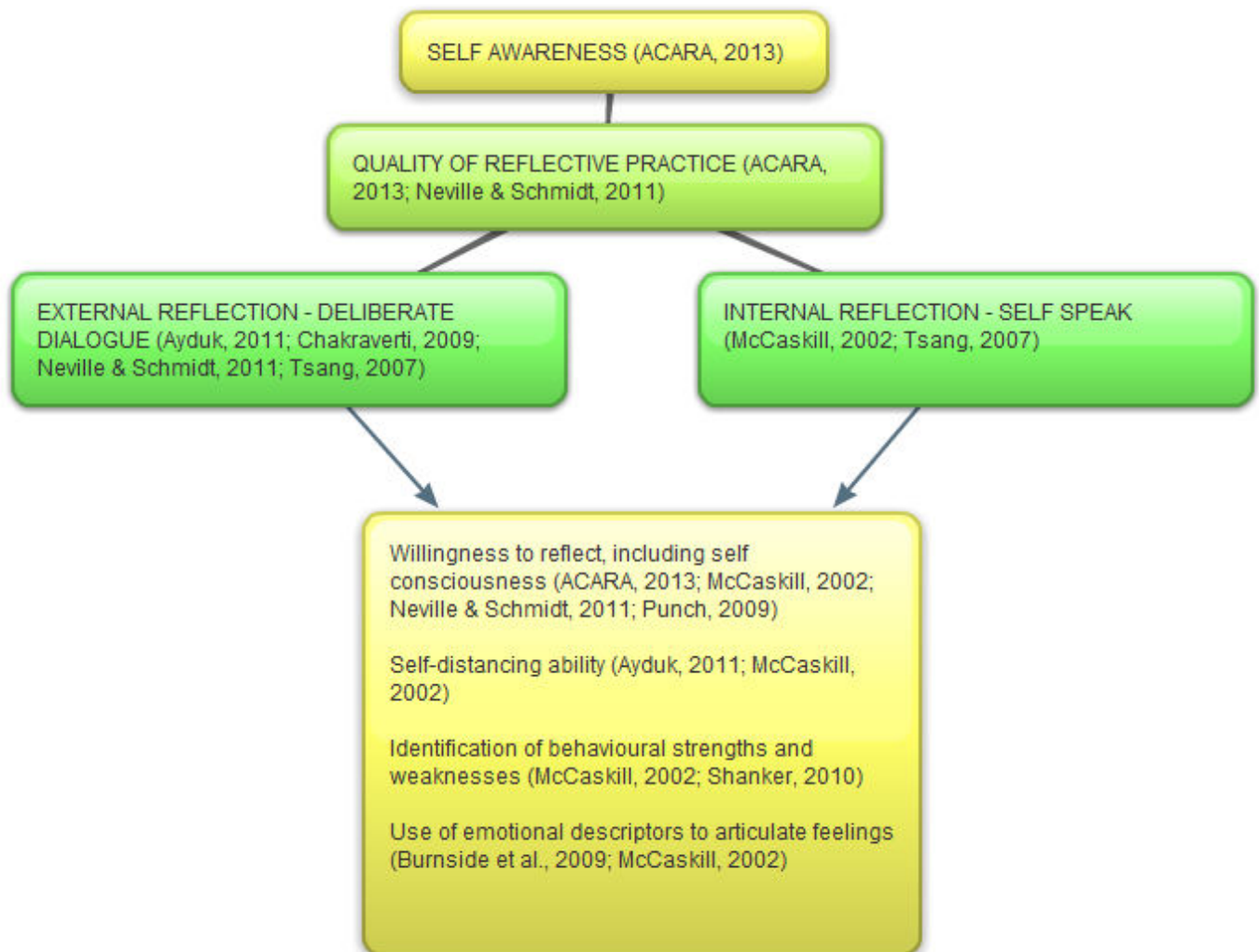
ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

In order to make sense of and synthesise the raw data, I conducted a thematic analysis using Lichtman's "Three C's" method of codes, categories and concepts, the results of which are communicated and enhanced using narrative (2013, p. 251).

Initial coding (Lichtman, 2013) involved discerning which observations and dialogue were of potential relevance and importance to my topic, and assigning codes accordingly. The coding stage was also underway when making decisions relating to which observations to record, including annotations on interview transcripts. From these critical elements, observations and insights were classified according to thematic categories, based on indicators determined prior to data collection (see Appendices 1 & 12) (Lichtman, 2013). These categories are grounded in researched concepts pertaining to self-awareness, which were revisited during analysis to attribute meaning to the perception-based data of this case study (see Figure 1) (Lichtman, 2013). Changes and continuities in these concepts were explored for each participant, in order to gauge the overall impact of *Play is the Way* (2012) on their self-awareness levels.

Results (below) relay the emotional and behavioural journey undertaken by each participant. More specifically, each participant's story begins with a brief introduction to their personality and a summary of change and continuity in their self-awareness, based on impressions of reflective practice. This is followed by an overview of the child's perceived emotions and behaviour during the three games, which lays the foundation for a subsequent assessment of any changes in the perceived quality of their reflective practice, based on concepts (see Figure 1). Excerpts from data, including transcripts, observation notes and art-pieces, are referred to and integrated in this final section, to illustrate findings.

Figure 1: Concepts of self-awareness upon which data analysis was based



RESULTS¹

PARTICIPANT 1: LYDIA²

SUMMARY OF CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN SELF-AWARENESS

Lydia is a softly spoken child, with a quiet thoughtfulness that showed in her kindness to others. Her self-management, social awareness and social management capabilities became evident throughout the experiential process, however she demonstrated a relatively low quality of reflection. Only subtle improvements were detected in her identification of strengths and weaknesses, self-distancing ability, and independent internal reflection.

PERCEIVED BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONS IN EXPERIENTIAL GAMES 1, 2 AND 3

Lydia's potential as a leader emerged in Game 1³, evident through the respect and honesty she showed to her team mates, and her attempts to increase communication as a means of achieving team cohesion. This proved a difficult task, as the challenges of the game had resulted in most group members failing to listen to each other, and acting silly instead of persevering to achieve the shared goal (see Appendix 9). This was frustrating for Lydia, an emotion which she selflessly did not "let out" in a way that would affect others. She did however, allow the frustration to impact on her own optimism and willingness to persevere and try new ideas, resulting in despondency and meekness for a large portion of the game. She lacked belief in her capabilities as a leader, and consequently also lacked assertiveness in taking authority within the group.

