An exploratory study of drama and video-based activities in late childhood

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Abstract

An exploratory study of drama and video-based activities in late childhood

Healthy socioemotional development in childhood is key to successful societal functioning adulthood (Kim, 2016). Prosocial behaviours such as showing empathy, navigating friendships, and resolving conflict can be challenging if proper socioemotional development is interrupted or delayed in childhood (Spivey & Mechling, 2016). This can be especially challenging for some populations where nuance is difficult, as many of our societal rules are communicated indirectly. Various developmental and environmental factors may interfere with healthy socioemotional development (Alzyoudi, Sartaw, & Almuhiti, 2014).

While these factors sometimes lead to disorders, they also translate to low level of social competence in children (Landy & Bradley, 2014). This low social competence may lead to victimization and rejection in childhood and may even follow an individual into adulthood (Bellini & Akullian, 2007).

Most school-based social skills programs are based on direct instruction and focus on special needs populations (Wilson, 2013). However, Positive Youth Development (PYD) takes a holistic view and assumes that every child has potential that can be nurtured (Damon, 2004). Furthermore, current studies neglect to fully investigate how more highly socially competent peers can benefit from interacting with those with less social competence.

There is also evidence that empathy and friendships can act as protective factors against victimization and bullying (Masten, 2014). Empathy can also be fostered in those with higher social competency by integrating with those with lower social competence (Corbett et al., 2011). Drama and video-based activities have been used in after-school and extra-curricular programs for some time. There is evidence that these fields have components that can help with indirect socioemotional learning (Emunah, 1994).

This phenomenological project takes an exploratory approach to drama and video-based activities in an after-school context. Through this project, we observed children with different levels of social competence interact in a collectively creative way. Overall, findings suggest that creating a process-oriented after-school program, with the child at the center, and strong consistent adult relationships affects levels of trust, agency, and negotiation.

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One of the key components to proper functioning in society, both in childhood and as an adult, is healthy socioemotional development (Kim, 2016). This includes prosocial behaviours such as empathy and caring, appropriate emotional self-regulation, and the making and maintaining of age-appropriate friendships (Spivey & Mechling, 2016). Children typically acquire such skills through social interactions from birth through their school years, with different milestones achieved at each stage of development (Kim, 2016). Healthy socioemotional development occurs through a mix of direct instruction and indirect observation. While the former is observable and adjustable, the latter is nuanced and often unconscious (Alzyoudi, Sartaw, & Almuhiti, 2014).

Various environmental and individual factors may interfere with healthy socioemotional development. For example, children with developmental disabilities (e.g., Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)), may have trouble interpreting subtle social cues key to communication (Landy & Bradley, 2014). Life stressors, such as bullying, disturbances in the home, and learning differences may lead to emotional impulsiveness and problems with behavioural self-regulation (Cross, 2011; Petrakos, Monette, & Strike-Schurman, 2017).

Consequently, the development of important social aspects, such as empathy, theory of mind, and executive functioning may be delayed or impaired. These impairments can lead to emotional and behavioural deficits that follow children into adulthood (Kassardjian et al., 2014). Individuals who struggle to navigate daily social interactions may be vulnerable to rejection and victimization across their lifetime (Bellini & Akullian, 2007).

<div align="center">**Literature Review**</div>

Social Learning Theory

Bandura's Social learning theory posits that, though learning can and does occur through direct instruction (e.g., academic instruction or parental teachings), acquiring nuanced and unspoken rules of a given culture or society is impossible to learn exclusively in this manner (Bandura, 1971). Children learn the bulk of these day-to-day behaviours vicariously through the observation of others, who serve as inadvertent role models. According to Bandura (1971), learning of this kind occurs when an individual attends to someone (initially a parent or caregiver, and later a peer or friend) exhibiting a certain behaviour, can mimic said behaviour, and observes environmental reinforcement or punishment that is relevant to the observer.

A person's first role model is their parent or caregiver. As they develop, other adults (such as teachers) and same-aged peers (such as siblings and classmates) can serve as figures to be emulated (Wilson, 2013). Learning is most effective when the role model is a person of authority, has expertise, or has an emotional connection with the observer. In this sense, both adults and peers can serve as role models to learners at any developmental age if they adhere to these conditions (Shukla-Mehta, Miller, & Callahan, 2010). The second phase of learning according to this theory is that the behaviour must be within the physical or psychological grasp of the learner. They should be able to mimic the target behaviour, either on their own or with some assistance (Bandura, 1971). Learning is even more likely if the model breaks down the task step-by-step and coaches the individual throughout (Wilson, 2013).

Finally, the environmental reinforcers must be relevant to the learner (Bandura, 1971). A child may be interested in and able to mimic the target behaviour. However, without an adequate

reward or salient outcome relevant to their wants or needs, motivation to learn and persist in the face of obstacles may not come to be (Dweck, 2002).

Motivation. Research shows that individuals who are intrinsically motivated to learn are more likely to persist in pursuing and mastering a challenging goal (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). Token economies and other forms of external reward, while useful in some instances or in the short-term, do not typically translate into long-term successful acquisition and generalization of a behaviour (Dweck, 2002). This point is especially relevant when it comes to children with special needs where treatment gains can be seen within the treatment context but fail to generalize to other environments (Landy & Bradley, 2014; Reber, 2012). Members of this population may, for a variety of reasons, find it difficult to pursue a certain behaviour outside a treatment context. Adversity and anxiety may interfere with their ability to engage in the learned behaviour (Laugeson, Ellingsen, Sanderson, Tucci, & Bates, 2014). Alternatively, they may not see the value in performing a certain behaviour if rewards have mainly been given externally, without the necessary steps taken to internalize their motivations (Dweck, 2002). This is especially difficult with certain populations, such as those with ASD or low adaptive and social skills, who may struggle to remember social scripts, understand context cues, and, by extension, context-appropriateness (Laugeson et al., 2014).

Some current therapies designed to address these issues (e.g., social stories, Applied Behavioural Analysis) convey social messages or teach specific skills. These are useful to demonstrate social rules and etiquette to individuals who need careful and clear instruction, such as those with ASD or intellectual disabilities with low IQ and adaptive functioning. However, these programs struggle to make learning meaningful to the individual. Motivation can therefore

be low when the child in question does not see the purpose of the task at hand (Laugeson et al., 2014).

That said, Self Determination Theory (SDT) outlines a model wherein children can learn to internalize external motivation so that external reinforcers are no longer needed. According to this theory, motivation can begin extrinsically but can be phased out and transformed into intrinsic motivation. In fact, this theory posits that most behaviours are acquired by children through these steps and intrinsic motivation in adulthood can be rooted in adequate teaching in childhood (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

A humanistic and holistic approach to mental health, Positive Youth Development (PYD) is an extension of the Positive Psychology movement. Positive Psychology was introduced by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) as a response to the disease-model that was adapted in early Psychology practice. The idea in Positive Psychology is that, rather than look at mental health as something to treat when it goes badly, we can look at those with healthy psyches and learn from them. It focuses on cultivating and encouraging positive individual traits and study what elements make people flourish.

This approach was naturally extended to children and adolescents, with the PYD model. Rather than focus on potential risk-factors, PYD looks to identify positives in youth and encourage potentiality. It also assumes that children are capable and willing civic members who want to contribute and help others:

> [PYD] begins with a vision of a fully able child eager to explore the world,
> gain, and acquire the capacity to contribute importantly to the world…It aims
> at understanding, education, and engaging children in productive activities

rather than at correcting, curing, or treating them for maladaptive tendencies

or so-called disabilities. (Damon, 2004)

Benefits of Extracurricular Programming. PYD takes a holistic approach to mental health and development and looks at where the child is placed in relation to the community. In schools, this means that for children to excel, interventions must not be rigid or confined to the classroom. The culture of the school influences the child's mental health and overall development. To unlock individual potential, support must come not just from teachers, but peers and other adults in the school as well (Damon, 2004). If the culture of the school supports PYD, it creates an environment in which every child's mental health is nurtured at all times, rather than parents or staff only interfering when problems arise (Huebner & Gilman, 2003).

This culture of positive development nurtures important relationships between peers, but also between children and adults. According to Masten (2014), when schools provide opportunities for children to bond with non-parental adults in a safe environment, it creates daily opportunities for guidance. She describes these relationships as providing "adults who can function as positive role models, mentors, purveyors of social capital, and otherwise as generally knowledgeable sources." (pg. 228). She also states that both children who have good parental attachments and difficult home environments can benefit from these relationships. Again, this promotes positive development: adults focus on all children, not just those at-risk. They also do not need to wait for problems to arise to interact with children in their environment. Nurturing a trusting relationship means that youth are also more likely to confide in them during difficult moments, again, reducing the need of only stepping in when something has gone wrong.

Masten (2014) also points out that while teacher-student relationships are important, extracurricular activities provide opportunities for children to find diverse role models outside of

an academic setting. As well, they can learn skills outside of the classroom without the pressure of evaluation, which promotes a mastery orientation and contributes to individual motivation (Dweck, 2002). These spaces also allow children to interact with peers they may not have met in their classroom. This may be especially important if they do not fit in well with the group in their home classroom, as they can create positive relationships with peers and adults who have similar interests to them (Masten, 2014).

There is also evidence that well-structured after-school programs that prioritize personal and social skills in children have an overall positive impact on school life. Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan (2010) did a meta-analysis, comparing studies which looked at American after-school programs with a focus on social skills building and personal relationships in children and adolescents. They found that programs which took the SAFE approach (Sequenced, Active, Focused, and Explicit) were linked to significant increases in self-perception, prosocial behaviours, and test scores when compared to control.

Social competence

Children whose socioemotional development has been delayed or disrupted may encounter problems at every level of observation. These delays or disruptions may come with a decrease in social competence. While there is no consensus on the definition of social competence in developmental literature, Rose-Krasnor (1997) conducted a comprehensive review and found that social competence was broadly defined as "effectiveness in social interaction" (pg. 1). She broke this down into four types of operational definitions in research:

Specific Skills. Perhaps the most common approach, this category approaches social competence as a set of specific desirable skills that can be measured objectively through behavioural checklists, such as the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS). According to Rose-

Krasnor (1997), this approach is more popular because it allows for a standardized measure of social competency which can then be applied to social skills interventions.

Sociometric status. Sociometric status is an approach where children are asked to evaluate the popularity of their peers. Peer rejection is associated to negative outcomes, such as delinquency and risk of school dropout. Rose-Krasnor (1997) points out however that popularity and perceived social skills are correlational: we do not the direction of this relationship and therefore cannot say that peer rejection is a result of low social competence or vice-versa.

Relationships. Social competence is defined as the child's ability to make and maintain positive relationships, especially friendships. This approach assumes that relationships are transactional, and the quality of the relationships relies on the social competency of both partners. "A child who interacts with a socially skilled partner is likely to have a higher quality relationship (and thus appear more competent) than the same child interacting with a less skilled partner." (Rose-Krasnor, 1997, pg. 115).

Rose-Krasnor (1997) also makes the distinction between horizontal and vertical relationships. In a horizontal relationship, the child interacts with a same-aged peer who is equally socially competent, and the relationship equally reflects the social competency of both partners. In a vertical relationship, the child is interacting with someone in authority, usually an adult or an older peer/sibling. The relationship is then scaffolded by the more powerful partner and reflects the latter's social competency more saliently.

Functional outcomes. Finally, this definition is context-specific and is most concerned with specific social goals within a given environment. Built off the information processing model, this approach assumes that social competency is achieved when the child has an external goal as a focus. The child becomes directed towards a goal, monitors their progress towards this

goal, and finally, can reflect on their experience and information. This allows them to redirect themselves as need be, problem-solving and pivoting in order to achieve their goal. True social competence means that all three systems are in place and function smoothly, resulting in healthy self-regulation.

Operational Definition. In this study, we use an eclectic definition of social competence that reflects these four categories. We define social competence as: the ability to make and maintain positive relationships and friendships, even in the face of conflict; work toward a goal and in groups (i.e., self-regulation); and be well-liked by teachers and peers (i.e., social validity and sociometric status). We also make the assumption that social competency is reflected in peer relationships, and role modelling occurs in these circumstances.

Peer Relationships

Children who show less social competence may be neglected or rejected, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and hopelessness. If more social competency skills are not acquired, these feelings may follow children into adulthood, and may develop into serious mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Laugeson et al., 2014).

Integrated settings offer children of all abilities the opportunity to interact and learn from one another. However, children with low levels of social competence may have trouble making friends with more peers who show more social competence. As a result, they may miss out on opportunities for social interaction and practice. Issues may also emerge if socially competent peers lack understanding, compassion, and patience. Recall Rose-Krasner's (1997) point of the importance of vertical relationships. If peers with more social competence do not accommodate for those with less social competence, this may lead to neglect or outright rejection or bullying. (Laugeson et al., 2014; Shtayermman, 2007). Moreover, if children with more social competence

do not learn how to show empathy and understanding towards those with less social competence, these attitudes may carry into adolescence and adulthood (Laugeson, 2017). Fostering these attitudes in childhood are especially relevant since, by the time one reaches adolescence, reciprocal and intimate friendships become high priorities, sometimes over family relationships and academic outcomes (Masten, 2014). Lack of these meaningful friendships in adolescence therefore, may lead to poor long-term mental health prospects (Laugeson et al., 2014).

Positive friendships in childhood may also serve as protective factors. Vandell and Hembree (1994) found that, regardless of social status, positive friendships were correlated to better academic outcomes and socio-emotional management. There is also evidence that having positive friendships may lower instances of bullying and peer victimization (Bollmer, Milich, Harris, & Maras, 2005).

Historically, research on socioemotional development in children focuses on helping those with disabilities to integrate into society, with mixed results (e.g., Flynn & Healy, 2012; Hui, Schulze, Rudrud, & Leaf, 2016; Kim, 2016; Spivey & Mechling, 2016). However, a few studies have examined the benefits of peer support in mental health treatment in adults, and the effects on destigmatization of mental health issues and diagnoses. Results show that peer support can improve feelings of self-efficacy in mental health patients, ease social transitions, and promote classroom integration (Carter & Kennedy, 2006; Malke et al., 2017). This is significant, because stigmatization may dissuade individuals or their caregivers from seeking treatment for fear of social rejection (Corrigan, 2004).

Social Skills Interventions. To help children develop social competencies, researchers, practitioners, and educators have developed interventions focusing on children with social skills disorders, designed to be used within classrooms. The one most often recommended as evidence-

based is Social Stories, a teacher-created program that aims to teach social skills through storytelling, metaphor, and direct instruction (Wilson, 2013). In this approach, teachers read texts or use visual aids to tell stories with themes and key phrases that are used as topics for class discussion. A storyteller may integrate role-modelling during storytelling, but it is not a requirement (Kassardjian et al., 2014).

However, recent studies have brought into question the effectiveness of this program. In 2010, Kokina and Kern ran a meta-analysis and concluded that the claims of Social Stories' effectiveness were questionable. In that same year, Test, Richter, Knight, and Spooner (2010) did a review of studies that tested the effectiveness of Social Stories on children with ASD. They found that only 6 of the 18 studies examined showed moderate improvement in social skills. The authors went so far as to say that they would not recommend Social Stories as an evidence-based practice.

The main problem with Social Stories is the rigidity and instructional nature of its format. Each story is centered around 4 categories of sentences: descriptive, perspective, affirmative, and directive. While a story can be catered to an individual or group, the storyteller is bound by these four categories. Social stories can successfully be used to explain a certain behaviour, and serve as a bouncing off point for discussion. However, it does not offer a chance to practice the behaviours learned and thus fails to generalize to other contexts (Laugeson et al., 2014).

Other interventions have been developed, which are more personalized and interaction-based. For example, a 2016 study by Hui and colleagues compares Social Stories to Teacher Interaction Procedure (TIP). TIP advocates a six-step approach that includes breaking down a behaviour into discrete and manageable steps; discussing the context in which the behaviour might arise; and role modelling and imitation (Hui et al., 2016).

Compared to Social Stories, TIP is far more interactive and flexible. TIP practitioners work with their clients to understand the meaning of a behaviour within and outside a given context. This co-created meaning makes the behaviour relevant to the learner who can make links to other situations in their lives. Hui et al. (2016) found that participants in the TIP condition reached mastery of a target behaviour while those in the Social Stories condition did not. A 2014 study by Kassardjian and colleagues successfully replicated these results.

Laugeson's PEERS program was also developed as an alternative, evidence-based social intervention (Laugeson, Frankel, Gantman, Dillon, & Mogil, 2012). Though the program was initially developed to cater to adolescents with low and high functioning ASD, it has been adapted to individuals of all ages with varying issues, such as ADHD, depression, and anxiety (Laugeson, 2017). The goal of the PEERS program is to coach students to react in ecologically-valid ways; i.e., teach students how more socially competent peers behave within given situations.

PEERS also uses visual aids and role play to inspire student self-reflection and examination. PEERS invites participants to compare their social behaviour to that of their more socially competent counterparts in order to show them, in a realistic fashion, where they differ (Laugeson, 2017). The PEERS program integrates behaviour modeling and role-play, works to motivate participants through their personal needs, and has shown to successfully generalize outside of the coaching sessions (Laugeson, et al., 2012).