In Game 2⁴, Lydia markedly improved in her self-assurance as a leader. She remained empathetic, considerate and respectful, but found the courage to speak up assertively to her teammates, providing ideas and ensuring that encouraging, productive communication took place. She had a confident, calm, positive persona which positively impacted the team's success in the game (see Appendix 9).

The pressure of competition in Game 3⁵ affected Lydia negatively, revealing a competitive aspect to her personality. While she began this game with the same attitude and leadership strengths that she had exhibited in Game 2, her self-control lapsed when the intensity increased. She lost patience at her teammates, yelling at them aggressively, and claimed that the competition was unfair, denying accountability for not achieving success. She was less perceptive of her teammate's suggestions and needs, and her physical skills deteriorated due to lost focus. This only increased her aggravation, frantically and tendency to blame others.

CHANGES IN PERCEIVED QUALITY OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Lydia's levels of self-consciousness and self-distancing ability fluctuated, seemingly correlating with the extent of negative experiences during gameplay. Her apparent self-consciousness and re-immersion during the discussions and interviews following Games 1 and 3 proportionally reflected the frustration she had experienced. When discussing Game 1⁶, she was meek and hesitant in contributing. In the subsequent interview⁷, she responded shyly, with uncertainty, and often despondently when relaying negative experiences, preferring closed questions and requiring many prompts.

Upon commencement of the Game 3 discussion⁸, she was scattered and disengaged, clearly not having distanced herself from the uncontrolled agitation she had experienced in the game. She allowed herself to be distracted, giggling to avert accountability for not focusing on the conversation, which appeared to mask embarrassment and a reluctance to reflect on her weaknesses⁹. She showed slight improvement in her distancing ability as the discussion progressed, however, as she seemed to calm down and grow more comfortable in reflecting, responding positively to the non-threatening environment that was fostered by these discussions. She was calm, confident and actively engaged during the discussion following Game 2¹⁰, which corresponded with her positive emotions and behaviour during the game.

On the whole, Lydia had some degree of difficulty identifying her strengths and weaknesses, demonstrated through confusion and the need to be reminded of her behaviours through prompting questions. For example¹¹:

ME: Let's talk about you now.... You've told me about your feelings. What were your strong or weak moments in the game?

LYDIA: Um... I'm actually not quite sure.

ME: That's ok. What were the things that you said you'd try and improve on for this game?

LYDIA: Um.....Last week.....(unsure).....

ME: Remember how we had a chat just before the game to work out what we'd all work on for this week... what were the things that you said you'd try to work on?

LYDIA: Um..... Don't really know

ME: Remember how you let your frustration get to you last time we played?

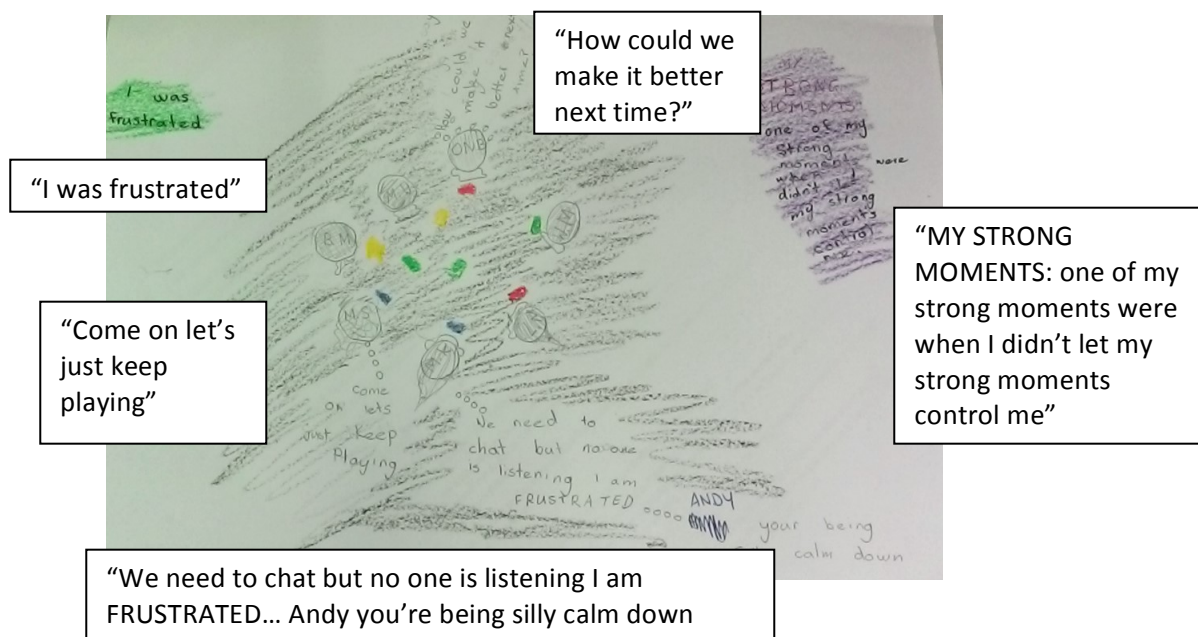
LYDIA: Yes

ME: How did you go with that this time?

LYDIA: Well I wasn't really frustrated because I didn't get frustration come to me... I didn't get frustrated because ... um... everyone was listening and we were better this time... and we had a chat at the start which made everything a bit better.

Lydia's empathetic nature is evident in Figure 2, where she intuitively depicted what she and others were thinking during Game 1¹²:

Figure 2: Artwork by Lydia - Week 1



Her astute social awareness, however, sometimes outshone the honesty of her reflections, as she admitted to some weaknesses that she did not appear to have, seemingly feeling obliged to rather than doing so for intrinsic benefit¹³.

Slight improvement was evident in her ability to recall her lack of emotional control in Game 3; this learning took place between the group discussion and interview, which the following excerpts will illustrate. When asked in the group discussion about feeling frustrated and how she acted as a result, Lydia responded¹⁴:

"Um...I'm not really sure...maybe a little bit...but I'm not really sure"

"Um – I think I um.....what was the question again?"

Vincent chipped in:

"Well maybe started to get a little bit frustrated about it..."

I added some straight talk:

“When things started to get dropped you started to let the frustration get to you. At the start of the game you were patient with your team mates and if they were having a weakness you were helping them through it... but you lost patience. You yelled “STOP IT” and things like that... and didn’t seem as controlled. That might be something you can work on.”

Nick also contributed:

“She could just use a firm voice. Cos when you go “guys STOP IT” it’s like you’re a bit angry at them.”

I asked Lydia how she felt about talking about her weaknesses, and she said:

“I don’t mind... I actually like it because then I know I have something that I have to work on for next time.”

Later, in the interview, I asked broadly about her weak and strong moments. Lydia’s reply demonstrated the benefits she had reaped from the previous straight talk¹⁵:

“Um probably one of my weak moments was when I was letting the um... umm...er... the frustration get to me a bit an I was shouting out to other people and saying “stop being silly” and other things like that.”

Lydia needed some prompting to use emotional descriptors in Weeks 1 and 2, however her vocabulary choices were reflective of the feelings I had observed during gameplay¹⁶. In Week 3 however, she preferred to focus only on positive feelings, which contradicted my observations in that I believed her to be frustrated during the game¹⁷. I felt that not confronting her apparent frustration was an avoidance strategy, which correlates with her re-immersion tendencies that were evident that week. Lydia became more focused, confident and independent during the art activity as the sessions progressed, indicating improved internal reflective practice¹⁸.

PARTICIPANT 2: NICK¹⁹

SUMMARY OF CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN SELF-AWARENESS

Nick is somewhat a livewire. While not overly loud, he has an energy that infects others and is also a loyal friend. Nick consistently reflected upon his experiences in a calm, engaged, confident and thoughtful manner, and with a sound vocabulary of emotional descriptors. Hence, no improvement was apparent or needed in terms of self-consciousness, self-distancing and use of feelings words. Some improvement was evident in his awareness of his own strengths and weaknesses, however he consistently had some difficulty in discerning between ability and behaviour. His internal reflective practice also improved.

PERCEIVED BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONS IN GAMES 1, 2 AND 3

Like Lydia, Nick stood out as a leader in the group as Game 1 got underway²⁰. While in challenging times (see Appendix 9) he felt some frustration and exasperation, he controlled his emotions and remained calm and optimistic as he tried to communicate with and respectfully organise his teammates. At times, he got caught up in the bedlam that transpired (see Appendix 9) and neglected to listen to others; he also lacked the assertiveness that would have enabled him to more effectively suggest new strategies to the group.

In Game 2²¹, Nick's assertiveness improved. This was particularly evident when he gave honest feedback to peers who were behaving inappropriately, and supported them in managing their weaknesses. Where his teammates felt threatened by the success of another team, Nick was resilient and open-minded, allowing himself to be inspired and seizing the opportunity to learn new strategies. He was proactive in suggesting strategies to the group, but also valued the ideas of others. Once again, he was well in control of his emotions and maintained a positive, calm outlook. It became apparent that Nick sets very high expectations for himself in terms of ability and achievement, as he later claimed to be very frustrated at himself for dropping the beanbag once. This was an incident which appeared only a mistake and not worthy of such a response. His frustration was not observable, once again reflecting his high level of emotional control.

Nick continued to exhibit strengths with a quiet confidence in Game 3²². These included straight talk, patience, optimism, intense focus on his own performance, and mostly making an effort to listen to and support others. The latter was especially relevant when Lincoln was experiencing frustration upon being ignored by his teammates. Nick was clearly empathetic with Lincoln's plight, however could have gone to greater lengths to pay attention to his ideas and support him in delivering them to the rest of the group.

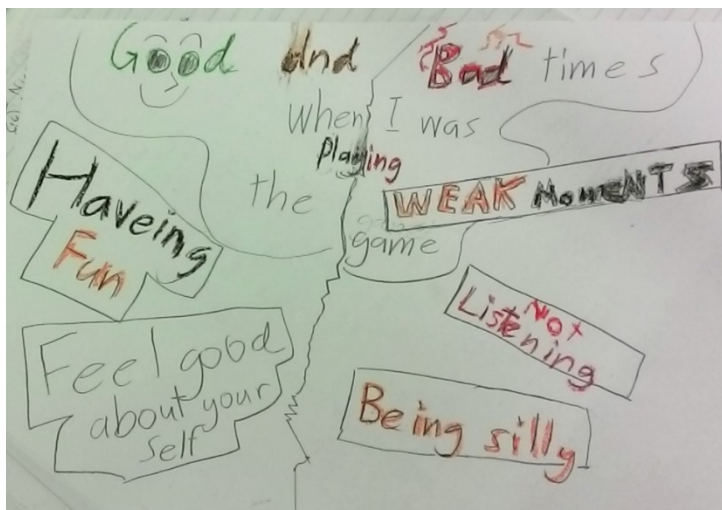
CHANGES IN PERCEIVED QUALITY OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

In each of the discussions and interviews, Nick was fully engaged and willing to make thoughtful, relevant, insightful contributions, some of which I had to prompt to clarify and extract further depth. He also showed confidence and comfortability in reflecting on his own and other's behaviour, revealing no signs of self-consciousness²³. Similarly, he was consistently calm and distanced from the frustration he sometimes experienced in the games²⁴. It is difficult to accurately ascertain his self-distancing ability however, due to his obvious aptitude in controlling negative emotions and preventing them from surfacing.

The most notable reflective challenge Nick faced was that of identifying behavioural strengths and weaknesses. He was able to accurately identify some, but had an early tendency to focus on general experiences and team behaviours rather than his own. For example (see Figure 3)²⁵:

Figure 3: Artwork by Nick - Week 1

"Well, my picture was basically what happened when we were down there. So I've done a kind of a line up here and I have weak moments and strong moments. With the weak moments I have things like not listening and being silly on there, because people in the thing were sometimes being silly and not listening."



He also struggled at times to ascertain the difference between ability and behaviour, often attributing success or failure to the former. For example²⁶:

ME: And what did you do... you individually, not just the whole team... what in particular were your strongest moments of the game?

NICK: Probably when I came up with the idea of clapping and passing it ... the idea of the rhythm. Because Andy had said that it was hard to keep count if we're each going "1, 2, and 3"

In actual fact, his true strengths were open-mindedness, optimism, initiative and communication. His behaviour lay the foundations to his and the team's success: more so than his ability to generate ideas.

He also believed that one of his biggest weaknesses was when he

"did start to drop the beanbag a bit..."

which was a weakness

"because you're kind of failing the team... 'Cos the whole point of the game is to not drop the beanbag"²⁷

If Nick had been distracted or behaving inappropriately when he dropped the beanbag, this indeed would have been a weakness. However, this did not appear to be the case. On the contrary, he seemed to be trying incredibly hard to keep focus. From Nick's perception of personal weakness, I sensed a certain pressure that he puts on himself to achieve high standards. Nick's perspective of success and failure in association with personal strengths and weaknesses was still evident in Week 3, indicating no improvement in this aspect²⁸.

He did, however, demonstrate a deep and sophisticated understanding of his own strengths and weaknesses in the final group discussion, which showed metacognition about his own strengths and weaknesses had strengthened over the three sessions²⁹. His independence during internal reflection also increased over the course of the study³⁰.