Peer-mentors and Empathy. Though studies that teach social skills do not normally focus on the attitudes or behavioural changes in peers, some effects have been recorded. For example, in a pilot study, Corbett et al. (2011) ran a drama-based intervention aimed at improving the social skills of eight adolescents with ASD. The participants were assigned

neurotypical peers as models for the dramatic role they were tasked to play. While there was some improvement in theory of mind and face recognition skills of the teenagers with ASD, an unexpected side-effect was that their partners showed them increased empathy, social referencing, and communication. The researchers also reported that these effects were generalized. The typical peers showed more sympathy and interacted more frequently with all types of students with disabilities outside of the context of the study. The authors chose not to explore this aspect when they expanded their study in 2014, but left open the possibility of exploring this effect in future research.

In a 2016 qualitative analysis, Griffin, Wendel, Day, and McMillan (2016) studied the Next Steps program at Vanderbilt University. This 4-year program caters to students with special needs who wish to obtain a university education and broaden their career prospects. The program admits adults aged 18 to 26 with a previously diagnosed intellectual disability and who were served an individual education plan in high school. To aid the student during their time at the school, neurotypical peers volunteer to mentor the Next Step students. The peer-mentors serve as lunch partners, workout partners, academic tutors and daily planners. In this capacity, they help Next Step students build social skills, learn healthy habits, and develop organization and study skills that will help them after they have graduated (peabody.vanderbuilt.edu, 2017).

According Griffin et al. (2016), not only did this benefit the students with disabilities, but all of the 17 peer-mentors interviewed during the study reported the development of genuine care and friendship with their assigned mentee, as well as a feeling of personal growth. Some of the participants also reported their intention to pursue future careers and volunteer opportunities working with the disabled, demonstrating the long-term impact this type of program can have.

Dramatherapy

Dramatherapy is a relatively novel approach within creative arts therapies. Dramatherapy uses many different drama-based techniques, such as role-play, storytelling, and mask and puppet work, to work through life events and achieve various therapeutic goals (Landy, 2006). This approach can be used for individual and group therapy to address a multitude of issues for different age groups (nadta.org, 2017). Its flexibility is one of its greatest strengths, either as a main source of treatment, or as support in an eclectic treatment approach (Landy, 2006)

Research into the benefits of drama-based therapies is in its early stages. Though sample sizes are small, and the scope of the studies are limited, initial results are promising. Corbett et al. (2014) explored the effectiveness of peers as role-models within a theatrical framework. The researchers ran a 2-week summer camp and implemented a program developed in the Social Emotional NeuroScience Endocrinology (SENSE) lab designed to improve reciprocal social interaction in children with ASD. The program targets social cognition, social awareness, and facial processing. Children aged 8 to 17 with a diagnosis of ASD were paired with same aged peers, and were double cast in the same role in a larger production. The typical peer was tasked with teaching the role to the atypical peer over the course of the camp with the support of counselors and video-modelling. The typical peers were also tasked with encouraging their partner's play behaviour outside of the designated rehearsal times. As social skills were acquired, peers gradually faded out their coaching and guidance.

Corbett et al. (2014) found that the youth with ASD showed lower levels of overall stress, an increase in active peer engagement and involvement, better face processing skills, and higher scores on social functioning and adaptive measures. Home living and self-care skills also

improved. However, eye contact did not improve, and social gains did not generalize to non-camp environments.

The PEERS program is not considered a form of Dramatherapy, but incorporates similar techniques (i.e., role-playing, behaviour rehearsal, and coaching) and has been successful in generalizing positive gains outside of a treatment context. According to Laugeson et al. (2012), this is because students are taught ecologically-valid social scripts and prompts. By mimicking more socially competent counterparts, PEERS students see success in their own interactions which lessens anxiety and encourages social initiation. Parental support and follow-ups are also a key part of the PEERS approach, which is something that is lacking in Corbett's (2014) study. Furthermore, coaches and students co-create the meaning of social behaviours, which helps to clarify and internalize motivation (Laugeson, 2017).

Other drama-based programs have also had successful results. D'Amico, Lalonde and Snow (2015) measured levels of social skills and problem behaviours in six male children, aged 10 to 12, with high-functioning ASD. The researchers first measured the participants' social skills using the SSIS-RS, administering the test to both the children and their parents. The results were used to identify areas of focus for a subsequent intervention (e.g., communication, assertion, cooperation etc.). Various dramatherapy techniques were used to address each child's individual strengths and weaknesses. Therapeutic sessions were held once a week for 75 minutes, over 21 weeks. This eclectic, individualized, and flexible approach utilized several dramatherapy techniques, such as establishing a dramatic reality, role play, and storytelling. The researchers aimed to improve empathy and social skills, as well as explore other psychological issues.

The children reported that they had a safe space to explore their internal issues and practice social behaviour without the pressures of reality. They were also given an opportunity to express themselves indirectly, and be part of a collaborative effort. This is important because these types of children often find themselves socially rejected or neglected, so being part of a group effort is not always a reality. According to the authors, the children felt a sense of empowerment rarely experienced in their daily lives. The group showed significant increases in social engagement and decreases in externalizing behaviours, such as inattentiveness and hyperactivity.

Guli, Semrud-Clikeman, Lerner, and Britton (2013) ran a pilot study exploring the effects of the Social competence Intervention program (SCIP). This drama-based group intervention was administered once a week for 16 weeks in an After-school context. It focused on 39 students (31=M) aged 8 to 14 with ASD, a non-verbal learning disability (NLD) and/or ADHD. The researchers used a mixed-method approach, interviewing the participants and their parents along with psychometric tests (i.e., the SSRS, the BASC, and the DANVA2) to measure social competence, social perception, and naturalistic behaviour pre-and-post the SCIP intervention.

A typical SCIP session consists of a cooperative warm-up game followed by 2 to 3 drama activities that tie into the topic of the day (e.g., how to start a conversation), which are then discussed as a group. The children were then given suggested homework to practice skills that would tie into the next session topic (e.g., observe how others start a conversation and journal about it). Like the PEERS approach, parents are an integral part of this program, as they are privy to the therapeutic goals and topics of the sessions, and are assigned with helping the children complete the at-home tasks.

After 16 sessions, the authors compared an experimental group to control. Both groups showed improvement on clinical measures. However, the authors observed significant increases in social interactions in the experimental group relative to control. Parents in the experimental group also reported that their children reached out more socially outside of the sessions. This indicates more improvement of social skills in naturalistic settings, such as the playground and the school cafeteria, and better generalization in the SCIP condition. The majority of children in the SCIP group also reported feeling that they were better at making friends and reading non-verbal cues.

Godfrey and Haythorne (2013) did a qualitative analysis of teacher and parental feedback of children with ASD attending Roundabout dramatherapy sessions (Godfrey is the co-founder of the program). Roundabout is a private dramatherapy association based in the UK. Interventions include one-on-one therapy as well as small or large group settings. This program employs many types of Dramatherapy techniques, such as storytelling, improvisation, and puppetry. They focus on development of social skills, trust, creativity, and self-confidence, among other things (roundaboutdramatherapy.org.uk, n.d.).

Godfrey and Haythorne (2013) interviewed 42 parents and educators involved with the program and found 5 major themes that the caregivers felt encompassed the children's experience with the program: a safe space to explore their feelings; making friends; role play as a way to learn and practice social skills; familial involvement/extended social system; and the structure and predictability of drama which lessened their anxiety.

This last theme is an aspect of drama that may be highly advantageous for those with disorders where rigidity is an issue. For children with ASD, for example, unpredictability and breaking from routine can cause great anxiety (Reber, 2012). Children with ADHD or SID may

find the processing of multiple cues disorienting, which can cause frustration (Landy & Bradley, 2014; Reber 2012). Dramatherapy bridges this gap. While it does call for flexibility through things like rehearsal and improvisation, it gives children a framework in which to work and heal. While new elements are introduced throughout the process, the base and foundation never change without their say so. These feelings of safety and predictability can therefore lessen anxiety.

Video Modelling. Behavioural modelling interventions are largely based on Bandura's Social Cognitive theory, with elements of Vygotsky's Social Learning theory. While each iteration of behaviour modelling has its own procedure and nuance, they all share the common trait of breaking down complex tasks into discrete steps or stages that are more manageable and easier to understand. In short, an observer learns by watching and interacting with another person who acts as a role model (Wilson, 2013).

Video Modelling (VM) is an innovative approach to behaviour modelling. VM has been researched as a support tool when teaching social skills, empathy, and play skills to children with ASD (Bellini & Akullian, 2007; Charlop & Milstein, 1989; Nikopoulos & Keenan, 2004). It has also been used to teach vocational and social skills to adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities (Allen, Wallace, Renes, Bowen & Burke, 2010; Spivey & Mechling, 2016). VM is particularly well-suited for individuals with sensory disorders, such as ASD and SID, as they can become overwhelmed by direct eye contact or sustained social interaction. Further, the video format allows a viewer to rewind, fast forward, and learn at their own pace (Kim, 2016). This is similar to dramatherapy, in that the method affords flexibility within a safe and structured framework to reduce anxiety and promote learning.

VM most often serves as a support tool within behavioural modelling (Corbett et al., 2014; Laugeson et al., 2012). However, some researchers have begun to look at it as an effective teaching tool on its own. Spivey and Mechling (2016) used VM to teach social safety skills to three young adult females with intellectual disabilities. The participants were shown videos wherein a victim was taken advantage of or physically threatened. The recordings then showed strategies on how to protect or remove oneself from these situations. Participants were asked to verbally describe what they saw, but did nor engage in rehearsal or imitate the role models. When tested, the participants successfully recalled the strategies and were sometimes able to elaborate on them. However, verbal strategies were better maintained and generalized. In other words, physical strategies were not as well encoded. The authors suspect this is due to the lack of mimicry. This supports Social Learning Theory's position that mimicry and practice are an essential part of vicarious learning/role modelling.

Researchers are also asking whether VM as a support tool is effective in enhancing other interventions. A study conducted by Akmanoglu, Yanardag, and Batu (2014) examined the effects of Graduated Guidance (GG) with and without VM. GG is a method where skills are taught gradually with physical assistance and prompts. The study consisted of four preschool children with ASD watching videos of normally developing peers demonstrating a target social skill. The video component was either used alone or in conjunction with GG. All participants successfully acquired their assigned skills, with three showing similar rates of acquisition, regardless of the condition. The fourth was only able to learn through the combined use of both methods. Hui et al. (2016) ran a similar study, but on children aged 9 to 12. Their results echoed that of Akmanoglu and colleagues (2014), with 3 out of the 4 participants reaching mastery, maintenance, and generalization regardless of the condition. These studies showed that VM

could possibly be used as a main source of behavioural modelling in some cases. However, the authors did not offer theories as to why there were differences, but recommended that future research could explore this idea.

Video self-modeling (VSM) has also been shown to be effective in changing people's self-perceptions and modifying behaviour. A meta-analysis conducted by Bellini and Akullian (2007) reviewed the effectiveness of VM and VSM in children with ASD diagnoses. Of the 23 studies examined, all of them used VM and VSM as support tools and showed improvement of communication and behavioural functional skills. The authors recommended that future studies look at VM and VSM as potential stand-alone interventions.

Other studies have found positive results when using VSM techniques to increase spontaneous social engagement in children with ASD (Bellini, Gardner, Hudock, & Kashima-Ellingson, 2016), to increase learning and decrease problem behaviours in children with EBD (Young-Pelton & Bushman, 2015), and to teach adaptive skills in adults with Down Syndrome and Intellectual Difficulties (Danna, 2015). These recent investigations are small but promising.

The Aim of the Project

The goal of this pilot project is to explore the themes outlined above in a creative setting centered around drama and video activities. Children who have more or less social competence were paired in a multimedia setting. Through improvisation, scene work, and filming and editing, this study explored possible socioemotional impacts on the participants. The focus of this project is three-fold: to see if the participants with less socially competent behaviours can acquire or improve on their social skills; if those with more socially competent behaviour can learn better empathy skills towards their peers; and how well a drama-based context with video components supports socioemotional and friendship development. We took a PYD approach,

putting the child at the center, and treating all the children as having potentiality for change. We prioritized positive vertical and horizontal relationships and overall group dynamics/development over completing a creative outcome.

Methods

Context

This exploratory project took place in a public English Elementary school in Montreal. The project was framed in the context of an after-school club, which is not out of place for this school. An enrichment program, with a variety of activities to choose from, runs three times a week between 2:30 and 3:30 pm. There are also additional studies, such as Language Arts, private tutoring, and music lessons that run every day until 6 pm. Finally, there is an After-school program that runs from 3:30 to 5:30 pm every day.

The project was framed as an after-school Drama Club. The participants were aware that they were part of a research project, but we designed the experience to feel like a natural addition of the existing infrastructure of the school. We did this by letting the children first attend their after-school program as they normally would so that they could see their friends, and participate in the transition between their classroom and the after-school program. Their educators would then indicate to the participants when it was time to leave and join us for the Drama Club, which would normally start around 4:00 pm. This is how all the children in after-school programs are treated in this school. We did this not only to create a sense that our club as just another activity in the school, but also to minimize the risk that group members would be singled out by peers or teachers. We did not want them to feel stigmatized as part of a 'special education' club or group. When asked, their educators reported that they did not witness the children singled out by peers, so we believe our efforts were successful.

Framework and Model

In 2014, Cassidy, Turnbull, and Gumley did a systematic review of individual's accounts of various Dramatherapy interventions within a Clinical Setting. Using a Grounded Theory approach, the authors investigated 13 studies in total with individuals over the age of 16, who were in a therapeutic setting from 3 months to 2 years. From this review, the authors created the Meta-processes model of change.
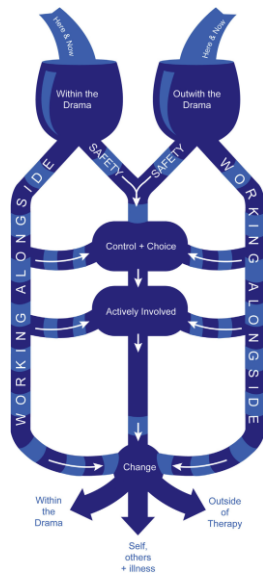
Figure 1: Meta-processes model of change. Taken from: Cassidy, S., Turnbull, S., & Gumley, A. (2014). Exploring core processes facilitating therapeutic change in Dramatherapy: A grounded theory analysis of published case studies. *The Arts in Psychotherapy,41*(4), 353-365. doi:10.1016/j.aip.2014.07.003

It is a person-centric model which is based on four inter-related themes:

1. 'Work Alongside': the facilitator works with the participant from within and outside
   the drama

2. 'Establishment of Safety': the facilitator and participant work together to create a sense of safety in the work space

3. 'Choice and Control': once the participant feels safe, they can feel free to make choices and be in control. This facilitates engagement in therapeutic techniques

4. 'Active Involvement': the participant becomes an active agent in their own progress by engaging with the material and experiential techniques

The authors claim these four themes in combination promote change in the "here and now", which they describe as "working primarily with what the [participant brings to the session] at any moment" (Cassidy et al., 2014, p. 5), regardless of predetermined theme or goals for the session. 'Working alongside' refers to the facilitator's duty to refrain from interpretation and instead reframe the participant's experience through dramatic exercises in order to facilitate insight. This keeps the participant at the center of the work. 'Establishing Safety' is achieved through techniques, such as projection, distancing, and the use of metaphor. The goal is to build emotional distance when the participant is working through strong emotions or painful experiences. The authors described this as containing feelings 'within the drama', thus allowing the work to continue without overidentification or overwhelming emotions.

The facilitator must also give the participant the choice of how the session will progress, while continuing to reframe experiences and act as a guide. This delicate balance, when done correctly, creates a sense of safety and control. This can be done in a multitude of ways, such as offering several scripts or dramatic realities to choose from, and discussing which of these the participants connect with the most. These techniques culminate in the participant becoming 'actively involved' in their own progress. Once safety and choice are established, he or she can

feel confident working 'within the drama'. The facilitator works alongside and with the participant throughout the dramatic exercises.

With this framework in mind, Renee Emunah's five-phase model was partially adapted for this project, because it mirrors similar ideas. Emunah (1994) incorporated multiple Dramatherapy principles and techniques into a five-phase model designed for group therapy. The phases are:

1. Dramatic Play

2. Scenework

3. Role Play

4. Culminating Enactment

5. Dramatic ritual

While Emunah (1994) designed her approach for adults in therapy, many of her principles can be modified for children in a play setting. This model is also in line with the goals of this study: it focuses on group work, and is person-centric, non-linear, and non-performative. Group members work through each phase at their own pace, focusing on goals unique to each stage. The goal is not to finish all five stages, but to use each phase as a guideline for how sessions should proceed. A dramatic outcome is an option, and reflects what individuals and the group have been working through. However, performance is not the end goal, which releases group members from the pressures of performing, and allows them to focus on the experience as it unfolds.

The first phase, 'Dramatic Play', is loosely structured and designed to establish trust, spontaneity, and creative play through various games and activities (see Appendix A for examples). Group dynamics emerge in this phase, and individual self-esteem and self-confidence

are central. Emunah (1994) emphasizes that the activities during this phase must be "simple,

engaging, failure-proof, and age-appropriate" (p. 36) in order to build trust and confidence

between participants and facilitators. This phase aligns with the metaprocesses theory's theme of

creating a 'safe environment'. In this exploratory project, this was the 'ice-breaker' phase,

allowing the children to get to know each other, the research assistant, and the observers. The

research team used this phase to observe the children during various exercises to see if

behavioural, social, or emotional issues emerged. Our observations in this phase informed how

the next phase was run. In this way, the researcher and research assistant took on the role of

drama facilitators.