PARTICIPANT 3: ANDY³¹

SUMMARY OF CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN SELF-AWARENESS

Andy is a jolly child with a confident air and a knack for conversation. I found it difficult to ascertain whether or not Andy's self-awareness improved overall, due to the complexities and irregularities of change and continuity within and between concepts as he enacted them. While his levels of self-consciousness and self-distancing seemed dependent on the negativity of his experiences, he made subtle improvement these areas. His already high quality of internal reflective practice improved slightly, as did his feelings vocabulary in some respects.

PERCEIVED BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONS IN GAMES 1, 2 AND 3

In Game 1³², Andy maintained a cheery disposition, despite difficulties that were taking place (see Appendix 9). Though his optimism was a strength, his determination to enjoy himself often led to some off-task, playful behaviour that distracted him from listening to his teammates and contributing as he should have been. It seemed to me that this behaviour was a means to avoid persevering with challenges, and alleviate any uncomfortability that may have resulted from doing so.

Andy made a concerted effort to control his behaviour in Game 2³³, which was successful for most of the game. He was also much more focused with what was happening, and contributed to the team by encouraging others, offering sensible ideas, and mostly receptive to the feedback of his peers when they encouraged him to adjust his behaviour. His control lapsed somewhat upon the realisation that his team was not up to the standard of others in the class (see Appendix 9). The pressure seemed to affect him: silly behaviour began again, he became frustrated and impatient at being given feedback, and was quick to blame his teammates for any shortcomings.

Andy's behaviour in Game 3³⁴ played out in a similar way to the previous week. His strengths – optimism, politeness, encouragement, involvement, self-control, receptiveness – shone through in the early stages, as he helped his team to achieve their goal (see Appendix 9). When competition pressure increased however, his self-management deteriorated. He threw the beanbags around to amuse himself, instead of listening to his teammates' suggestions. His behaviour focused on his own needs rather than his teams', at the expense of their success.

CHANGES IN PERCEIVED QUALITY OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

In Weeks 1 and 3³⁵, Andy engaged confidently in external dialogue, with a slight improvement in articulation responding to open questions with less prompting by the last session. He was always enthusiastic to contribute to the discussions in these weeks, however sometimes became disengaged and impatient at the length of time that he was required to listen to the contributions of others. His calmness indicated he was well distanced³⁶. In Week 1, he initially found it hard to give reasons for his off-task behaviour in the discussion; this improved in the interview, as he took on board suggestions given by his peers and delved into the way he was feeling³⁷.

This discussion³⁸:

ME: ...I want to challenge you to think about WHY you were being silly... Andy do you want to have a go?

ANDY: Well I kind of liked the feel of when someone would give me a beanbag and I would swap it around with my beanbag... and I was kind of being a bit silly.

NICK: It's just like with bullying... sometimes the bullies can feel good about it.

MISS CARTER: Can you explain that a bit more Nick?

NICK: Well sometimes when a bully is bullying... they sometimes feel good cos they did feel bad about themselves and they want other people to feel bad... so they make them feel bad.

MISS CARTER: What a good idea. Are you saying that Andy wasn't feeling good about the game – I'm just using you as an example Andy, I know you weren't the only one who was being silly – so to make himself feel better, he decided to be silly with the beanbags? Do you think he's right Andy?

ANDY: Yep.

led to this interview response³⁹:

ANDY: I don't really know why I was distracted or silly... maybe just because..... *(pauses, thinking, remembering discussion)*...I was..... it was getting a little bit too tough and I just wanted to make sure I had a good time so sometimes I just be silly and..*(trails off)*

Self-consciousness and self-immersion became evident in Week 2⁴⁰, reflecting the negative emotions Andy experienced in the latter half of that game. He was in a scattered frame of mind during the discussion⁴¹, appearing less engaged, thoughtful,

and self-assured. He hesitated more in giving responses, which seemed to reveal a level of embarrassment. This hesitancy was also evident in the interview, but he was much more focused and committed, indicating that the reflective discussion had a positive influence on him⁴². Similarly, he was able to thoughtfully create a comprehensive art-piece that week, which was

“supposed to be a grapevine...and the brown ones meaning my weak moments and the light colours meaning my strong moments.”⁴³

He seemed to be more comfortable confronting his negative experiences in the privacy of internal reflection than he was dialoguing with others in that particular week.

Andy was consistently able to recognise his own behavioural strengths and weaknesses, and his ability to openly admit to his shortcomings was acknowledged by Vincent in the final group discussion⁴⁴:

“I just want to say something about Andy. I think he was one of the best people at controlling his weaknesses and talking about them... about his own weaknesses... I think he’s one of the best in the group at talking about it. He’s one of the people with the most weaknesses butt he always talks about them and he knows that next time “I should try and control my weaknesses and turn them into strengths’.”

As the sessions progressed, Andy required less prompting to use emotional descriptors accurately and comprehensively⁴⁵, and his focus increased during internal reflection⁴⁶. This picture (see Figure 4) and explanation demonstrates his consistent ability to internally reflect in a balanced way upon his strengths and weaknesses, expressing this very artistically.

Figure 4: Artwork by Andy - Week 1



“Ok so this side in the circle means that I had a good time, and this side means that I had a bit of some hard times as well... so weak, strong.”⁴⁷

PARTICIPANT 4: LORETTA⁴⁸

SUMMARY OF CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN SELF-AWARENESS

Loretta has a bubbly disposition, and is seemingly eager-to-please no matter the circumstance. She underwent a marked improvement in self-awareness throughout the study, particularly in terms of her self-consciousness, identification of strengths and weaknesses, and internal reflection: concepts which were of a relatively poor standard at the beginning. Her ability to self-distance also improved but, like other participants, this was dependent on the negativity of her experiences. Her emotional vocabulary was consistently descriptive and honest.

PERCEIVED BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONS IN GAMES 1, 2 AND 3

Loretta made a great deal of effort to optimistically persevere in the face of the challenges that confronted her team in Game 1⁴⁹. She showed initiative in seeking new solutions when others weren't successful, and was an active voice in the group. However, she lacked communication skills, acting overbearing and bossy instead of cooperating and listening. Her decisions were often rash, and she appeared frustrated, tense and flustered for most of the game.

Loretta was much calmer and remained positive for most of Game 2⁵⁰. She refrained from interrupting and listened to her teammates, taking into consideration the needs of her teammates and unselfishly offering support. Her decisions were more informed, and she tried hard to maintain her strengths when pressure on the team increased (see Appendix 9). Her team's lack of progress did agitate her, causing a relapse of the hastiness and self-centeredness at times, but her overall contribution to the team improved significantly.

In Game 3, I was impressed as Loretta emerged as an upstanding leader in the group, revealing much personal development had occurred over the three sessions⁵¹. She remained calm and positive – a source of strength for others – even amidst the pressure of competition, encouraging and gently organising her teammates while remaining empathetic and receptive. She also displayed outstanding sportsmanship, applauding the other teams on their success. Her only apparent weaknesses were becoming a little scattered and losing focus when she dropped the ball, and also ignoring Lincoln when he was having difficulty in gaining the group's attention.

CHANGES IN PERCEIVED QUALITY OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

In Week 1, Loretta was eager to contribute external dialogue to the point of being hasty, long-winded and dominating, which mirrored the agitated behaviour she had displayed

in the game and hindered deep, thoughtful reflection⁵². This indicated re-immersion, as did her behaviour while partaking in internal reflection⁵³.

Self-consciousness was also evident in that week. Loretta's hastiness was defensive at times, seemingly driven by an urgency to keep control over the conversation and to justify her actions. This indicated that she may have been fearful of confronting her weaknesses or being accused⁵⁴. For example⁵⁵:

ME: Put your hand up if you think Loretta might have been a bit silly sometimes in this game.

LORETTA: *(almost defensive... quick to speak before others could say opinions about her)* I have been a bit silly in this game, but it was a bit... the only times I tried... it's because.... It wasn't working for anybody... and everybody was getting annoyed and everything.

Her body language in the interview also implied self-consciousness and defensiveness, notably in anticipation of talking about weaknesses⁵⁶:

ME: Do you think you listened to everybody?

LORETTA: *(voice gets slightly frantic and speaks faster)* Well not everybody..... cos..... well... I listened to a few people then everybody started talking over and stuff and that's when I got a bit annoyed so that's why I said "everybody let's get up"... but nobody got up.... So....

She was also very much inclined to reflect on the whole team's strengths and weaknesses rather than her own, both externally and internally⁵⁷. I sensed that Loretta felt ashamed and uncomfortable with having had a personal weakness, and was expecting to get into trouble. My intention was to foster a dialogic environment that was non-threatening for this type of conversation, but she still seemed to feel threatened.

The following two sessions revealed progressive improvement in Loretta's reflexivity, in alignment with her increased self-management, social awareness and social management during the games. Most significant was her increased confidence, openness and calmness in reflecting, even when talking about her personal weaknesses, and the relevance and succinctness of her responses. She occasionally showed signs of self-consciousness and re-immersion, but was able to control them⁵⁸.

I noticed that she still stuttered at times, and preferred to discuss collective rather than individual issues, but was very receptive to gentle correction⁵⁹:

LORETTA: Well my strengths was probably ... well coping well with Peter going... 'oh this is so annoying' and stuff... and well... I don't think

ME: How did you cope with it? What did you do that was a strength?

LORETTA: Well we –

ME: Not we, you....!

LORETTA (shy laugh): I was trying to encourage him and say “you can do it”... and um... yeah... “we’ll get there soon” and ... um... it was.... And well a few people were messing around too like Andy... and Vincent were messing around at the very end of the thing.... And they were getting a bit annoyed that we weren’t getting as far as we wanted to.

She clearly felt less threatened, and became much more comprehensive in her identification of strengths and weaknesses, with uncertainty being based more on the increased complexity of her reflections rather than denial, embarrassment or reluctance⁶⁰. She also demonstrated in Week 3’s interview and discussion that straight talk had a direct, positive impact on her⁶¹.

Loretta also learnt how to calmly, independently & creatively focus during internal reflection⁶².

PARTICIPANT 5: LINCOLN⁶³

SUMMARY OF CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN SELF-AWARENESS

Lincoln is a calm thinker. I felt that he has a vivid sense of the “big picture”, along with some perfectionist tendencies. Lincoln’s reflective practice showed some improvement in terms of his identification of strengths and weaknesses and internal dialogue. He was consistent in his use of emotional descriptors, and in his willingness to reflect without self-consciousness, with slight improvement in actively contributing to discussions. His ability to self-distance, once again, was heavily reliant on his enjoyment of the game.

PERCEIVED BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONS IN GAMES 1, 2 AND 3

Lincoln’s quiet confidence was observable in Game 1⁶⁴, and he remained in firm control of his emotions, appearing calm and optimistic throughout. He was thoughtful and aware of the need for his team to increase their communication (see Appendix 9), which he did suggest to them with conviction on one occasion. His powerful voice and calm mannerism would have been of increased benefit to the team if he had been more assertive and spoken up more often. Lincoln also got caught up in some silly behaviour when his team was in a state of disarray (see Appendix 9).

In Game 2⁶⁵, Lincoln continued to control his emotions and was able to prevent any inappropriate behaviour from occurring. He exhibited a mature perspective when viewing the other team’s successful demonstration, respecting their accomplishments rather than feeling threatened. He became much more assertive, a strength which could have been further enhanced by providing tactful, honest feedback to his peers who were responding negatively to the other team’s success (see Appendix 9).

Game 3⁶⁶ held some negative experiences for Lincoln. He began strongly, providing encouragement, support and advice to his teammates with his usual calm, positive persona. However, as communication deteriorated (see Appendix 9), Lincoln found his suggestions were being blatantly ignored. This frustrated him, but he remained patient and persisted with trying to gain the attention of the group. He did not let his frustration become apparent to the other students, instead allowing it to fester internally and impede upon his mood and focus.

CHANGES IN PERCEIVED QUALITY OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Lincoln did not display any signs of self-consciousness, and consistently provided thoughtful, relevant, confident contributions. He did require prompting questions to encourage elaboration upon his concise responses, but volunteered to speak more frequently in Week 2 than Week 1⁶⁷.

When Lincoln's game experiences were positive, he was calm in his reflection, although he did display a slight tendency to avoid talking about the controllable negative emotions that he had felt⁶⁸. For example (see Figure 5):

Figure 5: Artwork by Lincoln - Week 1



However, he became quite re-immersed when reflecting upon his negative experiences in Game 3: the emotions he had not been so successful in controlling. This included disengagement from the discussion, and a slightly indignant tone in the interview. He also seemed to have lost some self-assurance in his responses⁶⁹.

Lincoln, in his recognition of behavioural strengths and weaknesses, demonstrated his most detectable improvement between the discussion and interview in Week 3, clearly benefitting from the feedback he received from others. At first, he showed an implicit

awareness that he had let his frustration negatively affect him, evident in the following uncertainty⁷⁰:

ME: Sure. Lincoln, how did you feel when your team mates weren't listening to you?