In the second phase, 'Scenework', the goal is to create dramatic scenes, either through

improvisation or short prewritten scripts/sketches. Group members inhabit roles that are different

from their own roles in life. The goal is to allow them the opportunity to explore different sides

of themselves and disrupt patterns of behaviour. Emunah (1994) claims that at this point,

discussion about what transpired within the scenes naturally follows.

Initially, this project was going to adapt phase 2 through age-appropriate scenework based

on issues or topics the children brought forth. For example, if a child had issues with starting

conversations, the child and their partner might be assigned a scene to practice appropriate social

conventions. However, as this phase progressed, the children resisted the scenework and the

work remained fully improvised. Due to the principles of the meta-processes model, we

supported the children's decision and co-created the sessions in this way. For this reason, real

life issues were not directly incorporated into the scenes.

In phase 3, 'role play', the dramatic scenes become grounded in personal reality. Group

members are asked to embody roles that reflect who they are and situations they encounter more

frequently. Participants are given the opportunity for self-reflection. Due to the developments in the second phase, this phase was not implemented during this project.

When designing the study, we chose not to include the final two phases, as the goals are developmentally inappropriate. In Phase 4, 'Culminating Enactment', group members are encouraged to delve into their unconscious and externalize suppressed internal experiences. Phase 5, 'Dramatic Ritual', is meant to offer closure by reviewing some of the more powerful and difficult moments of the first four phases. Emunah (1994) herself recognizes that these may not be appropriate for children whom she says are likely to most benefit from the first phase. This was corroborated through our project, as the children remained mostly in phase 1 of Emunah's model.

However, in the spirit of phase 5, we held a closure ritual at the end of the project. We also added filming and editing activities in the second half of our project. The closure ritual and video component will be described in more detail in the next section.

Procedure

Research Team. As the main researcher, I have a BFA in Theatre Performance from Concordia University and a BA in Psychology. I have four years of experience as a childcare worker in multiple capacities, including teaching drama and video editing to children ages 5 to 13. I was a professional actor and producer, and am a co-member of Cooperative Collective Vision which teaches drama and media skills to children year-round. I will be referred to as Researcher 1 (R1) throughout this document.

The secondary researcher is a graduate of the Dramatherapy department at Concordia University. She has a BFA in Theatre and Development from Concordia University and has been studying drama for approximately 10 years. She is also a co-member of Cooperative Collective

Vision. At the time of the project, she was not yet a practicing Dramatherapist but had served

two internships as a Dramatherapy student, one with adults with developmental disabilities at a

social integration school, and one with adolescents in an outreach program. This project was her

independent study and she successfully obtained her Master of Arts in Dramatherapy at the end

of 2018. She served as a resource for Drama-based activities and was consulted on potential

therapeutic elements that may have arisen in the course of our project. However, she at no time

served as a therapist to the children, nor did she implement therapeutic practices during the

sessions. She acted as a co-facilitator and helped plan and run the sessions. She will be referred

to as Researcher 2 (R2) throughout this document.

We employed two volunteers as observers. The first observer (O1) was an undergraduate

student from the Child Studies Program at Concordia. The second observer (O2) was an

undergraduate student from the Psychology Program at Concordia. They were tasked with

observing the children during the sessions and recording their behaviour according to the focus

of the week. They used a focused running record method (see Appendix B for sample observer

notes). The two observers rotated between sessions, with one observer present on Tuesdays, and

the other on Thursdays. We decided to rotate observers to raise our confirmability but also to

ensure that if one observer was not present, another could take their place. O1 chose to write her

notes by hand and then type them into Microsoft Word while O2 recorded her observations

directly into a Word document. The observers would email me their typed-up notes at the end of

the week, and I saved them to an encrypted USB key as well as my password protected personal

laptop.

Participants. The project is focused on Cycle 3 students who are nearing the end of their

academic journey in elementary school and will transition into high school within the next two

years. This age group was chosen because it is a vulnerable point in childhood. Statistically, there is a drop in self-esteem levels in preadolescence which can lead to internalizing problems, such as depression and anxiety (Battle, 1980; Robins Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, & Potter, 2002). Once in high school, these children will no longer experience the safety and support of their familiar school, and will instead have to use their social abilities to create new support systems in the coming years. Therefore, a project such as this could have a positive impact down the line.

      Recruitment. The goal was to recruit six children, aged 9-12, half of whom would be described as displaying more socially competent behaviours, while the other half would be described as displaying fewer socially competent behaviours. The size of the group was chosen because a small group is better suited for individual attention, and for capturing adequate details during observations. We also wanted a round number because we planned to pair them in twos.

      Once the administration approved of the project, I approached the two Cycle 3 after-school educators and described the type of child who could be a candidate (see Appendix C for sample Teacher Consent Form). To keep the research team blind and protect the students' anonymity, the educators were asked to compile a confidential list of nominated children and then present this list to the home and school office. Adult C, an administrator in the home and school office, was tasked with approaching Cycle 3 classroom teachers (two Grade 5 classroom teachers and two Grade 6 classroom teachers) to review the list and make additional recommendations. I was not privy to the teachers' recommendations to maintain anonymity and reduce bias. Both types of instructors are included in this step because they have different relationships with and knowledge about the children. Furthermore, this project is concerned with the socio-emotional domain, which may or may not have an impact on academic performance.

As such, both types of instructors offer a unique perspective on the socio-emotional lives of children in different contexts: the former, in a structured classroom with learning as an overall goal; the latter, in a loosely structured environment with experiential learning activities and insight into socio-emotional behaviour.

The reason the after-school teachers were approached first was because they are more likely to observe social interactions, the type of behaviour most relevant to our project. The classroom teachers were consulted to see if they agreed or disagreed with the nominations. We also gave them the chance to nominate children not enrolled in the after-school program (NB: the children ultimately recruited were each enrolled in the after-school program). I did not contribute to the nominees to minimize bias.

Once completed, the list was returned to the home and school office. Adult C then emailed the parents of the children with a recruitment letter I composed, inviting them to enroll their children in the project (See Appendix D for copy of email). Once the emails were sent out, the parents were given a deadline to respond, either via email or in person. I went to the school from Monday to Friday for two weeks prior to the deadline between the hours of 3:30 and 5:30 pm. I made myself available during pick-up, and addressed parents' questions or concerns. In the end six children were successfully recruited (see Appendix E for sample parent/guardian consent form).

Two types of children were asked to participate in the group. The first type displayed more socially competent behaviours and were well-liked among their classmates and teachers. These children had many friends and had few problems being included in groups. To their educators' knowledge, the children nominated for this group had no psychological diagnosis, IEP, identification code, or learning and behavioural difficulty. These children were considered

good role models for making and maintaining friendships and/or displaying kindness, thoughtfulness, and maturity. While academic achievement was not one of our criteria, we wanted them to have no trouble participating in the classroom and handing in their work on time. However, they sometimes displayed a lack of empathy and understanding towards their peers.

The second type of child displayed fewer socially competent behaviours and may have experienced emotional, behavioural, and social difficulty. They had trouble making and maintaining friendships, working in groups and collaborating, and had difficulty with emotional regulation and self-control. While they may not have been in poor academic standing, they showed difficulty with sustained attention, and completing required work in a timely and efficient manner. They perhaps struggled to ask for or receive help from others. Teachers may have witnessed them playing alone or having their attempts at engaging with peers rejected or ignored.

The Sessions. As mentioned, the project took place at an elementary school in Montreal in the form of an invitation-only Drama Club. Sessions were held twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for approximately 1 hour. We spent 10 sessions in an auditorium, with raised seating and a proscenium style stage, and 2 sessions in a classroom due to previous bookings it the auditorium (See Figures 2 and 3).
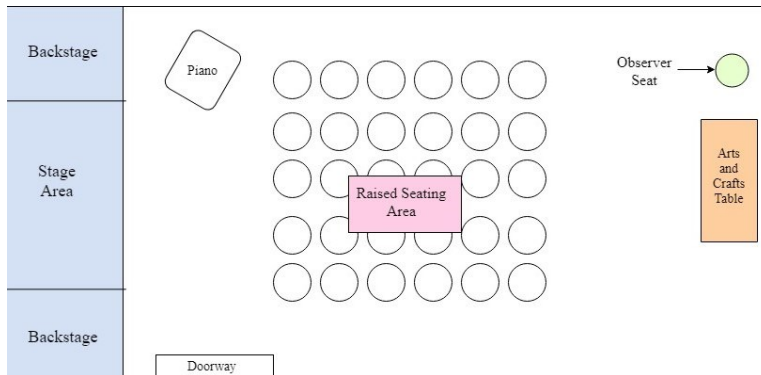
Figure 2: Diagram of the auditorium where 10 of the sessions took place (not to scale). The Stage Area was where most of the games began but the children would sometimes use the raised seating area as well during active games. The chairs depicted could be removed as needed.
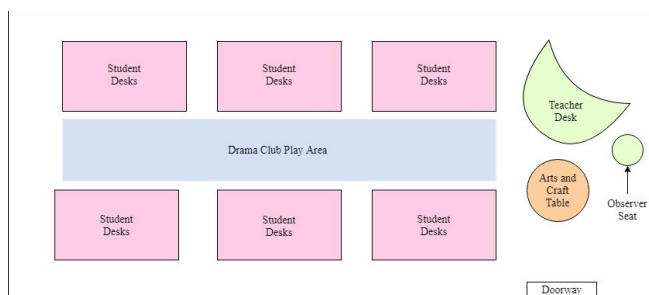
Figure 3: Diagram of classroom where two of the sessions and the final closure party took place (not to scale). The students' desks were pushed back to make more room for the Drama Club as needed. We would also sometimes film in this location.

Parents and educators were consulted and agreed that holding Drama Club between 4:00 and 5:00 pm would be most suitable. As the school day ends at 3:30 pm, this allowed for the children to transition from their classrooms to their after-school program, leave their personal belongings if they wished, have a snack, and then join us. It also gave a 30-minute pick-up window for the parents between 5:00 and 5:30 pm, along with allowing leeway if our time ran

over. The first three weeks consisted of acting games and scene work. The final three weeks

consisted of filming and editing scenes based on the first half of the project. The full process

lasted six weeks. R1 and R2 ran the session with one of two observers present.

On a macrolevel, Emunah's model (1994) served as guideline as the sessions progressed.

On a microlevel, the meta-processes model of change framed our approach within the sessions.

A variety of exercises were implemented based on the goals of the week, which were decided

after discussions of our observations the week prior (See Table 1).

While the focus of the sessions changed week to week, we strove to create a routine

within the session. We opened with a warm-up game that lasted from 5 to 15 minutes (e.g.,

name game; elemental ninja). Group acting games were played based on the theme or focus of

the week:

Table 1

Themes or focus of the week

Week	Theme/Focus
1	Getting to know you/Icebreaker
2	Child Agency
3	Partnerships
4	Beginning of Filming
5	Filming/Editing
6	Filming/Editing

A closure activity and emotional check-in ended each session. After each session, the

research team met to debrief and share their impressions. The first week had no specific theme

since we had no observations from a previous week. The goal in the first two sessions was for

the children to become comfortable with one another and the research team; to understand what

the sessions would entail; and for the facilitators to observe and interact with the group.

By the end of the second session, we created a group contract.:
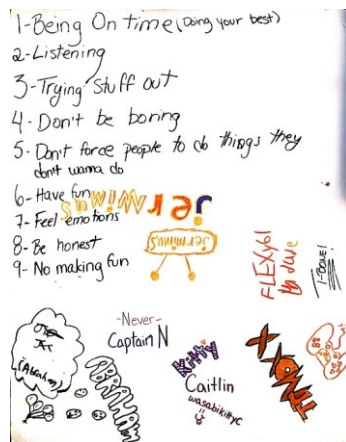
Figure 4: Drama Club Group Contract. Participants signed using a pseudonym of their choice.

Group contracts are often used in childcare environments to mutually establish rules and

expectations (theteachertoolkit.com, 2019). This democratic approach allows both children and

adults to voice their needs, discuss which rules are important and why, and agree on what

consequences are appropriate if the rules are not respected (theteachertoolkit.com, 2019). The

group contract was intended to empower the children, build trust in the facilitators, and allow

them to feel heard and safe in the space. They were also more likely to follow rules that they

themselves established, rather than obeying rules imposed upon them (M. Hunt, Personal

Communication, 2018). Once the group contract was made, it was displayed on a wall in the

space as a visual reminder of the established rules the group agreed to follow.

After the first two sessions, we began to identify strengths and vulnerabilities within group members and what relationships/dynamics were emerging. The goal was to use this knowledge to pair the children across groups in a way that we thought would be complimentary. Based on previous research, we intended to pair each child with another child in the opposing group. We wanted to see if having a partner with more Social competence would encourage the child with less social competence to emulate their behaviour, positively influencing their socio-emotional learning. On the other hand, we wanted to see if having a partner with less social competence would affect shows of empathy and helping in a child with more social competence.

However, the children resisted to being assigned partners and so we allowed them to choose how they wished to work together. The data analysis took into account which group the children were originally sorted into, while being based mainly on individual events and group dynamics.

One reason we chose not to enforce these partnerships was that, in accordance to the meta-processes model of change (see Figure 1) and Emunah's (1994) approach, we wanted partnerships to be voluntary and equitable. We did not want children to feel singled out by the activities, either as a 'mentor/coach' or as a 'student' of socioemotional learning. The goal was to create a safe, egalitarian environment, and productive group dynamic. To mandate pairings might have revealed the separation and risk feelings of resentment and acrimony between pairs. These elements would have threatened the five themes Cassidy et al., (2014) emphasized. Furthermore, a sense of group identity was emerging, and we wanted to co-create the sessions with the participants. It felt logical to support what how the group was forming and how they wanted the sessions to be run.

It should be noted that while the parents were aware of the full research design so as to obtain informed consent (See Appendix E for sample parent/guardian consent form; see Appendix F for ethics approval), the children were not aware that they were categorized according to their level of social competence. There were two main reasons for the deception. First, we did not want to alter the children's perceptions of each other. We wanted to ensure natural interactions and an organic building of relationships/dynamics. The fear was that if the children were aware that they were being organized according to their level of social competence, that some children might either feel marginalized or superior to others. Again, we wanted to maintain an egalitarian environment. Secondly, we did not want other children in the school to hear of this categorization and risk affecting the reputation of our participants.

In the first half of the project (Phase 1) we introduced games chosen for a variety of reasons, such as physical warm-ups and flexible thinking. Initially, we were going to start with larger games and then split the group and work on small games or scenes. However, not only did the children resist the scenework and the pairings, there was also sporadic attendance throughout the weeks. During recruitment, many parents expressed wanting to enroll their children but had scheduling conflicts and previous obligations. To ensure that we had a full sample size of six, we decided to allow participants to attend at their convenience. For some, they only missed one or two sessions. For others, they missed almost half the sessions. For that reason, we had to be flexible and willing to pivot in our plans. Though the acting exercises were based on themes of the week (see Table 1), we mostly improvised scenes on the spot since rehearsing scripted work consistently was not possible. This also turned out to be the preference within the group, which contributed to the sense of co-creating the experience.

In week 4, we introduced the camera and computer equipment. (The equipment was borrowed from Cooperative Collective Vision). The equipment consisted of: 2 Nikon Coolpix S33 cameras, 1 large tripod, one Canon Vixia HF, and 3 Dell Inspiron i7 15inch laptops. The computers run on Windows 10. The videos were edited in Windows Movie Maker 2012 (WMM).

The children were shown how to: turn the cameras and computers on and off; take a photo and video with the camera; delete images and videos from the camera; correctly remove and insert the SD card from the cameras and computers; how to create and name folders on the desktop; successfully upload their image and video files from the SD card to the computer, and then import them into WMM; and the ability to edit their files (i.e., delete images, split the video file, cut the video file, add music and sound effects). After some practice, they separated into groups of their choosing and took turns filming improvised scenes and sketches.

Since we could not script scenes in the first half, we attempted to keep the group together in the second half and create an original scripted work that would last from 5 to 10 minutes. However, the group could not agree on one idea. They ended up creating a variety show that incorporated all of their ideas. They took turns filming the project, with everyone getting a turn behind the camera. The majority of the editing was done by four of the six children, who were most present in the final weeks. The facilitators supervised the filming and editing process and tried to introduce discussion prompts for self-reflection (e.g., What made you think of that? Did you find it funny or weird? How do you think the character could have acted differently? etc.). The idea was to use the roles that the children played as representations of their own selves, or as proxies for people they may encounter throughout their lives.

      Emotional Check-ins and Check-outs. Emunah (1994) recommends that each session begin with actions that connect the drama facilitator with each group member and end with a closure activity. The closure activity can serve different functions depending on the events of the session. They can be calming, help with transitioning into the non-dramatic world, and allow for reflection on what transpired during the session. We adapted this practice to help the participants transition from the academic context to a dramatic play context and then back into the non-dramatic world. We also wanted these beginning and end sections to serve as emotional check-ins and check-outs; each participant could reflect on their experience while also giving feedback to the facilitators.

      Emotional Thermometer. Feelings Charts are not uncommon practices in modern classrooms. They are often used with children who have trouble with emotional regulation; i.e. in early childhood education or those with social skills disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (Reber, 2012). These visual aids come in many versions. Some sort emotions into categories, assign numbers or colours, or put 'emojis' or other facial cartoons to represent them. Some are even represented as thermometers, with a bulb at the bottom usually representing a more desirable emotion (see Figure 5).
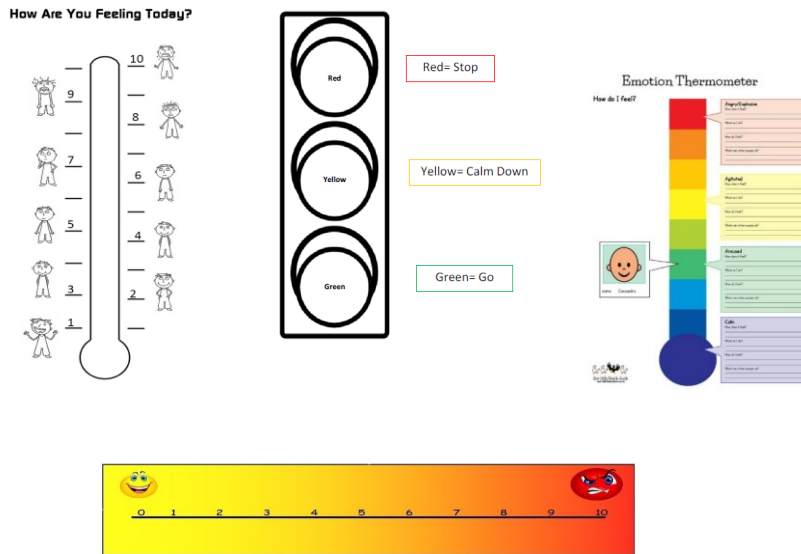
Figure 5: Some examples of feelings charts and scales that can be used by teachers and behaviour consultants in school. Taken from freebehaviourcharts.com and thelittleblackduck.com

I was introduced to the idea by a behaviour consultant for the Lester B. Pearson Schoolboard (M. Hunt, personal communication, 2018). Hunt uses an emotional thermometer with children with emotional and behavioral difficulties. Her thermometer has numbers on it to help children in her care express their degree of anger or stress. I adapted this idea to create an avenue for the participants to express their emotional states. In accordance with our framework, the final form of the thermometer was co-created with the participants and was constantly in flux.

Introduced in the third session, the only aspect of the thermometer provided by adults was the format. I created a scale using three colours; blue, yellow and red (See Appendix G). We chose these colours to represent emotions as 'cool' to 'hot' rather than positive or negative. We

also deliberately chose to not use green, so the children would not associate emotions with stoplights, as something to be policed or 'stopped' within the context of the project. We did not want to dictate whether the colours would represent more negative or positive affect, or whether these emotions were more or less desirable. For that reason, we did not use a bulb or numbers, and placed the scale horizontally (See Appendix G).

We taped blue, yellow, and red electrical tape onto a 17x22 dry-erase whiteboard which we left blank. We asked the children what emotions to include on the scale and where they should fall according to the colour. Whether a feelings chart or scale is labelled depends on its usage. In our case, we wanted to empower the children to name their own emotional states and decide where they would fall on this scale. Also, our participants were all in Grade 5, so we operated under the assumption that they had a basic understanding of emotional labelling and expression. In a classroom setting, this tool can be used as a form of behaviour or group management, where the children learn to control their emotions, or identify if they are getting angry or stressed. In this context, we wanted the tool to be a simple form of self-expression and communication. We also wanted to inspire discussion about the children's inner-life.

Magic Bucket. While there are many closure activities to choose from, R2 suggested 'Magic Box/Bucket'. This is a method suggested by Emunah (1994) and common in DT practice. Magic bucket is a closure activity where the group stands in a circle and pulls down an imaginary bucket from the sky. They find a way to open it together (e.g. key, screwdriver, saying 'open sesame' etc.) and then put in things they did not enjoy about the session and take out things they did enjoy. In other words, they leave something behind that caused them unpleasantness or discomfort, and take something positive with them. It serves as a quick way to reflect on events of a class or session as well as leave behind any heavy or difficult moments that

may have arisen. It is a transition between the real world and the space that is built around drama and therapy. In our case, we were not implementing a therapeutic practice, but we wanted to use this exercise as a way to emotionally check in with participants, and get their thoughts on the events of the session. If, however, they did experience a moment of difficulty or an unexpressed emotion, it would provide opportunity for self-expression. We also wanted to use their feedback to shape our planning.

Journaling. When designing the project, the research team wanted to find a way to record the children's inner thoughts and feelings in a way that was not verbal and was private. Furthermore, we wanted to prepare for the possibility that some children may not be interested in participating in the activities proposed. We did not want to operate as a schoolroom where some activities are mandatory in order to receive a grade or pass a class. The solution was to introduce journaling, an activity which could both serve as a means of non-verbal self-expression and as an alternative to a proposed activity. Though we would keep them between session to protect participants' identity and make sure the books were not lost. We also informed them that the research team would look at the books but no one else would have access to them. Though the books were lined notebooks, we told the kids they could use them to draw or do anything they wanted. We also explained that they could have the journals whenever they wanted, and if they wanted to step out of the room or skip an activity to journal, they could do so.

Closure Party. While the project is not outcome based, we gave the children to option to showcase the work they had done over the course of the project. Since the final product ended up being a short film, the children requested a closed potluck and viewing party. By limiting audience members to only people the children wished to invite, we wanted to relieve pressure of

perfection and judgment. Again, we wanted to give them a sense of power and ownership over the process.

Emunah (1994) emphasizes the importance of having a closing ritual designed by the group:

> In early societies, dramatic rituals were ways in which communities marked points of transition, shared wishes and successes, and celebrated events. The celebratory aspect of drama [helps participants] review the series, evaluate progress, give each other feedback…and intensify the sense of unity and kinship within the group.

Analysis

Data Collection. Data was collected in two ways. First, the running records and our personal observations served as external components. The observers collected data on externalized behaviours, with their focus based on weekly themes (see Table 1). Audio of the session debriefs was recorded on my personal phone and then uploaded to a secure USB, after which they were deleted off my device. I then transcribed the discussion into a secure Word document using 'otranscribe'. The documents were kept in an encrypted file on my password protected laptop and backed up onto a password protected USB key. As I transcribed, I reflected on our conversation and the events of the sessions. Therefore, these transcriptions doubled as field notes and memos that informed the data analysis. The observers were also expected to record overall group dynamics and interactions .

Second, internal events were monitored through the emotional check-ins and check-outs. At the beginning and the end of the session, we inquired about the participants' state of mind when entering the space, their thoughts and feelings about the session once it was over, and how

they were feeling as they left the space. The observers were tasked with recording quotes as they witnessed these conversations.

This project took an exploratory, qualitative approach to look into the participants' experience in a phenomenological fashion. This research method is used in order to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of the person or persons experiencing it, endeavouring to remain as close to their own perceptions and feelings as possible (Hays & Singh, 2012). Phenomenology allows for more in-depth exploration of individual perspectives, with a flexible approach that includes participant feedback (Hays & Singh, 2012). This approach, therefore, supports the goal of this project, which is to prioritize the children's perceptions and feelings. Internal states or changes are nuanced and difficult to measure, especially without a validated psychometric measure. A phenomenological approach gave us a window into the children's inner lives while also keeping them as the main focus.

We did not focus on external change or impact, but we did observe emergent patterns and behavioural changes which contributed to the overall analysis. We also kept in mind which social competence category each child was originally recruited to, how they interacted among and between these sub-groups, and what dynamics emerged as a result of these interactions in a collective creation project. Our original themes were initiation and maintenance of friendship, including appropriate conversation skills, conflict resolution and respect; and prosocial behaviour, including helping behaviour, comforting, and teaching/coaching. These suggestions were based on feedback received from the after-school program directors, recommendations of the PEERS program (http://www2.semel.ucla.edu/peers, 2017), themes identified through the SSIS-RS by D'Amico et al. (2015), and studies that observed prosocial behaviour (Regan &

Howe, 2017; Corbett et al., 2014) as well as the Vanderbuilt Next Steps program (Griffin et al., 2016; peabody.vanderbilt.edu, 2017).

     Coding. In our first round, we used eclectic coding, a form of open coding which combines multiple coding strategies. An overall coding scheme is built, supported by second cycle coding and analytical memos. This method was chosen because it is suited to small, exploratory research projects such as this one. The types of coding used in this cycle were: descriptive (i.e., assigning short labels to summarize larger passages of data), simultaneous (i.e., applying multiple codes to the same passage of data), and in-vivo coding (i.e., summarizing a passage of data using words or sentences used by the participant) (Saldana, 2016).

     The second cycle of coding consisted of a round of focused coding, where similarly coded data is combined to create tentative categories. Finally, axial coding was applied to these tentative categories to create overall themes and subthemes (Saldana, 2016).

     Procedure. Once the observers' notes were transcribed and sent to me, I uploaded them line by line into excel spreadsheets. I had O2 pull and organize all quotes by child and session into separate excel files. Once all the data was compiled, we decided to split it into two parts. We called the first half 'Phase 1', which centered around acting games; and the second half was 'Phase 2', which centered around the making of the movie project.

     Once split, the data was coded. O2 coded the quotes descriptively and I did one round of eclectic coding with the observations (which also included the quotes). I then asked another researcher who was not involved with the project to also apply a second round of eclectic coding. Once this was done, I re-examined the initial codes and used focused coding to create 15 categories per phase. Those categories were collapsed into five themes with various sub-themes.

These new themes included aspects of the original themes and were used in the final analysis

(See Figures 6 and 7).
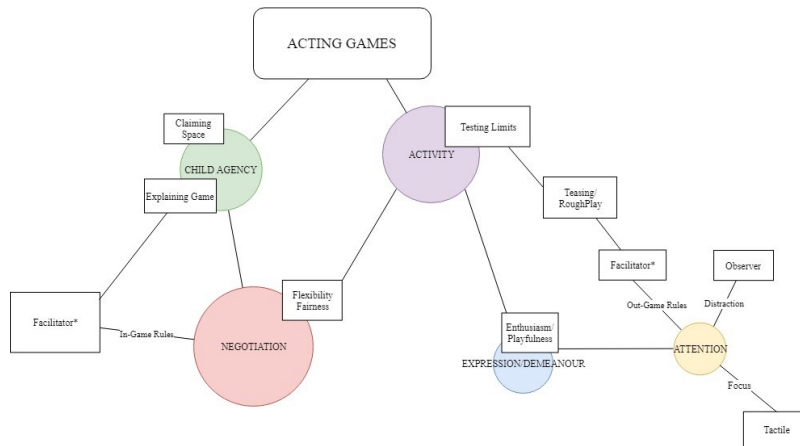
Figure 6: A visual representation of the axial coding that led to the themes and subthemes in Phase 1.
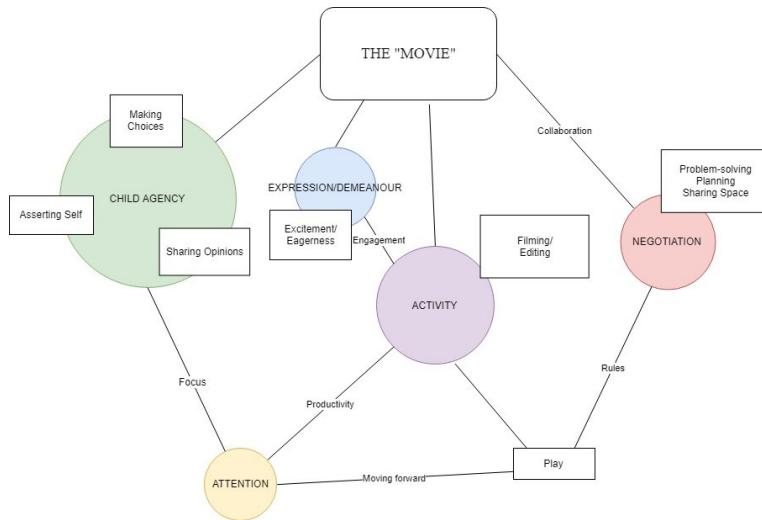
Figure 7: A visual representation of the axial coding that led to themes and subthemes in Phase 2.

Trustworthiness

Researcher Bias. I must disclose that I am employed in this school. I have taught various activities in the after-school enrichment program for the past four years and was a Grade 3 after-school educator during the first two years of my employment. Each of our participants was under my care for at least one year as an after-school educator, where I spent five days a week with them, from 3:30 to 5:30 pm. I also taught stop-motion and acting classes to each of them for three years. Meaning I spent at least one hour per week with them in a teaching capacity. For these reasons, I had pre-existing relationships with the students, their parents, and their educators. This was useful during recruitment, as there was a degree of trust between me and the families. It also gave me valuable insider knowledge that came into play during the project. However, this meant that I had pre-established dynamics and preconceived notions about the children that had to be accounted for.

Insider-Outsider Perspective. One of the ways in which we counteracted my bias was by working with team members who had no previous experience with the children or the school. I also left R2 and the observers blind to which children were in the higher social competence group and which were in the lower social competence group so that their first impressions were not influenced by those categorizations. At the same time, I refrained from sharing insider knowledge that I had about the children's home or school lives unless it became relevant to the discussion at hand.

Triangulation. The research team debriefed after each session to share our overall impressions and compare notes. We also met once a week to discuss our overall thoughts on the week, compare observer data, and come up with a theme and plan activities for the following week.

As mentioned, I also had O2 and a secondary researcher code the data separate from my own coding. The secondary researcher also looked at my initial codes and gave feedback. Another secondary researcher was consulted during axial coding to help streamline the themes and subthemes. Both researchers were blind to the context and the participants, so their impressions were based solely on the data presented. This triangulation of data sources and investigators contributed to the overall authenticity and confirmability of the data, as well as acting as a balance to my own perspective.

   Field notes and Memos. While I was transcribing the debriefs, I added memos and notes. This included self-reflection, records of events that did not come up during discussion but I felt were relevant, and initial analysis and impressions of the events of the session. These served as field notes, memos, and a researcher journal. Not only did I reflect on the events observed and our discussions, but it also allowed me to audit myself and check my biases throughout the process.

   Member Checking. As a final strategy, we employed member checking. First, we consistently checked in with the children if we felt our impressions were incomplete or had too much of an adult lens on them. We also used magic bucket to get feedback about what was successful and what was unsuccessful during the sessions, so that our impressions of the children's level of enthusiasm and engagement was accurate. Second, during the closure activity, we had a roundtable discussion where we asked the children to give us feedback about the project and what they would like to see in the future. Finally, I conducted a follow-up interview with the after-school educators to check conclusions and ideas we had come to over the course of the project, as well as verify the accuracy of the opinions I had on the children based on my history with them.

Findings

Over the course of six weeks, this project was separated into two phases. The first phase centered around emergent group dynamics and building a relationship between the participants and the facilitators. This goal was achieved by centering the first three weeks (six sessions) around acting games. The second phase centered around creation of a film project, i.e. "The Movie". As such, Phase 2, which consisted of the last three weeks (finals six sessions), were centered around technical aspects of writing, filming, and editing scenes and stories created by the children. From these two phases, five themes emerged: Negotiation, Child Agency, Activity Type (Play related or Goal Related), Expression/Demeanor, and Attention. The themes were present in each phase but manifested themselves in different ways.

In the following section, I will give a brief description of each child. As previously discussed, the secondary researcher (R2) and the two observers (O1 and O2) were willfully blind before entering the space. The information below was obtained through observations and field notes, as well as through discussions with teachers, parents, and the children throughout the course of the project. We also conducted a follow up interview with two after-school educators. I will describe the context as well as themes that manifested themselves in each phase.

The Participants

Pseudonyms. During the first session, the facilitators introduced themselves and the observers. We described the project and received verbal assent from each child. The researchers explained that the children's identities, any information they shared, and any work they produced within the 'Drama Club' setting would remain anonymous. As part of our child-centered mandate, we asked them how they would like the research team to refer to them in writing. To make this explanation developmentally appropriate, we compared their pseudonyms to superhero

names, with their real names serving as a secret identity. The children agreed to these terms and chose names for themselves. They then used these names to sign the group contract. (See Figure 4).

The Lower Social competence Group

*Flexible Dude (FD)***.** Flexible Dude (FD) is a male Grade 5 student. He was prone to emotional outbursts when he was younger (from Kindergarten to Grade 3), such as getting into verbal altercations with his then best friend. He would also leave a room and go into a foetal position and hit his head against a hard surface if he felt that things were not going his way (e.g., if someone was not sharing a toy with him). His current educators say he no longer has outbursts, which they attribute to maturation and the fact that he is no longer friends with his former best friend. According to his after-school teachers, he is an activity-focused child. He will play with whoever is available and socializes with children of different ages and social groups. He sometimes asks educators to play with him if other children will not. Over the course of project, FD had most of his friendly interactions with Abraham, Jermimus, and Caitlin. However, his educators could not say whether FD became close with these children in an after-school context, since the latter three did not stay as long as FD in the after-school program. He was the only child to attend every session, including the closure activity.