LINCOLN: I was actually getting a little bit frustrated.

ME: And do you think you controlled that frustration?

LINCOLN: Ahh

(Others chime in "YES you did")

LORETTA: He controlled it because everyone else was speaking and he didn't get annoyed and say "guys it's my turn" and he just kept on keeping his hand up.

He seemed unaware that, even though he had not completely controlled this emotion, not allowing it to affect his peers was a strength and they viewed it as such. In the interview however, with prompting, he showed recognition of his emotional control in that instance being both a weakness...

ME: What did you do with your frustrated feeling?

LINCOLN: Ahh – I kind of let it come to me. Which was probably a weak moment?

...and a strength⁷¹:

ME: OK. And did you let your frustration out at other team members?

LINCOLN: No

ME: And would that be a strength or weakness?

LINCOLN: A strength.

Lincoln improved in his internal reflective practice over the course of the study, moving from a slight reliance on external dialogue to independent focus while drawing⁷².

PARTICIPANT 6: VINCENT⁷³

SUMMARY OF CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN SELF-AWARENESS

Vincent is an amicable child with a placid nature, seemingly a friend to all. His reflective practice improved profoundly over the three data collection sessions. While his sound self-distancing ability remained constant, improvement was evident in his self-consciousness, articulation, identification of strengths and weaknesses, emotional vocabulary and internal dialogue.

PERCEIVED BEHAVIOUR AND EMOTIONS IN GAMES 1, 2 AND 3

Vincent's greatest strength in Game 1⁷⁴ was his capacity to remain level-headed and positive, despite a high degree of confusion that he experienced when his team was struggling to communicate (see Appendix 9). He found it difficult to cope with or alleviate this confusion, which resulted in losing focus and making mistakes.

In Game 2⁷⁵, Vincent endeavoured to master his befuddlement, working hard to stay focused. This he managed to do for most of the game, including being a more active contributor to problem solving discussions. He continued to be optimistic and was a calming influence, unthreatened by the other teams. The pressure from potential competitors did indirectly impact him however, as he became overwhelmed again when team cohesion fell apart (see Appendix 9). This resulted in some mild silly behaviour.

In the final game⁷⁶, Vincent conquered his confusion. He discovered that alerting his teammates when he was starting to get confused was an effective strategy in controlling it. He maintained focus throughout the entire game, despite the challenges it presented for the team (see Appendix 9). He was both actively involved and supportive within the group, making suggestions and providing encouragement to help his peers control their weaknesses.

CHANGES IN PERCEIVED QUALITY OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Vincent's clarity of thought improved remarkably, evident in his increased confidence and articulation during reflection. In the beginning, he would only contribute when asked due to self-confessed shyness⁷⁷ and, though he was engaged, required many closed prompting questions to extract meaning from his somewhat muddled responses⁷⁸. Vincent was much more eager to contribute to the group discussion in the following week, and the coherence of his responses improved⁷⁹. By the final session, his comprehensive, relevant contributions reflected sophisticated metacognition and deep focus⁸⁰.

Improvement in Vincent's identification of behavioural strengths and weaknesses was most detectable in his decreased tendency to refer to general rather than individual behaviours, and also his enhanced ability to discern between feelings and behaviour⁸¹. The following data illustrates the development that took place in these two aspects.

Over the three weeks, Vincent's explanations of his reflective art piece progressed (see Figures 6 & 7) from⁸²:

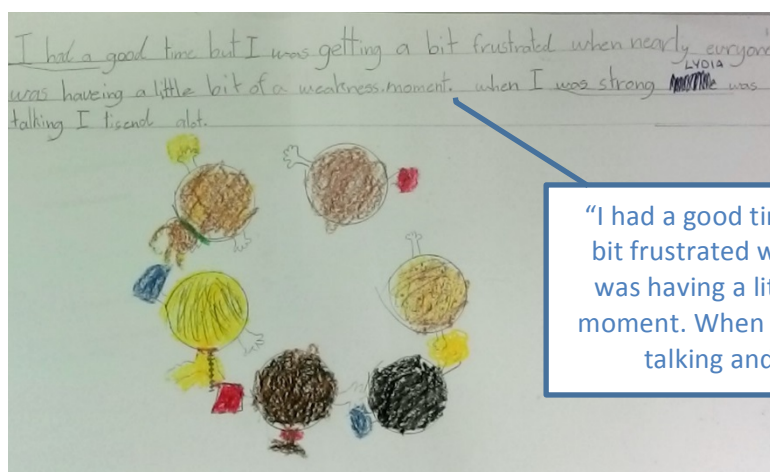
"Well I've drawn a picture about what you'd look like if you had a strong or a weakness"



Figure 6: Artwork by Vincent - Week 1

To:

Figure 7: Artwork by Vincent - Week 2



To:

“But I’m really going to focus on what I was doing... I was... well I was trying to be a strength and it did work out really.”⁸³

This also indicates improvement in his internal reflective practice, as his two artworks showed me that he had become more comfortable reflecting upon himself directly and in detail.

Vincent’s understanding of whether feeling confused was a behavioural weakness developed from:

“Mmmmm II think..... Half and half”⁸⁴

To:

“I did feel confused but I didn’t let it out. I made it a strong instead of a weak.”⁸⁵

In terms of using feelings words, Vincent discovered the power of articulating his emotions during gameplay⁸⁶, and acknowledged this during external reflection⁸⁷. His honesty, readiness and detail in describing emotion improved over the three sessions, most notably between Weeks 1 and 2⁸⁸. In addition to his enhanced self-focus during internal dialogue, Vincent also became more independent in completing the reflective drawing⁸⁹.

¹ See Appendices 10-48

² See Appendices 10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28

³ See Appendix 12, [p.1]¹

⁴ See Appendix 25, [p.1]¹

⁵ See Appendices 38 [p.1]¹ & 9

⁶ See Appendices 10 & 12[p.1]²

⁷ See Appendices 11¹ & 12[p.1]³

⁸ See Appendices 36 & 38 [p.1-2]²

⁹ See Appendix 36, [p.2-3]¹

¹⁰ See Appendices 23 & 25 [p.1]

¹¹ See Appendix 24 [p.1]

¹² See Appendix 11[p.1]

¹³ See Appendices 24 [p.2]¹ & 12 [p.2]²

¹⁴ See Appendix 36[p.2-3]

¹⁵ See Appendix 37 [p.1]

¹⁶ See Appendices 11 [p.1,3]² & 24 [1]²

¹⁷ See Appendix 38 [p2-3]³

¹⁸ See Appendices 12[p. 2-3]⁴, 25[p.3]² & 38 [p.3]⁴

¹⁹ See Appendices 10, 13, 14, 23, 26, 27, 36, 39 & 40 Not sure why there is a space here?