*Mark***.** Mark is a male Grade 5 student. He was initially reluctant to participate and claimed his mother, who teaches at the school, said he "had to". Once we explained that he had the freedom to participate or not, his hesitance disappeared. Mark enjoys comic books and drawing, and tends to be quieter and more introverted in group contexts. He became well-liked within the project with most of the children (except Abraham and Jermimus) wanting to work with him during Phase 2. Though Mark appears to have friendships outside of the project, his

educators revealed that he has repeatedly expressed that he has no friends and does not feel safe

at the school. They revealed that he has broken down in tears over this issue in the recent past.

They also said that he is bigger and taller than most of the kids in his class and

worries about being intimating or hurting others due to his size. They also hinted that there are

issues going on at home but did not provide details. Mark attended six out of the 12 sessions as

well as the closure activity. He missed half the sessions because his mother had to take him home

early on Thursdays. She did not disclose why this was the case.

Jermimus. Jermimus is a male Grade 5 student. He has a female twin who also attends

the same school and is generally more socially competent. Jermimus has an overall cheerful

demeanour, but has trouble making and sustaining friendships. The educators say that other

children often come to them saying that Jermimus is "bugging" or "annoying" them in his

attempts to engage them in conversation or play with them. When signing the consent form, his

father mentioned that their family is working on increasing Jermimus' empathy skills. Adult C

told us that Jermimus often gets in trouble for wandering around the school without alerting an

adult to his whereabouts. He was on the friendliest terms with FD but interacted with all club

members. He attended seven out of the 12 sessions as well as the closure activity because he had

undisclosed family obligations on most Thursdays.

The Higher Social competence Group

Abraham. Abraham is a male Grade 5 student. When signing the consent form, his

mother mentioned that she and Abraham's father co-parent and both parents have the right to

consent. To my knowledge, Abraham is close with both his parents and I have not witnessed any

acrimony between them, nor did Abraham mention family dynamics throughout the sessions.

Abraham is passionate about acting and takes lessons both within and outside the school.

Abraham seemed the most confident and knowledgeable about theatre and film and liked to lead during acting games. However, his educators expressed that he can be "pushy" which makes him hard to work with in group contexts. He has a high level of energy and liked to be the focus during most games, sometimes to the detriment of the game and group focus. He has an overall cheerful demeanour, however there is evidence that he uses humour and cheeriness to cover negative feelings. For example, he sometimes put his magnet in the red or yellow section of the Emotional Thermometer despite appearing happy (See Appendix G). His educators also say that he has a more defiant attitude this year and is growing apart from his friends, who sometimes find his outgoing nature overwhelming. He attended 11 of the 12 sessions, including the closure activity, though he often had to leave 15 to 30 minutes early to go to another acting class outside of the school.

Never. Never is a female Grade 5 student. She is enrolled in many types of activities including lacrosse, gymnastics, and robotics. When signing the consent form, her mother said she would like Never to be more empathetic, especially towards her younger sister, with whom she can be controlling. Never's demeanor is low energy and understated, but her after-school educators revealed that she has a group of friends of whom she is the undisputed leader. She was closest with Caitlin throughout the project. The educators said the two girls play competitive games together (e.g., Catan), but they generally socialize in different circles. They describe Never as "very competitive", especially when it comes to things that are intellectually stimulating (e.g., Chess) and likes to "show off" her skills through teaching, which can sometimes make her "overbearing". According to them, she tends to understand things quicker than other children and has trouble grasping that others need more time to catch up to her. She

attended eight out of the 12 sessions as well as the closure activity. She missed some Thursdays when she signed up for lacrosse, which practiced at the same time as the project.

  Caitlin. Caitlin is a female Grade 5 student. Like Mark, her mother is an educator, but at a different school. She signed Caitlin up due to intellectual curiosity, and was most interested in the research goals when speaking to me about the project. Caitlin is an outgoing child with high energy levels who seems comfortable being center of attention and leading, but can step back when needed. She was the most adult-oriented of the children, meaning that she was the most likely to engage with the observers and facilitators, despite being told to treat the observers like they were not there. She seemed eager to know what the observers were writing about her and sometimes asked "How did I do?" after sessions, as if seeking for feedback, something none of the other children did. The after-school educators expressed that she can get "possessive" over friends and is "controlling". She likes to make friends with people who will follow her directions. She attended 10 of the 12 sessions as well as the closure activity. She missed one session to attend tutoring and one to attend a different school function.

Phase 1

  Context. As outlined in the methodology section, the first phase was designed to develop trust and a feeling of comfort between group members. It also allowed the research team to observe the children and their emerging group dynamics. As stated, the initial goal was to pair them into dyads matched between groups and assign them scenes or improvisations based on personal issues, interests, or lived experiences. However, the children resisted both the dyads and the proposed scenework in favour of their preferred improv games. After discussing it, the research team agreed that in keeping with our child-centric approach, we could not force them into pairs or activities that they actively objected to, as this might lower their enjoyment and

participation. Considering these factors and the inconsistent attendance, the decision was made to change the format to be more lose and dramatic play-based. For that reason, Phase 1 is framed within the context of acting games rather than pair work and individual issues.

To accommodate these changing goals, an overall focus was chosen each week based on what was observed the week before (See Table 1). For example, we observed in week 2 that the children responded better to our suggestions if they were given more say in what games were played, therefore we gave them more choices in week 3 and asked the observers to record instances of child agency. In addition, the observers were tasked with recording details or situations that arose that they deemed important or interesting. From these observations, five overall themes emerged, which created a system of interaction (See Figure 6)

Negotiation. The most prominent theme observed in Phase 1 was that of Negotiation. This is not surprising considering that the bulk of Phase 1 consisted of playing games that were new for many of the children. In this context, Negotiation was closely related to in-game rules, turn-taking and, fairness within the game context (See Figure 6). Initially, in-game rules were set by the facilitators as they introduced the activities. Almost immediately, the children tested these rules. For example, in Session 1, we played a game called 'Emotional Freeze' in which one actor was tasked with going on stage and acting out an emotion. At a random moment, one of the facilitators would yell out 'freeze' and throw out a new emotion, which the actor would have to embody. From the first round, Abraham and FD started yelling out 'freeze' when they pleased despite the facilitators' instructions and objections. While there is normally some room for negotiation in other acting classes or after school programs, a certain level of compliance is expected. However, due to the child-centric nature of our program, the facilitators chose not to strictly enforce in-game rules and instead led a group discussion around which rules to keep and

which to modify or discard. However, this presented a challenge for the research team as the

activities were chosen for a purpose (e.g.in the first week, our focus was emotional expression in

a school context).

      After some discussion, we agreed that our process-oriented approach meant that we were

more curious as to how the children would change these games and what that might mean for the

group. We also realized that compliance was not one of our goals and learning to enforce limits

without imposing our adult lenses would be a challenge. We also were conscious about creating

an environment that was different from their classroom experience, where the teacher must

remain the ultimate authority. This became an ongoing theme through Phase 1, as exemplified in

these excerpts from our debrief of Session 3:

> R1: There was a lot of energy today, a lot of disciplining. Well, we can't even
>
> discipline. And that is frustrating for me, a little bit.
>
> R2: But we can. … you have to set limits. But it's hard to find the right way to
>
> do it in a way that's not too authoritarian, I guess.
>
> O1: Especially in the moment … it's really hard in the moment to be like
>
> 'What's the best way, the least restrictive way to say this.'
>
> …
>
> R2: Yah, but I think that we have to be careful with the limit-setting, cause
>
> it's gonna be the culture of the group of … chaos if we just let it go too much.
>
> R1: I think it's because it is a space where they're allowed to and encouraged
>
> to express themselves and be themselves and say what they want.
>
> R2: How can we set the limits without it being … we're telling you what to
>
> do, kinda thing. Cause they don't like it either.

With these conversations around rules came the subject of fairness. Though the rules themselves were flexible, once the group decided on them, the children corrected each other if they noticed someone bending, breaking or misunderstanding a rule. The subject of fairness was mentioned often, as the children wanted to make sure other group members were held to the same rules they were following. For example, in Session 4, only Caitlin and FD were present. The facilitators introduced a game called 'Elemental Ninja'. The objective is for players to stand in a circle in ninja poses and tap the limbs of the player next to them. Each player gets one chance to make contact and one chance to dodge. In this version, the players all have powers related to the elements, and the group must collectively decide which element represents which power.

Caitlin and FD spent about 10 minutes during their session deciding what the powers were. In Session 5, we asked them to introduce the game to the other participants, who then also contributed to what power the elements would have. While Caitlin was open to the powers changing, FD was much more adamant about keeping the pre-established rules. The group spent 15 minutes re-negotiating the powers. Throughout the gameplay, there were instances of stopping-and-starting as the children made sure the rules were followed in the name of fairness. This is in contrast to their desire for the facilitators to be flexible as was demonstrated earlier with 'Emotional Freeze'.

Activity (Gameplay-related). Because Phase 1 was centered around acting games, much of the activity observed during the first 3 weeks was play-related. Within this theme, certain sub-themes emerged, such as teasing and rough-play (See Figure 6). Within the school context, this type of play is often discouraged as inappropriate or even dangerous. However, it became apparent from the first week that this group wanted to play with each other in a rough-and-

tumble manner. In Session 2, which included FD, Jermimus, Abraham and Caitlin, they

interrupted an acting game to physically drag Caitlin and then Jermimus across the stage. Later

in that session, they were asked to walk through the space as I called out various animals they

had to imitate. When I called out 'cat', the four of them ended up meeting in the middle of the

room to pretend to catfight. The research team chose to step in during the former, as that seemed

unsafe, but not during the latter where the children held back more. We discussed this later in the

debrief:

> R1: Playfighting has its place but I think we need to channel that
>
> somewhere…because even when we were doing the first game, they were
>
> immediately carrying each other and, hitting each other. And it was fun for
>
> them but it's, y'know, they were grabbing the stick and swinging each other
>
> around. And that was a calm game so.
>
> R2: Yah, but it's funny cause I'm talking about that a lot in my
>
> [Dramatherapy] classes, like that playful aggression is such an important part
>
> of development. But adults are always trying to stifle it. So, I wonder how we
>
> could channel it in a way that's safe and everybody feels comfortable. But
>
> they still get to express that a little bit.
>
> R1: … But that's something that as an educator I find - I do it when I'm in
>
> school, I tell them to stop doing it because I have to, but I personally don't
>
> mind. I think it's really healthy actually, for kids to do that. 'Cause it lets out a
>
> lot of their natural inclinations. A lot of them are in puberty or about to hit
>
> puberty. Lots of energy going. The recalibrating themselves socially so that

kind of stuff- and it also teaches them limits. It teaches them what's fun and

what hurts.

This discussion was later validated by an incident at the end of Session 3. During the last

activity, Caitlin, Never and Abraham were pretending to drag and throw Mark into the 'Magic

Bucket'. After this, Mark spoke up and said he did not like the way they behaved: "Nope, that

actually hurt". The other three seemed genuinely remorseful and apologized for hurting Mark,

who accepted this.

An element of teasing was also present. At first, we only saw this among the children.

They would banter during games, playfully gloating if they won a round or scored a point. For

example, in Session 2, we were playing a game called 'Group Mood', in which one player is sent

out of the room and when they re-enter, they must guess a collective mood that the other players

are portraying. When Abraham was struggling to guess correctly during his turn, the facilitators

suggested the group give him a hint. Caitlin spoke up and playfully called out: "No! Let him

suffer."

Over time, this type of play extended to the facilitators, mainly within the context of the

games. For example, in Session 6, Abraham and FD were present. The facilitators joined them

for a round of Elemental Ninja, as suggested by Abraham. FD gleefully turned to Abraham at the

beginning and proposed an alliance: "Let's team up on them!" Later, when I was taking too long

during my turn, Abraham yelled at me: "R1, go, go, go!"

Child Agency. As previously mentioned, the facilitators toed the line between setting

limits and granting freedoms to the children. As the sessions continued, we saw that the children

were eager to assert themselves and their wants. We decided to encourage the autonomy and

initiative we observed in different ways. First, we asked the children to explain the rules of the

games if they were familiar with them. Second, if the game was unfamiliar, we would present the

rules and then open the floor to questions, comments, or objections. We also made it clear that

we were open to switching activities if the group desired. We did this by taking group votes.

Thirdly, we introduced Elemental Ninja, an activity which adds a layer of creativity and

cooperation to a game they were familiar with. Fourth, we introduced games that allowed the

children to employ control over the adults (e.g., Puppets: actors act as props while other

participants move them around and work them through a scene.) Finally, we left it up to the

children to suggest and explain acting games that they wanted to play. The facilitators stepped

back and allowed the children to lead each other, only stepping in if things seemed too out of

hand or if the play became too rough.

Depending on availability, the activities either took place in an auditorium or in a

classroom (See Figures 2 and 3). The children used movement and physicality to claim these

spaces almost immediately. For example, in Session 2,while playing an acting game in the

auditorium, the group did not stay confined to the stage as expected, but ran or walked up and

down the seating area as well. In Session 3, we used the classroom for the first time, a space

which was familiar to the children as a learning space. As he stepped into it, FD yelled out: "This

is our class now!", effectively claiming the space for the Drama Club.

Another way they showed agency was by testing limit of out-game rules, which we laid

out at the beginning of the process in the Group Contract (See Figure 4). In these instances, the

children would pull focus by talking over the facilitators, openly disagreeing with the facilitators;

or not following requests from the facilitators. For example, at the end of Session 5, as I was

addressing the group, they were chattering amongst themselves and not listening to me. I

expressed that I was frustrated by this, but they started laughing as if it was funny to them.

Caitlin, as a throwback to an earlier joke, started babbling in French, which Never and Mark

started to echo. This devolved into playful shoving and I could not get them to stop and focus on

me. As discussed, the struggle in those moments became how to enforce limits without resorting

to disciplinary tactics implemented in schools. In this instance, R2 appealed to their empathy and

pointed out my frustration and hurt at their disrespect. This was somewhat successful, but it

ultimately took a long time to get them to focus.

  Expression/Demeanor. In this project, this theme refers to expression of inner thoughts,

feelings or states. In this phase, expression and demeanour were most often related to the desire

have more frequent attendance from missing group members and wanting more time in Drama

Club. These states were either inferred through observation of facial expression, body language,

or other physicality; or through direct forms of communication such as the Emotional

Thermometer and verbal discussion. For example, in Session 4, where Caitlin and FD were

present, when we presented the Emotional Thermometer, Caitlin put hers in the yellow section

and said: "I'm kind of meh because I want other people to hear us too. I'm right here, in the

middle of happy and meh." (See Appendix G). In another instance, Abraham had to leave the

club early. As he was walking out, he went to the Emotional Thermometer and expressed: "I'm

sad to leave, but excited because I'm going to another acting class". (See Appendix G for magnet

placements).

  Within the context of the games, we observed enthusiasm or lack thereof to the nature or

rules presented. In Session 5 for instance, I introduced a game called 'Interview'. While we had

played this game successfully in Session 4 with just FD and Caitlin, FD yelled out "Nooo!"

when he heard he was to work with her again and said he found the game boring. Caitlin echoed

his sentiment. Jermimus slumped down in his chair and most of the children agreed with FD and

Caitlin that they did not wish to play. These were both verbal and non-verbal cues that the group was unenthusiastic about the game suggested. In contrast, during Session 3, we played a game called 'Pow', in which players have to enact a dramatic death when eliminated. When asked their thoughts on the game, Mark expressed liking it and said, "I like fake dying!" This was an instant where a verbal cue indicated clear enthusiasm for gameplay.

We also saw eagerness from the children in relation to having their turn during a game they enjoyed. These behaviours included physically and verbally pushing others to take their turns. This also meant that we saw frustration if someone was not moving at the pace another child would have liked, or if someone did not follow or understand the rules. This was most evident when playing a game called 'Beefeater', where the children had act as tourists and enter on-stage one by one. The goal was to make one of the children, who was pretending to be a British Beefeater, laugh. The first time we played this game in Session 5, the children started out waiting patiently for their turn. However, during the second round, they started to get more impatient. For example, when Never had her turn, she was taking longer than the others because she could not make Mark laugh. After a while, the others from off-stage whispered to her to move on. Abraham then entered the scene as a police officer and escorted her off the stage. In the next round, FD made Jermimus laugh, but from off-stage Abraham said it was just a smile and argued the point. Finally, all the children came on stage to try to make Jermimus laughed at which point I stopped the game as it was getting out of control.

We also saw signs of becoming upset when losing (e.g. Caitlin: "Me? Again?" when being ousted a second time from a game), verbal feedback to continue playing (Abraham: "R1 we are starting!" when I stepped out of the room and had to pause the game) and laughter or expressions of glee over winning (e.g. FD: "I win!" as raises his arms in victory). These were

also moments where some children would use the thermometer to express themselves, moving their magnets up and down to communicate feelings without needing to use words.

   Attention. Finally, attention was the last theme to emerge. While the smallest, it is also the most complex as it encompasses many different aspects of the project. First, while the children were able to keep their attention when playing games, during transitions, they would act playfully with each other, making silly faces or noises, and playing with elements in the room (e.g. long wooden sticks used to lower the projector screen). They seemed to be having fun, but these moments took away time from the activities. Once again, the facilitators had to find creative ways of getting them to focus without making demands on them or utilizing school-type disciplinary tactics. This consisted of negotiating out-game limits, such as taking turns to speak and not speaking over the adults; gathering together and listening when explaining gameplay; and stepping in when rule-making negotiations seemed to get out of hand or went nowhere.

   This is the only time in which the observer became a factor for some of the children. For the most part, the group ignored the observers as instructed. However, there were some instances where the children did interact with them. For example, in Session 2, Caitlin used the opportunity of moving through space during a game to try and sneak a peek at the observer's notebook. Jermimus and Abraham also interacted with the observers, albeit less frequently. At first, these moments appeared to disrupt the flow of the session. However, the research team recognized that we had created an environment where the children were encouraged to express themselves, and so did not actively discourage or curb this activity when it arose. We also approached the sessions as a collaborative process between ourselves and the children, and so were curious what these brief interactions may reveal, something I discuss in a later section.

A final note about attention comes down to fidgeting, an activity that can be interpreted as a student being distracted or disrespectful. However, research shows that fidgeting can be a tool for focus, especially in children with hyperactivity and other focus related issues (Reber, 2012). The children were provided with arts and crafts to occupy their time during down time or if they did not wish to participate in one of the games (i.e. playdoh, construction paper, colourful markers, pencils, scissors, tape, and glue). In Session 4, FD brought some slime from home but lost it after the session. During Session 5, he replaced it with the playdoh on the arts and crafts table. From there, the playdoh became ubiquitous throughout the sessions. During Phase 1, it served as a tactile stimulus for most of the children, changing hands between FD, Caitlin, Abraham, and Jermimus. In this context, it seemed to serve as a fidget object and was used when the children had down time or during explanations. In those circumstances, we believe the playdoh was used a focus tool.

Phase 2

   Context. The initial goal during this phase was to translate the work done in Phase 1 into film-making. Whatever the children had worked on in their dyads would be filmed and edited by them. The facilitators would encourage self-reflection and self-modelling through the watching and editing process, while using subtle prompts to encourage reflection.

   However, this phase had to change dramatically as the children resisted both the idea of being assigned into pairs and working on scripts based on their experiences. We believe this reflected a sense of group identity they wanted to hold on to. We chose to pivot our focus away from self-reflection and observe the creation of a project with only minimal support and little prompting. We felt that following their lead not only continued to empower them individually,

but it encouraged cooperation. Furthermore, as we decreased our interference, we wanted to see if they would problem-solve and cooperate amongst themselves.

For that reason, the system that emerged from Phase 2 center around the filming and editing process/project, which we dubbed 'The Movie' (See Figure 7). It is important to note that the project continued to be process-oriented, so the aim was not to make a complete and polished project. However, the children expressed wanting a complete movie to screen for their closure activity, and so the facilitators supported their goals without emphasizing a product.

As in Phase 1, many of the same themes were observed, but manifested themselves differently and with varying levels of importance (See Figure 7).

Child Agency. With the focus of the club shifting from gameplay and acting activities to creation of The Movie, the children became more focused and excited about having a finished project. Therefore, child agency was more prominent. In this context, child agency consisted of the children making choices, asserting themselves, and sharing their opinions about the project. This manifested itself as the children coming up with ideas of what they wanted to film and how they wanted to film them; sharing feedback; and helping each other execute ideas as the filming and editing went on.

For example, in Session 9, Caitlin, Mark, Jermimus, and Never were filming a version of a game we had played during Phase 1 called 'Bus Stop'. Caitlin suggests Mark direct, who then placed the group in the back of the room for filming (See Figure 2). Caitlin asked if she was playing a boy or a girl and what her personality was. Mark responded, "You don't need to know you'll just sit there when he comes in and stay no longer than 2 minutes." Jermimus asked if he could play his character as a drunk to which Caitlin agreed and Mark approved. They filmed without incident and watched the playback on the camera screen. They begin to laugh. Mark then

asked, "Who wants to film now?" and they transitioned to Caitlin as director. Jermimus

suggested moving to the stage, which the others agree to and helped him set up on stage. Their

interactions continued in this way, with directing power changing hands and individuals voicing

opinions along the way.

     In contrast to Phase 1, the children's agency was more in relation to each other as

opposed to the adults. They seemed to inherently recognize that if they wanted the project

completed, they would need to be efficient and direct when asserting themselves and their needs.

Our decision to step back seemed to support this direction towards independence and collective

creation.

     Activity (Goal-related). As with agency, the elements in this category centered mainly

around filming and editing. Though we did play some acting games as warm-ups or during down

time, the children seemed much more eager to put their energy into filming and editing (e.g., in

Session 9, as the warm-up was about to begin, Caitlin asked to skip the game and start filming

right away. The rest of the group agreed with her and we skipped straight to filming. In Session

10, when FD tried to get Never and Caitlin to play hangman with him, they refused in favour of

editing their project.)

     Furthermore, when it came to gameplay itself, the children seemed aware that they were

on a timeline. We saw the children encouraging each other to stay focused on completing the

games and warm-ups so that they could move onto the filming and editing. For example, in

Session 10, Never, Caitlin, and FD were waiting for others to arrive. FD tried to get Caitlin and

Never to play a game of catch with the playdoh while they waited but Never got a computer

instead: "Come Caitlin, we have to edit this.". When Abraham arrived, FD immediately

exclaimed, "Okay! Let's edit." Later, FD was trying to film a voiceover but Never and Caitlin

were talking so Abraham yelled out, "Quiet!" which they immediately did. Due to this, I did not have to step in to get to them to focus and to motivate them.

     Negotiation. In this phase, negotiation was related to the logistics of filming and editing. The group split into two, with FD and Abraham doing one part of the film, and Jermimus, Never, Caitlin, and Mark doing another. Both groups had different ideas for what they wanted to film, so Abraham suggested they dovetail the work and make a cohesive program, which the group agreed on. They ended up creating a variety show with commercials, with the first group filming commercials and the second filming sketches. This idea worked thanks to Abraham's ability and willingness to communicate with the other group during filming and editing ("Wait, let's talk to the people we're working with".) His attitude spread to the rest of the group and the children worked with an awareness of each other, even as they worked separately, especially during editing:

        R1: Even though they were split up between the two computers, so Never and

        Caitlin were on one computer, and Abraham and FD were on another

        computer, Never and Abraham were communicating across to each other to

        make sure to try to edit things together, which I thought was awesome. (Field

        notes, Session 10)

     Overall, behaviours in this category fell under problem-solving (e.g., what order should the scenes be filmed and cut together?), planning (e.g., how long did they have to film certain things?), and sharing of space or equipment (e.g., taking turns using the auditorium and the props):

R1: While we were sitting and I was showing them the different cameras,

Abraham and FD and Mark were like 'I want the HD camera' and then

Mark…was like, 'Oh, I'll just take the blue camera'.

O1: Yah, and like, as far as negotiating who was gonna film…it was just like

'I wanna do it' and then it's like 'Well, no wait, I want to' and it's like

'Okay.'…I feel like, [they knew] they were gonna get a chance and they had

all these different ideas and stuff. (Discussion, Session 9)

Once again, the adult's role was minimized. We helped with technical aspects, such as how to run the equipment, and served as timekeepers to help the children stay on track. We did not need to step in to help resolve conflicts or find compromises for creative choices.

Expression/Demeanor. This category consisted of how the children interacted with the Emotional Thermometer and what was observed from external demeanor or direct verbal expression. Overall, there were fewer expressions of negative affect, such as frustration or disappointment. Considering that gameplay was minimized and the children were focused on working together, this is unsurprising. The other thing to note was that, while there was some enthusiasm around gameplay and being in each other's company, much of the emotional expression in this phase related to watching themselves on film. We also saw a mix between enjoying the process and spending time together, showing enthusiasm at being part of the project, and showing very little or more serious emotions (i.e., focus) when it came to working on the projects, most often during the editing portions.

We saw this begin in Session 7. As Never and Caitlin walked in that day, they immediately put their magnets on excited. When FD walked in, his first words were "Where is everyone?" After the warm-up, we told them that we were going to start filming and editing next

week to which they respond enthusiastically by smiling and jumping up in their seats. As

mentioned, in Session 9, when Caitlin, Never, Mark, and Jermimus were replaying their filmed

scenes, they were laughing at what they saw. Later, in Session 10, when Caitlin and Never were

reviewing their editing, they laughed at a sketch called "Best Friends". Caitlin though her voice

sounded funny but both her and Never agreed that they enjoyed the result.

Attention. Finally, attention played a small but significant role in this phase. In contrast

to Phase 1, when the facilitators were trying to introduce new games and encourage the children

to try their ideas, we rarely had to step in to help the children focus. In fact, by Session 10, the

group asked for more time, so I extended the project from one hour to an hour and a half. What I

noticed at that point was a sense of purpose, coupled with a feeling of relaxation. It was as if the

extra time gave the children a chance to breathe, and, conversely, they were calmer and more

focused on the task at hand. In fact, the only time I had to step in during the last three sessions

was to keep time and remind the children how long they had left in the session. Those small

reminders were usually enough to motivate them to refocus and finish whatever project was at

hand.

Again, the group policed themselves in terms of focus and attention (see earlier examples

in Negotiation) with Abraham stepping up as a go-between for the groups and facilitating

cooperation. When it came to filming and editing, the group seemed eager to complete the

warmup games to get to the filming. The clay/tactile components in this case were not used for

concentration but rather returned to play object, especially for FD, who liked to transform them

and use them as communication tools, an aspect I will elaborate on in the discussion portion.

Group Dynamics

I believe it is important to reiterate that this group of children were not strangers to each other. To my knowledge, these children have attended this school together since Kindergarten and they have all been enrolled in after-school program since at least Grade 3, when I was one of their educators. However, we did not know the degree of friendships between them, nor their pre-existing dynamics. Even though I was their educator for one year when they were in Grade 3 and have taught some of their after-school activities in the past two years, I do not know the full details of their friendships and interactions outside of the small window of time I spent with them. For this reason, we had follow-up interviews with two of their after-school educators, to verify our assumptions and my preconceived notions which may have been false.

Group Contract. As stated in the methods section, in Session 1, we wrote a group contract, a common practice in educational and recreational settings (See Figure 4). During the creation of the contract, some individual traits and attitudes emerged. First, we saw that each child had different a different approach to the concept of rules. There were some initial protests. For example, when R1 suggested that the children be on time as a first rule, Caitlin protested, saying "I'm always late". To compromise, R1 added 'doing our best' in order to give flexibility to the rules.

Earlier, during the explanation of the group contract, Abraham said "I'm not good at rules", indicating that he either does not like having rules to follow or he struggles to follow them. Adult C later told us that Abraham is often in the home and school office for not following rules in class. His after-school educators also noted that he has shown more defiance toward them this year, talking back and refusing to do what they ask of him. I found this surprising, considering that during my experience with Abraham 2 years ago, he tended to listen and follow rules without incident. When the educators were asked why this might have changed, they did

not have an explanation or hypothesis. The observer also noticed that Abraham was the only

child standing up while the rest crouched around the group contract which was laid on the floor,

and he did not contribute to the rules. We suspect he may have felt uncomfortable by the exercise

and wanted to move on to other things.

FD contributed a few rules, one of which was "Flexible dude must be flexible." We

found his choice of name and rule contribution interesting. From the beginning, FD

demonstrated a lack of flexibility towards others while making exceptions for himself, especially

during gameplay. In Session 6 for example, FD was alone with the two facilitators for the last 30

minutes of the session because the others were either unable to attend or had to leave early. We

introduced an obstacle course game called 'Grandma's footprints'. The goal is to reach a

designated finish line without the player assigned as Grandma seeing you move. FD chose a sign

on a bulletin board as the finish line and wanted to be Grandma first.

During the next turn, I was Grandma and caught him slowly moving on one foot. When I

told him he was out he responded with "That doesn't count." R2 asked him "Would you let us

get away with that?" He paused for a few seconds before slowly responding "Yes", even though

he had eliminated us when we moved in similar ways in previous rounds. When discussing it

later in the debrief, O1 also pointed out that moment and agreed that he had applied a double

standard to himself.

During gameplay, R2 and I independently chose not to argue the point. Due to our child-

centric approach, we wanted FD to use his time with us in his own way without starting a

conflict. In later discussion, we agreed that, had the other children been present, we would have

pushed for him to stick to the rules to make things fair for the group. We as the facilitators did

not care about winning, and therefore it did not seem important to us. We were more interested

in what this behaviour said about FD.

This double standard and rigidity towards others revealed that winning was important to

FD. For the rest of the session, he asked to play repeatedly because he knew he would win every

time with little resistance from me and R2. He even said, "I want someone to [be grandma] so

that I can win" and then later "watch me win". This desire to win with little resistance from

others became a theme with FD during Phase 1. In Session 4 for example, he told the facilitators

that he felt victorious, so I suggested he add it to the Emotional Thermometer. Not only did he do

this, but he insisted on writing it in big block letters above everyone else's. This was so

important for him that when I accidentally erased it from the board in Session 5, he became

upset. He insisted that I rewrite it exactly as he had and that it should remain on the thermometer

until the end of the project (See Appendix G).

While this pattern of behaviour could be interpreted as competitive and even aggressive,

we came to believe that there was a different reason for this beyond a competitive spirit or need

to win. This stems back to the first session, where FD proclaimed "I don't like people watching

me and I don't like it now" during one of our first acting games. We noticed a pattern where,

after we would explain a game's rules, he would say that he did not want to do it because he was

not good at it and would choose to sit out. However, once he saw other children participate, he

would jump in and participate eagerly:

> R2: It was somewhere in the beefeater game, I thought. Is when I noticed
>
> it…He said, 'I'm not gonna be the one to make him laugh, I'm just gonna be
>
> this one, cause I'm not good at that'… Yah, and then after, he was like 'I

wanna try!' And I felt like that was - for me, I noticed a shift there.

(Discussion, Session 5)

In the follow-up interview, the educators reported that FD is an activity-oriented child who is adamant about making rules that others must follow while making exceptions for himself. Again, while this may look like competition, the research team agreed that it may also stem from a fear of embarrassment. He might be afraid of not being good at something, and therefore looking foolish, so he only chooses to play games where he can be the winner. Furthermore, trying new things and risking failure are big parts of acting, which is why it can be difficult for someone who embarrasses easily. The other children did not seem to have same reluctance as FD, and we noticed that when FD saw others taking risks or lose gracefully, he was willing to step in and play.

Case in point, in Session 6, he, Abraham, and the two facilitators were playing 'Elemental Ninja'. FD and Abraham were disagreeing over a rule. In the past, if one of the groups wanted to change a rule or objected to one of his rules, FD would not let the game continue without underlining his point and convincing the other to come to his side. (FD: "No, it's the other way around…What you don't understand is…") In this case, he simply said "Oh, whatever let's play." All members of the research team took note of this moment as this was the first time we noticed FD let go when something was not going his way. What was interesting is that, in the previous session, Never was in a similar situation with Caitlin as they were disagreeing during a game of 'Elemental Ninja'. Instead of arguing the point, Never conceded with a simple "Whatever" and kept the game moving. We wondered if FD picked up on this strategy and chose to mimic it when he saw how being flexible could allow for more game time, something he values.

Another rule FD contributed which was notable was "Don't force people to do things they don't wanna do" (See Figure 4). Earlier that session, we told the group they were under no obligation to be present, participate, or complete the project. As mentioned, this seemed to have the most impact on Mark, who told us that his mother was forcing him to join the project, despite being told during recruitment that participation was voluntary (see Appendix E). He made it clear during our icebreaker that he did not want to be there and would not play with us. We accepted this and told him he was under no obligation to stay or participate. He seemed to consider this for a minute and said that he would be willing to try under those circumstances. We then explained the game, and his eyes visibly lit up as he proclaimed, "I know this game!" From that moment, Mark attended the club without needing coaxing and participated in all the activities. We believe that by being given permission to sit out or leave, this made him feel empowered and he let his guard down, which allowed him to better enjoy his time in the club.

We believe something similar happened with FD over the course of the weeks. At the beginning, it seemed as if he was always poised to fight for his opinion, hence the rule of not being made to do something he did not want to do. However, over time, he seemed more willing to let go of his need to be right and have others follow his rules because he felt in control during Drama Club. This change is best exemplified in Phase 2 when he was working with Abraham to create their film. Abraham had many ideas throughout the process and tended to lead when it came to the film's content. While FD did speak up if he did not agree with Abraham's direction, he also listened Abraham's ideas and was willing to try them out before refusing them. He was more insistent on holding the camera and trying to take certain shots, which Abraham conceded to. If FD got his turn behind the camera, he was happy to let Abraham take over when asked. It seems that as long as he was in control of who used the camera, he was willing to go along with

Abraham's ideas. It also helped that Abraham asked FD his opinion on things before shooting or

during editing. Being in on this decision-making process, even if only to be asked for approval or

disapproval, seemed to contribute to FD's comfort level in letting go of decisions.