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- ²⁰ See Appendix 14[p.1]¹
- ²¹ See Appendices 27[p.1]¹ & 9
- ²² See Appendices 40[p.1]¹ & 9
- ²³ See Appendices 10, 23, 36, 14[p.1]², 27[p.1-2]² & 40[p.1]²
- ²⁴ See Appendices 10, 23, 36, 14[p.1]³, 27[p.2]³ & 40[p.1]³
- ²⁵ See Appendix 13[p.1]
- ²⁶ See Appendix 26[p.1]
- ²⁷ See Appendix 26[p.1-2]
- ²⁸ See Appendix 36[p.6]²
- ²⁹ See Appendix 36 [p.2,5,6]³
- ³⁰ See Appendices 14 [p.2]⁴, 27 [p.3]⁴
- ³¹ See Appendices 10, 15, 16, 23, 28, 29, 36, 41, 42
- ³² See Appendix 16[p.1]¹
- ³³ See Appendix 29[p.1]¹
- ³⁴ See Appendix 42[p.1]¹
- ³⁵ See Appendices 16[p.1]² & 42[p.1]²
- ³⁶ See Appendices 16[p.1]³ & 42[p.2]³
- ³⁷ See Appendix 16[p.2]⁴
- ³⁸ See Appendix 10[p.5-6]
- ³⁹ See Appendix 15[p.1]
- ⁴⁰ See Appendix 29[p.2]²
- ⁴¹ See Appendix 23[p.1-2]¹
- ⁴² See Appendix 29[p.2]³
- ⁴³ See Appendix 28[p.1]
- ⁴⁴ See Appendix 36[p.10]⁴
- ⁴⁵ See Appendices 16[p.2]⁶, 29[p.3]⁵, 42[p.2-3]⁵
- ⁴⁶ See Appendices 16 [p.2]⁷, 29 [p.3]⁶, 42[p.3]⁶
- ⁴⁷ See Appendix 15[p.1])
- ⁴⁸ See Appendices 10, 17, 18, 23, 30, 31, 36, 43 & 44
- ⁴⁹ See Appendices 18[p.1]¹ & 49
- ⁵⁰ See Appendix 31[p.1]¹
- ⁵¹ See Appendix 44[p.1]¹
- ⁵² See Appendix 18[p.2]² & 10
- ⁵³ See Appendix 18 [p.3]³
- ⁵⁴ See Appendix 18[p.1]⁴
- ⁵⁵ See Appendix 10[p.6]
- ⁵⁶ See Appendices 18[p.1,2]⁵ & 17[p.2]
- ⁵⁷ See Appendix 18[p.2-3]⁶
- ⁵⁸ See Appendices 31[p.1]² & 44[p.1-2]²
- ⁵⁹ See Appendix 30[p.1]
- ⁶⁰ See Appendix 44[p.2]³
- ⁶¹ See Appendices 36 [p.1-2, 8-9]⁵ & 43[p.1]¹
- ⁶² See Appendices 31[p.3]³ & 44[p.3]⁴
- ⁶³ See Appendices 10, 19, 20, 23, 32, 33, 36, 45, & 46
- ⁶⁴ See Appendix 20[p.1]¹
- ⁶⁵ See Appendix 33[p.1]¹
- ⁶⁶ See Appendix 46[p.1]¹
- ⁶⁷ See Appendices 20[p.1]² & 33[p.1-2]²
- ⁶⁸ See Appendices 20[p.1]³ & 33[p.2]³

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- ⁶⁹ See Appendix 46[p.1-2]²
⁷⁰ See Appendix 36[p.7]
⁷¹ See Appendix 42[p.2,3]
⁷² See Appendices 20[p.2]⁴, 33[p.3]⁴ & 46[p.3]³
⁷³ See Appendices 10, 21, 22, 23, 34, 35, 36, 47 & 48

⁷⁴ See Appendix 22[p.1]¹
⁷⁵ See Appendix 35[p.1]¹
⁷⁶ See Appendix 48[p.1]¹
⁷⁷ See Appendix 35[p.2]²
⁷⁸ See Appendices 10, 21 & 22[p.1]²
⁷⁹ See Appendices 23, 34 & 35[p.1]³
⁸⁰ See Appendices 36, 47 & 48[p.1]²
⁸¹ See Appendices 22[p.1-2]³, 35[p.2]⁴ & 48[p.2]³
⁸² See Appendix 21[p.1]¹
⁸³ See Appendix 41[p.1]
⁸⁴ See Appendix 34[p.3]
⁸⁵ See Appendix 47[p.1]
⁸⁶ See Appendix 48[p.1]¹
⁸⁷ See Appendix 36[p.4]⁶
⁸⁸ See Appendices 22[p.2]⁴, 35[p.2]⁵ & 48[p.2]⁴
⁸⁹ See Appendices 22[p.2]⁵, 35[p.3]⁶ & 48[p.2]⁵

CONCLUSION

This thesis has shown that the overall impact of the *Play is the Way* experiential program (2012) on self-awareness in the Year 4 participants was a positive one (see also Appendix 49). Though a vast majority of improvements were subtle and complex, each child showed that their reflective capacity had benefitted in some way over the course of the study. In most cases, concepts either improved or plateaued, with few instances of worsened reflective practice.

This study increases the limited breadth of research on the relationship between experiential learning and self-awareness. *Play is the Way's* (2012) effectiveness is supported, correlating with Hoppe et al.'s findings regarding its positive impact on social behaviour (2004). Additionally, my results are reinforced by research into the successful use of experiential learning programs in nurturing children's self-awareness, amongst other personal skills, in preparation for leadership (Scheer & Safrit, 2001).

Some prominent trends presented themselves as significant to the results of the study, warranting further discussion and exploration in the future. These were: dependency on negative experiences, links between self-awareness concepts and resilience, the role of dialogue, and internal reflection through art.

Of particular interest to me was participants' self-distancing abilities, which commonly fluctuated according to the negativity of their experiences while playing the games. This made it difficult to accurately evaluate improvement in this aspect of reflective practice, particularly when some students had their most significant negative experiences in the final game (for example: Lydia and Lincoln). This finding is backed by Morgan (2009), who suggests that reflective practice is "triggered by an awareness of uncomfortable feelings or thoughts" (p. 161), followed by analysis and reformed perspectives on the issue at hand. Such feelings or thoughts are undoubtedly more likely to surface and easier to detect when negative experiences occur. Therefore an accurate self-awareness assessment based on observable deficits, such as re-immersion (Ayduk, Duckworth, Kross & Tsukayama, 2011), is somewhat reliant on this.