Positive vs Negative Leadership and Energy Level. It should be noted that Abraham

showed positive leadership during shooting and editing in Phase 2, where he was conscious of

the other group-members and what they were doing in relation to the final film. This contrasts

his educators' report that children in the after-school program find him hard to work with. This

behaviour is also different than during Phase 1, where he pulled attention during games and adult

explanations in order to speak his mind, or when he wanted to go first in most of the games. In

our debriefs, the research team concluded that this seemed to be a form of showing off, and that

Abraham liked being center of attention, especially if he felt like it was something he was good

at.:

> R1: Abraham, in my experience, has been a much better listener than he is in
>
> this activity. And that's why I do think it comes down to attention. I think he
>
> really likes it…I think he wants to be the center of attention in an acting way as
>
> well.
>
> O1: I see that.
>
> R2: Yah, he's like 'I act, and this is a drama group. I'm gonna be the star. Like,
>
> 'I take another class' maybe. (Discussion, Session 3)

He has ambitions to be an actor, has been in film and acting classes for many years and

was the most experienced of the group. Therefore, we believe he wanted to show his prowess

(e.g. using film terminology that the other children were not aware of during filming in Session

9). However, he did not seem to have the same concern during Phase 2. There may be two

reasons for this. On the one hand, he may have taken a cue from the facilitators, who modelled a democratic approach. For example, in Session 5, during Elemental Ninja, FD was objecting to Jermimus' suggested power. FD could not be reasoned with in that moment, so I opened it to the group and asked them to vote on whether Jermimus' power for fair or not. The group voted to keep the power, and FD accepted that decision. Abraham may have observed how a democratic approach is necessary to keep a project or activity going and emulated it. Another possibility is that, because he has previous experience, he may be the most aware that to complete a filming project, the group must work together and put their individual needs aside for the good of the creation. His experience with collective creation and collaboration might have therefore come into play. So, while this change might not be a direct result of behaviour he observed throughout the sessions, it may nonetheless demonstrate the power of this type of dramatic work on social dynamics and relationships.

This is especially important considering Abraham's background. He was initially sorted into the group with more social competence as, from the outside, he seems like an extroverted and confident child with many friends. However, when speaking with Adult C and his educators, I discovered that he has been losing friends this year due to his loud and outgoing behaviour.

However, in the context of the acting class, the other children appeared to appreciate his energy and were more likely to go along with his antics than object to them as they go on line with the mandate of the club. For example, in the previous year, he and Caitlin took a Commedia dell'arte class held in the auditorium. In Session 7, Abraham started improvising with Commedia dell'arte and invited Caitlin to do join him. She improvised with him on stage and the rest of the group watched and applauded them. This was a small moment of group cohesion and fun that had Abraham at the center of positive attention.

This is in contrast to Jermimus who, on the outside, appears to have similar energy to Abraham but who is received more negatively and is more often rejected than Abraham. Jermimus also tends to be more outspoken and louder than his peers, both inside and outside the club. However, where Abraham went into dramatic play or took the lead during games or filming, Jermimus did not appear to have a vested interest in the drama or the film component. This is not to say that he did not want to be part of the club. Jermimus was always willing to participate and fully commit to exercises that we presented. However, during explanations or when something did not capture his attention immediately he seemed to have a hard time focusing, perhaps indicating boredom. For example, in Session 3, when we convened in the classroom for the first time, all the children appeared distracted by elements in the room. However, Jermimus appeared the most distracted, running around the room and reading the posters on the walls loudly instead of joining the group or listening to the facilitators. This distractibility seemed especially exacerbated because we introduced a new element that he did not enjoy, the journals. Jermimus was not interested in journaling, calling it boring. FD did not enjoy the concept either, and both he and Jermimus were more interesting in playing with the journals than filling them in (i.e. they were tossing them around and between them, calling them boring and ugly etc.).

However, he did eventually decide he wanted to decorate his journal and then took a long time colouring the front. He was so focused on this task that he did not transition into the next activity with the rest of the group, preferring to draw. He ignored repeated attempts by both the facilitators and FD to put his book aside and join the group. When he was finally done with his drawing, he went around asking others what they thought of his work, interrupting the game that was underway.

This echoed his behaviour during the group contract. Once the rules had been established, the children were asked to sign the document (see Figure 4) as a promise to follow the rules. They were given colourful markers so they could decorate their signatures. Jermimus drew his in a very elaborate way. He was taking his time filling in his letters, even when everyone was done. The other facilitator and I tried to get him to step away from the task so that we could continue on to the next activity, but he ignored us and kept colouring, not responding verbally or otherwise to our requests, even when we told him we would give him time at the end of the session or in the next session to complete his drawing. He did eventually step away after much coaxing and our gently tugging the contract out from under his marker.

So again, while Abraham could also be disruptive and pull focus, especially towards the adults, he was more considerate of others and aware of the group mood, which mean he was more easily accepted by his peers in the club. Not only did Jermimus pull focus, but he put his own wants ahead of the group to the point that it halted the flow of the session.

However, we do not know if he purposefully ignores directions in favour of his own needs; or if he gets so hyper focused on a single element that he tunes out his surroundings and is unable to pick up on cues. Indeed, in the follow up interview, his educators had the same question:

> E2: I have to ask him many, many, many, many many many many many -
> even just to get his attention. I mean whatever's going on with him, I don't
> know. It takes a lot of work to get his attention because he has tunnel focus
> where he just, like, if he's in a book or a conversation or a game, he's
> completely in that

They also agreed that he can be oblivious to social cues, but again, are unsure if he is doing this on purpose and genuinely cannot pick up when others are being bothered:

E1: When he does spend time with people, it's usually just bothering them…Like, some kids will be sitting at a table in a group, and he'll just come over and hover and then, just say annoying things to them and just kind of poke and prod at them basically, and doesn't know how to interact without bothering other kids.

As Adult C also pointed out when asked about Jermimus:

He would get in trouble with peers for misbehaving in one way or another. Or get in trouble because he would be defiant with the teacher. But at the root of it, he was trying to be included in a particular group that doesn't want him around. So, a lot of that misbehaviour it's coming from craving something that he's just not getting. (Discussion, Session 5)

I believe a moment in Session 10 best encapsulates Jermimus' experiences with other children. Never was editing with the group on a Thursday, a day she normally was unable to attend due to Lacrosse practice. Jermimus was not present on this day, as he also tended to miss Thursdays. For that reason, until then, Never had usually been in Drama Club in Jermimus' presence. Never, as mentioned, was part of the higher social competence group. She is quiet and focused, following directions and trying to get others to join along during activities if they are not listening. She and Jermimus were also a part of the same team during filming. As mentioned, though Jermimus can be distracted during down time, he becomes engaged and cooperative during the activities. This was true during filming as well. As soon as the cameras rolled and he knew what his role was, he was easy to work with and listened well.

At one point during Session 10, I was helping Never with her editing and she stopped and looked around and remarked "See how much calmer it is without Jermimus here?" I was taken aback since this seemed to come out of nowhere. I told her that Thursdays are normally calmer because there are fewer kids who can attend. I made sure not to place blame on any one individual member of the group. I did ask her however, how her experience filming with Jermimus went. She furrowed her brow at me, which made it seem that she was confused by my question, and said it was okay filming with him. She did not elaborate further, and I did not want to push. It is hard to say what prompted Never's comment aside from a general observation, and whether she meant anything by it. However, when given the opportunity, she did not complain about Jermimus.

When discussing this, we were not sure if she was just protecting him, or if she was truly confused by my question. As I said, Jermimus participates well during activities and we did not observe any arguments or other issues between the children during filming. Though Jermimus can exasperate his peers due to his focus-pulling, he can contribute and collaborate during activities. Thus, there are moments where children enjoy spending time with him, as long as it is framed within a project. Once again, I believe this shows the power that a collaborative project such as the Drama Club and 'The Movie' can have between children with different levels of social competence.

Another interesting moment that occurred between Jermimus and Mark during the group contract creation. Jermimus said that "No one should be sad" should be one of the rules. Mark responded with," Yes we should, sometimes like if someone dies, we should be sad." After this, the rule became to 'feel emotions.' I believe this interaction gave us insight into how these two children see emotions differently. For Jermimus, it seems he either feels he should be happy at

all times or prefers if others around him are always happy. Looking back, while he struggled to

connect socially, he did show concern for others if they were uncomfortable or down. For

example, in Session 7, Abraham entered the session in tears and hid behind the curtain to let his

feelings out. Jermimus and FD noticed and tried to cheer Abraham up. FD said, "I hope you feel

better" and Jermimus offered him playdoh in an attempt to make him laugh.

Mark, on the other hand, while better liked than Jermimus in the club, generally

displayed a more negative affect and did not make obvious attempts to connect with others. His

face remained neutral and his voice more monotone. He became more expressive when

discussing topics he enjoys or during games, but stayed quiet until he felt it was the right

moment to speak. Between the two, Mark appeared more honest about his thoughts and feelings,

but lacked consideration for others' feelings.

Not splitting into dyads. It all came to a head during session 7, when R2 and I attempted

to split the group into dyads for filming. Never, Caitlin and FD wanted to work with Mark. This

was a problem as we were trying to split them into twos. Mark very bluntly said that he would

prefer to be with Caitlin and Never but would let the others decide for him "This is not my fault.

This is not my problem". This turned into a conflict, as FD was clearly upset. Jermimus, who

until then, was playing quietly with playdoh, spoke up and defended FD. He accused Never,

Caitlin, and Mark of being clique-y and not listening to the group's needs. This was unexpected,

as it had seemed until then that Jermimus was not listening.

Here we see again that while Jermimus sometimes lacks the ability to read social cues, he

does not want to see others in pain or treated poorly. In contrast, when Mark saw that his

decisions were causing others pain or discomfort, he chose to wash his hands of responsibility. In

our debrief, we reflected on these differing reactions and said that Mark's behaviour might be

related to his trouble with friendships outside of the club and we noticed that individual reactions fell along group lines in this conflict.

That is, the members of the higher social competence group tried to come to diffuse the situation. Abraham said he would work with anyone. Caitlin, while advocating for her trio, suggested all six of them should work on one big project and then split up as they wished, and Never suggested that we pull names out of a hat to make the pairings random and avoid favouritism. On the other hand, FD and Mark were more concerned with what they wanted and made no attempt to bring harmony back to the group, while Jermimus, while attempting to resolve the conflict, became aggravated. None of these reactions were wrong, and all contributed to the larger conversation, but it was the first time we saw a clear divide between members of the different groups and how their experiences affect their cooperation skills.

By the end of that session, no decisions had been made. However, in Session 8, we brought in the equipment and decided to see how they would naturally divide themselves. I brought in one HD camera and two less sophisticated cameras. With everyone wanting to choose the HD camera, a compromise was reached. Abraham also proposed the idea of creating a larger project. He had proposed this in Session 7, but the group ignored him. Now, faced with the reality of the equipment and the timeline, it seemed the children were willing to put their feelings aside and work. Abraham and FD went off with the HD camera and Mark, Caitlin, and Jermimus worked with the smaller camera. When Never came in later, she filmed with both groups. The issue of groups did not come up again.

The Role of the Tactile

How the children acted when we introduced the equipment sheds light on the how objects played a subtle but important role in the project. Over the course of the observations, we noticed

that certain objects took on two major roles: as tools for self-regulation, and as bridges for communication.

We did not notice the former immediately. What can sometimes look like a lack of attention, or distraction is a way in which a child is regulating their focus in order to better pay attention. Like doodling on a piece of paper when listening to a lecture, the theory is that by focusing your energy on something external, you can block out thoughts or stimuli that are distracting when listening. This is not an unusual tactic for children or individuals with attention disorders (Reber, 2012).

This is something that educators must always think about when designing a classroom: at what point does visual stimuli go from enriching to distracting? Case in point, in the auditorium there was a projector that was rolled up over the stage. In the first session, Caitlin and Abraham were distracted by the long cord that hung down from the projector and would often walk away from us in order to play with it. We learned by Session 2 that by making sure the rope was securely out of reach, they were more able to focus on our explanations. Overall, the auditorium was a better space for focus and attention for the group. We noted that whenever we had to use the classroom instead of the auditorium, getting the group's attention was more challenging The classroom was highly stimulating, with letters, numbers, colourful posters and other educational material on the walls. While this may have been helpful in an academic setting, we found it distracting to our acting group. The auditorium, with a designated stage and audience area seemed to prime the children to act, thus minimizing their distractibility.

While these types of stimuli were distracting, we noticed a curious development in Session 6. Only Abraham and FD were present during that session, which was held in the classroom. While waiting to see if others would arrive, they took playdoh from the arts and crafts

table, which they proceeded to knead throughout the session. However, where elements like the rope and posters were a distraction, the playdoh had an opposite effect. As mentioned, FD had previously shown a lack of flexibility if a scene or game was not going his way. During this session, we noticed that he was more restrained and able to take a step back. We played a game called 'Puppets' where he and Abraham were tasked with physically moving the other facilitator and me into a scene (As related by the observer in the session debrief). Here, she talks about how she saw him get excited, becoming giddy and smiling energetically, then reach for the playdoh and re-center himself:

> When he was placing you guys in the [scene], and he was watching you, it
> was almost like - I don't know if this is what he was doing but it was almost
> like he was trying to self-regulate. He went and got the clay to play with
> while he was watching you. You know, he was excited and then he got the
> clay, and was like, watching. I thought that was really interesting.

 Another stand-out moment is one previously mentioned. Recall that in Session 7, Jermimus was playing with playdoh while the group argued. From the outside, he appeared disengaged but, when he interjected, we realized that he was actively listening to the conversation despite appearing distracted by the clay in his hand.

In Phase 2, when the equipment is introduced, we see objects take on the role of communication and collaboration tool. For example, in Session 9, when the cameras were introduced, FD, Abraham, Caitlin, and Mark were present. After I showed them how to film, they were crowded on the stage around a camera, playing with the settings. Jermimus arrived late and Abraham immediately called him over to explain the camera settings to him without needing a prompt from an adult. As shown in the earlier section, decisions on how to share the equipment

helped the group put aside their earlier argument and pick groups for filming. Later, as Abraham and FD were filming, they used the camera as a bargaining tool to determine whose turn it was to film. They shared ideas and negotiated how long each of them would get a turn behind the camera to try something out. They would then watch the playback together to decide if a scene should be redone or not.

The larger group had a similar experience. When Never arrived late, she waited for the current scene to finish filming. As Mark was about to step back behind the camera, Never asked for a turn. Caitlin spoke up, reminding everyone that Never had not had a turn behind the camera yet and the group gave way to let her step behind the camera.

These objects also became bridges of communication through play as well. For example, in Session 10, Never, Caitlin, and FD were the only ones present. While Never and Caitlin had a project to edit together, FD felt left out. I asked if he wanted to film something, but he expressed that he felt he could not film without Abraham. However, when he noticed the tripod, he went over to the girls and told them that his father had a similar tripod at home. He then pretended the tripod was other things, such as a gun and a crane. Caitlin and Never smiled and engaged with him. When Never was preoccupied with editing a scene, Caitlin noticed that FD was playing with a piece of playdoh. At that point, he invited her to play catch with him, which she did. Later, FD set up a camera on the tripod and started filming Caitlin for fun. He asked her to run across the screen. He then proceeded to jokingly tell her not to run that way and ran in a sillier fashion. She laughed and they took turns running in different ways across the camera.

Relationship with Adults.

In order to introduce the project to the children, I asked both observers to participate in the initial introduction game on their respective first days. We played a name game at the

beginning to break the ice and to make introductions between the adults and the children. After

the game was done, I explained the roles of each adult to the children. I told them how myself

and R2 would be facilitators, that we were doing research for school, and that O1 and O2 would

be observing. We also asked the children not to engage with the observers (we said all this in

age-appropriate ways and acquired assent as well).

However, that rule was not always followed. In the first session for example, after the

name game was complete, the observer (O1) sat on a chair at the back of the room to begin her

observation (See Figure 2). Abraham called her seat 'The Punishment Chair' because she had to

sit and watch while the rest of us played games. He used the term again in Session 2 when the

second observer was introduced in the same way. The research team discussed this and agreed

that this was not meant in a malicious way. On the contrary, we believe that that Abraham was

trying to make the observer feel included through some light teasing while also calling out how

awkward it might seem to ignore someone while being watched by them. The other children also

laughed at his joke, which we believe meant everyone felt at ease with the situation.

The only person not present during the initial introduction was Caitlin, who was late on

the first day. When she walked in, she joined the game already in session and the observer was

already set up in the back of the room. We noticed throughout the game that she was stealing

glances at the observer. However, after we explained the observers' role and that the children

were meant to act like they were not there, Caitlin found opportunities to interact with them. For

example, in Session 2, during a walking around game, Caitlin split off from the group and

walked around the room in circles. Whenever she would cross in front of O2, she would whisper

playfully "Don't forget, Caitlin is awesome". She repeated this three more times. After observing

this, Jermimus copied her behaviour, also stepping over to the observer and saying "Jermimus is

awesome." as if competing for O2's attention. In those moments, O2 smiled warmly but ignored the children as she was instructed to.

However, a moment in Session 11 made it difficult for O1 to ignore Caitlin. At the end of the session, as everyone was leaving, Caitlin unexpectedly started to role play as me. She called me Caitlin and herself R1 and verbally indicated that I was meant to follow the other children out while she stayed behind and talked with O1. By then, Caitlin was aware that the research team conducted post-session discussions. I decided to go along with the ruse and left the room, signalling to O1 to play along. While breaking the wall of silence was unexpected, I was curious if Caitlin had a goal in mind and what this interaction might reveal. I also wanted to give her the benefit of the doubt in case she wanted to talk to O1 privately about something. O1 then debriefed me, explaining that Caitlin playacted as me and asked how O1 evaluated her, asking how 'Caitlin' did and what kind of grade she was receiving. Note that this is not the first time this occurred, with Caitlin asking me after the first two sessions how she was evaluated. We made it clear then that we were simply observing and not evaluating, and she did not ask again until Session 11. It seems then that the thought of evaluation was on her mind. This is another interesting insight into how Caitlin reacted to being watched and her concern with being evaluated by adults, something that the other children did not express concern with.