My findings on self-distancing and the related literature reveal that, for future research, it is important to consider the role that negative experiences play in a reliable appraisal of self-distancing (Ayduk, Duckworth, Kross & Tsukayama, 2011). This trend of fluctuating re-immersion levels does add validity to McCaskill's belief in the need for children to actually experience adversity in order to learn how to cope with it (2002). A more conclusive result for this concept might have been achieved if the study took place over a longer period of time, or perhaps used an unfamiliar game for each session to ensure that all students had negative experiences. It is also of note that the students I chose for

this study attend a school with a reputation for exceptional behavioural conduct; this is another variable that could be manipulated in future research to alter the extremity of reactions to the challenging experiential tasks.

This research has demonstrated that some self-awareness observations, particularly to do with identifying and comfortably reflecting upon behavioural strengths and weaknesses, are inextricably linked with resilience (Hippe, 2004). Therefore, it is relevant that I discuss them through this lens. Nearly every participant improved in their ability to identify strengths and weaknesses, and of particular significance is Loretta's initial reluctance to talk about her weaknesses and Nick's confusion between ability and behaviour. Loretta's early re-immersion and self-consciousness, and the apparent pressure Nick placed upon himself to achieve highly, implied that a fear of failure was present in two forms. This relates to self-awareness as an avenue towards resilience (Hippe, 2004; Martin & Marsh, 2003; Leong, 2008). Both participants revealed a level of uncomfortability with admitting instances of weak behaviour: relative failure. Their fear of failure manifested itself in Nick's "overstriving" tendencies and Loretta's defensiveness and deflection from individual to team accountability, signs of "self-protection" (Martin & Marsh, 2003, p. 31).

While Nick's apparent failure-avoiding tendencies did not seem to improve, Loretta's confidence and reflective capacity increased through repeated involvement in the experiential process (*Play is the Way*, 2012). This improvement aligns with the strategies that Martin and Marsh (2003) suggest help students move from a fear of failure to success-orientation, the desired alternative: learning focus, control, self-belief and value of school. *Play is the Way* was evidently able to foster these, through its intrinsic focus and the authentic, empowering opportunities it provided for learning and development (Martin & Marsh, 2003; *Play is the Way*, 2012). Modeling confident, honest reflection upon strengths and weaknesses, as took place in the reflective discussions, is also found to enhance the self-aware qualities that catalyse resilience (Hippe, 2004). A more prolonged study may have also revealed similar improvements in Nick's fear of failure, and I would also like to explore fear of failure and resilience in relation to extrinsic motivators such as competition.

The most unquestionable improvements in self-awareness across participants can be attributed to the exploratory dialogue that took place during reflective discussions (Mercer, 2007). There were several instances in which students, through their interview responses or discussion contributions, showed that they had learnt directly from constructive criticism given by either myself or their peers. As anticipated, McCaskill's incorporation of empowering language – "straight talk" – into the experiential process not only developed students' essential skills in exploratory dialogue, but also allowed them to reap personal benefits from cooperative reflection, correlating with current

research in this area (Kirkland, 2000; Mercer, 2007; McCaskill, 2002; *Play is the Way*, 2012; Webb, 2009). The effectiveness of group discussions in this study highlights the advantages of implementing cooperative learning, but also emphasises the need to allow time not only for deliberate discussion, but for students to learn the skills of honest, tactful critique that ensure such discussion is conducive to learning (Emde et al., 2001; Webb, 2009).

The contribution of arts-based reflection to my study findings warrants some discussion. All students improved in their ability to partake in internal reflective practice. Furthermore, I found it particularly valuable that Andy, when he appeared to be in a state of re-immersion, seemed more comfortable in documenting his weaknesses artistically “in the private theatre of [his own] thoughts” (Fisher, 2006, p. 149) than talking about them with others. This shows what an imperative role internal reflection plays in self-awareness, which is representative of literature on the topic.

Reflective meditation, of which the art activity was a form, is suggested to not only improve metacognition, but also articulation in external dialogue and social behaviour (Fisher, 2006). My participants’ enhanced aptitude to engage in internal dialogue aligns with these suggested benefits, and also Coholic’s research into the effectiveness of arts-based reflection (2011). However, I ponder over whether this signifies *Play is the Way*’s effectiveness (2012), or is of greater relevance to the impact of the reflective art activity. The assumption could be made that this activity in and of itself may have impacted self-awareness levels in addition to facilitating my evaluation of the program. Herein lies another opportunity for further research to clarify the effectiveness of arts-based reflection in isolation to the experiential process.

It is also necessary to acknowledge that the use of art in qualitative data collection may receive criticism due to being subjective, ambiguous and relatively untested when compared with traditional research methods. It does however, have a growing reputation as a qualitative methodology. Finley (2005) suggests that art is an avenue for diverse perspectives to gain agency and recognition. In addition, its ambiguity gives rise to varied interpretations which, in turn, promotes dialogue between people (Finley 2005). For this study, these benefits outweighed the uncertainties surrounding the use of art. The creation of an art piece as a reflective activity gave my participants the opportunity to depict their perspectives uninterrupted by external influences, and stimulated dialogue as they retold their personal narratives in the interview. I believe that using art to give students voice has somewhat counteracted the unreliability of my personal impressions.

Is play the way? This case study explored the impact of *Play is the Way* (2012), an experiential, cooperative, play-based, dialogical program, on Year 4 students’ self-awareness, assessed through the perceived quality of their internal and external

reflective practice. The program was found to be effective, particularly due to the real-life challenges it presented and the opportunities it permitted for empowering language to be used between students. Results of the study indicate that teachers, in seeking to develop personal and social capability in accordance with curriculum requirements, can enhance their practice by looking beyond the short-term advantages of behaviour management and embracing the lifelong benefits of experiential learning.

Outcomes generated could be further validated with an extended or modified version of this study, which allows all participants to encounter negative experiences and also have sufficient time for change or continuity in reflections on these to be evaluated. The role that arts-based internal dialogue plays in enhancing self-awareness could also be individually explored. This study was complex and subjective, as self-awareness is so closely intertwined with other elements of personal and social capability. Numerous tangents presented themselves for future research, around the development of self-management, social awareness and social management, as well as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

In summary, by using a program such as *Play is the Way* (2012), teachers can unlock students' ability to achieve their full potential, by equipping them with a strong, realistic sense of identity. Therefore, yes: play is indeed the way.

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