However, Caitlin never seemed distressed by the prospect of being evaluated, but rather approached the topic with curiosity and playfulness. Without asking her directly or speaking with her teachers or parents, it is hard to say whether she enjoyed being evaluated. However, her behaviour might indicate that she gets a certain sense of worth or joy out of this type of feedback, especially if she is used to getting good grades in her classes.

As in the first week, O1 made it clear that that there was no evaluation or grades being given out. Again, this was by design. As mentioned, we sought to foster a relationship of mutual respect where the children felt empowered and in control of their time in the club. We wanted them to see us as facilitators and collaborators rather then authority figures or teachers. While we still had to act as adults when it came to limit-setting and enforcing rules, we believe the children came to feel safe and comfortable with us in a way that they might not usually feel in an academic setting.

For example, once we introduced 'Elemental Ninja' in Session 4 and gave them collective ownership over the rules and gameplay, they did not seem concerned with letting the adults win nor they did not look to us to enforce or change rules. This contrasts with earlier sessions where the games were all introduced and run by me and the other facilitator, and as such, they deferred to us. In fact, as mentioned, by Session 5, they felt comfortable enough to disagree with our choice of game and ask for a different activity. Another turning point was during Session 8, attended by FD and Abraham. One of the activities played was called 'TV channel' where an actor or actors gets on stage and an audience member 'clicks' through TV genres. The actors must improvise scenes based on these genres. Initially, the facilitators were the channel changers, until Abraham declared, "Now we control you [R2 and R1]!", demanding a role reversal.

Initially, FD and A suggested standard channels (e.g., Romance, Cooking Show, Sci-fi) mimicking what R2 and I were suggesting. However, Abraham called out "Death Show". On the surface, this is an unusual suggestion that does not reflect any real-world TV show or channel that I am aware of. However, A and FD were discussing the subject of death earlier in the session when FD related how his father is a surgeon and works with dead bodies at times. Furthermore,

as mentioned, a common way to end acting games is to ask eliminated players to enact a dramatic death, a tactic we employed in most of our games from the second week (e.g., Mark: "I like fake dying!") R2 and I decided to go with Abraham's suggestion and act out a death scene in a comical fashion. Abraham then switched to the surgery channel and then the horror channel.

These suggestions seemed to delight both he and FD, who would giggle each time and call out a creative way in which we could maim or kill ourselves or each other. In the end, R2 had to act like she cut my finger and then my head off. While this may seem odd or even worrisome or violent, R2 pointed out there is a technique in Dramatherapy called developmental transformation where, if a child 'kills' the therapist, it can indicate that the child feels comfortable enough with the therapist/facilitator to express their aggression. (Dintino and Johnson, 1997).

Final Closure Activity

In the end, we gave the children a choice on how they wanted to end the project. First, we asked them if they would like to host a screening of their film, to which they overwhelmingly agreed. Secondly, we asked if they wanted to host the screening on the 12th session or if they wanted an extra session on the following Tuesday. They voted for an extra session so that they could have more time filming and editing.

When asked how they would like to celebrate the end of the project, they proposed a potluck. I also asked if they would like to invite peers, teachers, friends, and family but they were adamant that they only wanted the people who were present throughout the sessions. Though Mark said this was because it meant that there were fewer people to share food with, I believe that we built a safe and comfortable environment and inviting outsiders might have felt

invasive. It may also have had to do with a shyness or potential embarrassment, and they may

not have wanted to show their film to others.

In the end, all six of the participants, myself, R2, o1, Adult C, the director of the Home

and School program, and my Thesis Supervisor were present. The screening was held in the

classroom. The children were excited. During the previous session, Caitlin and Never told me

they wanted to bake a cake for the viewing and FD was excited because his parents were letting

him buy a bag of Doritos. I told them that I was going to bake cookies and FD requested

chocolate chip, which I was happy to oblige. On the day, I arrived early with O1 to set up a table

for the treats. We put down a tablecloth and had plastic plates and cutlery.

We then screened the video. There was some squirming and embarrassment at watching

themselves on-screen which is a normal reaction in my experience. My supervisor also pointed

out that she noticed some of the children, such as Jermimus and Abraham, looking back during

moments they thought was funny and smiling at the adults, as if checking to see if they were

laughing along. This supported the theory that they declined to invite outsiders to avoid potential

embarrassment or disappointment. In the end, I am happy we kept the viewing closed, as the

finished product was far from perfect and I did not want the children to judge themselves based

on this outcome.

After the screening, we had a round-table discussion, where we asked the children to talk

about what they liked and disliked about the project, and what they would like to see in the

future if the club were to reconvene. Overall, the comments were positive, with the children

remarking they had a good time. Caitlin said she would not like more people in the club and the

others echoed her sentiment, with FD specifying that only the six participants should be invited

back into the club. This indicates to me that we were successful in creating a dynamic that felt

safe and comfortable for these children, and they were eager to recapture it in the future. They also said that the additional time was well-used, and an hour and half would be perfect in the future.

Emotional Check-ins and Check-outs

As outlined in the methodology, we wanted to give the children tools to express their inner thoughts and feelings as they progressed through the project. We did this in a variety of ways, borrowing from our own experiences and the existing literature (See methodology section for full detail.)

Emotional Thermometer. Sessions began in the same way; the children walked in and place their magnets on the Emotional Thermometer (See Appendix G). In certain instances, a child might express an emotion or feeling that was not on the board and we would add it and then give them room to express their feelings. For example, in Session 3, where Jermimus seemed to be in a more playful and excited mood, he wanted to add the words 'cheesy' and 'swaggy' to the thermometer. We asked what he meant, but he could not define those words exactly. Regardless, we added those words and put his magnet where he pleased (See Appendix G). A similar thing happened with Mark in Session 9. He said he was feeling 'weird' that day and asked if he could include it on the thermometer (See Appendix G). He added it and then sat down in the audience and quietly watched Caitlin and Abraham improvise on stage. He never elaborated on what he meant by 'weird', but it is notable that felt comfortable enough to ask for the inclusion without waiting for a prompt.

In fact, we believe that the emotional thermometer became an important tool for self-expression and emotional regulation throughout the week. In Session 3, we introduced the Thermometer as blank and asked the group to decide what the emotions or states of being the

colours would represent. After some discussion, they chose the blue end to represent "Being

Cool or Awesome while the red end was "red hot". The yellow section was deemed to be more

neutral or mixed-emotion. The children then suggested states or feelings that they would like to

add to the board. There was some discussion as to whether there was a 'right' way to label the

board. Jermimus and Abraham wanted to use unconventional terms. For example, Jermimus

suggested 'meh' and Abraham suggested 'sassy' (See Appendix G). Others, like Never or Mark

were more concerned with accuracy, as they debated where to put 'Happy' in relation to 'Meh'.

Overall, the group seemed willing to take ownership of the thermometer, discussing how

best to format it and when emotions could come up (e.g., FD. "When I'm tired, I'm mad"). We

then introduced their magnets. Our initial idea was that they would each pick a colour of magnet

and perhaps design their own avatar. However, Caitlin suggested they write their initials on the

magnets, which the group agreed to (See Appendix G).

At the beginning, we reminded them to place their magnets when they entered the room

or before our warm-up activity. Over time, they began to place the magnets without prompting.

What we did not expect was that they would engage with the thermometer throughout the

sessions as a signal to the group that their mood was changing. For example, in Session 7, during

the conflict about separating into groups, Never, Caitlin, and Mark all switched their magnets to

'annoyed'. In another instance, in Session 6, Abraham came in and placed his magnet on 'sad'.

As the session wore on, he moved it to 'meh', indicating that his mood had improved but he was

not completely in a good place. When asked, he revealed that he had mixed-feelings because he

had to leave early, "I'm sad to leave, but excited because I'm going to another acting class".

Though we do not know what aspects of the session improved his mood, we were pleased to see

that he felt he could express himself in this way. Based on our observations and discussions, the

research team felt that the thermometer contributed to the creation of a safe space that the children felt ownership over.

 Safe Space in School Setting. Creating an atmosphere of safety and acceptance is something we felt was especially important in a school setting, where children's behaviour and expression are sometimes limited or controlled. Again, we did not want our participants to see us as teachers so that they behaved naturally with us. We were aware this might be a challenge considering that our project was set in a school. An incident occurred which I feel highlights how educators may handle children's behaviour and self-expression in a way that we consciously chose to avoid. To end Session 7 on a positive note, I chose a lighthearted game as a closure activity. It seemed to work, because the children were smiling and laughing as we ended the game. As they stepped out, we heard them laughing and talking at a high volume in the hallway, we believe due to their burst of positive energy. However, as they walked off, we heard a piano teacher step out of a classroom and loudly reproach the students for disrupting her lesson.

 Though she was in her right to ask the children to quiet down, the research team felt that the way she addressed the children was unnecessarily harsh. Rather than stepping out and asking them to quiet down, she very loudly yelled "What are you doing? You should know better!" We were not in the hallway and did not witness their exchange, but she was loud enough that we heard her from the auditorium. Not only was her tone and approach much different how we address the children, it led the research team to discuss how children are addressed in schools, where behaviour is always under scrutiny:

  R1: [Session 7] was probably a reflection of their comfort level as well, right?

  Cause they were comfortable enough to speak up for themselves and tell us

  the honest truth about what they wanted than just go along with what we

said…We were kind of fooling around and then they all left, and they were

like, making noises and just like super excited and just ready to be out there

and they got shut down by this teacher.… 'What do you think you're doing?

You should know better!' You this, you that, like, very much accusatory

versus 'Can you not do this behaviour, please'. So, like, shaming the kid

versus reprimanded the behaviour…and R2 made a good point of like 'Well,

how many times does a kid hear no during the day? And you come to a space

like this where you never hear no'…Here it's like, we make the rules together,

we're gonna decide on this together. It's just such an interesting contrast.

R2: And also, like, really accept the kids as they are with whatever they're

bringing in as opposed to like 'No, this is a space for this'. Yah, it's really

accepting of whatever they have.

Magic Bucket. Where the emotional thermometer/check-in was a success, we struggled

with the emotional check-out. As mentioned, we played a common closure activity called 'Magic

Bucket' where the group works together to pull an invisible receptacle from the sky. Together,

they take turns putting in things they did not enjoy from the session and take with them things

that they did enjoy. Emunah (1994) explains this is a chance for the group to come together in a

moment of reflection and transition out of the dramatic reality.

The children reinterpreted the purpose of the magic bucket. At the end of the first session,

we asked them to take turns and leave something behind that they did not enjoy and take out

something they did enjoy. We hoped this would serve as feedback for us in terms of how to run

future sessions as well as give us insight into their internal thoughts and feelings. FD went first

and chose to physically put Jermimus in the bucket. Caitlin then did the same with Mark. In the

end, most of the children took turns putting each other in the bucket. Only Never participated as directed and took out 'Freeze', a game we played during the session. We decided to keep the magic bucket and allow the children to transform it into their own ritual. This was in part because of our mandate to be child-centric but also because we noticed that this was a way they were bonding as a group.

The researchers discussed how they could honour these changes while still using the activity as a form of reflection and sharing. We decided to hand out notecards that the children could write their thoughts on and throw into the 'bucket'. The idea was that the children could express themselves to the facilitators privately but play as a group. We also noticed that Never, Caitlin and Abraham, the members of the higher social competence group, would still sometimes attempt to use the activity to express themselves before FD or Jermimus (members of the lower social competence group) would start throwing members in the 'bucket'. We surmised that perhaps they wanted to reflect and give feedback but were not given the right avenue of expression. However, the notepads were only used once, when they were introduced in Session 5. In fact, 'Magic bucket' slowly disappeared because attendance became more erratic for the rest of Phase 1. Once filming and editing was introduced in Phase 2, the children were more eager to spend time on their projects and expressed displeasure whenever 'Magic Bucket' was proposed.

Journaling. The journals were introduced in Session 3 alongside the Emotional Thermometer. We handed them out with colourful markers and encouraged the children to customize them. The reaction to this was mixed. As outlined above, Jermimus and FD did not have positive reactions to the introduction of the journal, whereas Abraham and Mark seemed

excited. Never and Caitlin did personalize their covers but did not show particular interest.

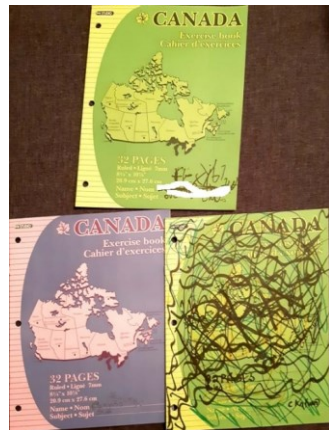However, after this first session, the children did not use the journals again (See Figure 8).

Figure 8: Sample of journals as decorated by FD, Caitlin, and Jermimus. FD's first wrote his real name and we had him cross it out. It has been erased from this image. These journals were not used again in during the course of the project.

We were surprised by this. During the introduction, Abraham labelled his as private and expressed the desire to use his journal in the future "I want to write the date and where I put my magnet that day". However, when the group was given a choice to journal or play an acting game, Abraham immediately chose the acting game. Mark was another child we assumed would embrace journaling. I had him in a previous class and when he did not want to participate, he requested pencils and paper to draw anime characters. I believed that Mark would at times opt out of the acting games in order to draw. Indeed, when the journals were first introduced, he asked if he could draw in them. When I said yes, we observed his eyes widen and he smiled. When we told him he was free to put anything in his journal, he jumped up and down in his seat in excitement. Furthermore, he was the only one who filled out some of his journal, drawing an anime character on the first page.

After that session, the journals were always on the arts and crafts table (See Figures 2 and 3). To our knowledge, none of the participants picked up the journals again, nor did they ask to journal. This is not a matter of location, as the children were in the habit of going to the arts and crafts table while waiting for the session to start. Furthermore, when it came time to film, one of the groups used the arts and crafts supplies of their own volition to make props for their film. It appears that the journals were simply not on their minds or were not as interesting as the other elements on the table. The research team also took the opportunity to propose journaling whenever there was downtime. The children consistently chose to either play with playdoh, use the cameras, or play an acting game instead.

On the one hand, this was disappointing in terms of data collection. We hoped the journaling, magic bucket, and notecards would serve as a vehicle for recording internal states and potential effects/changes. On the other hand, it demonstrates that the children did not feel the need to use these avenues of self-expression. This could indicate that the creative nature of the activity, along with the type of environment we created, meant they did not feel the need for formal forms of self-expression. Also, the very fact that we offered these options could have allowed the children to feel a sense of safety and comfort in expressing themselves and their emotions freely, knowing that they had the choice to do so privately.

Discussion

The initial goals of this project were to see how children with different levels of social competence could influence one another in a drama and video-based creative environment. Specifically, we wanted to see if 1) those with lower levels of social competence would demonstrate more socially competent behaviours, especially in regard to friendship making and conflict resolution, and 2) to see if those with higher levels of socially competence displayed

more acts of empathy. We took the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach which assumes that all children have unique strengths and potentials that should be positively cultivated. We also adapted the meta-processes model of change (see Figure 1) and Renee Emunah's (1994) model of therapeutic drama. Both models put the participant at the center of the work, with the facilitator working with and alongside the participant to co-create the dramatic reality.

The exploratory nature of this phenomenological study allowed for the goals of the research to be adapted to the needs of the participants. The group members were aware that they were part of a research project, so incorporating the children's input was crucial to creating a feeling of safety and empowerment.

A strength of phenomenological research is that it allows us to study phenomena from the perspectives of the participants. A risk of such a design is that we might ultimately not get to explore all the themes that were originally laid out. Indeed, as was shown in the Findings section, many of the elements we built our project on, such as the pair work and the roleplay, were transformed or eliminated early on in the process.

However, the advantage of such a design is that certain unexpected discoveries were revealed to us. I feel that while there are still some themes that could have been explored further had we stuck to our original design, the elements we did uncover reflect the authentic experience of the participants.

Group Identity

One of the elements we were curious about but did not expect to take such a large place in our study was the sense of group identity that emerged. To my knowledge, the group members have attended school together since Kindergarten and have been enrolled in the same after-school program since at least Grade 3. However, we did not know the degree of friendships

between them nor the full extent of their pre-existing dynamics when beginning the project.

Therefore, we were curious to see how their interactions would play out within the parameters

we set.

When designing the study, we knew that we might encounter resistance to the pairings

we chose and might have to be flexible in that regard. What we were not expecting was how

much this group sought to stay together throughout the process and naturally stayed connected,

even when they were separated into smaller groups in the film project. It is reminiscent of the

theatre concept of ensemble, wherein the goal is to work together to tell an overarching story and

every player is a piece of that story. The ensemble combines the individual's sense of self with

the understanding that you are connected to the group. In an ensemble, no one player is more

important or the next; the group supports the individual and the individual supports the group

(Emunah, 1994). Indeed, most beginner acting classes that I have attended begin with the

establishment of a sense of ensemble. Even though there might not be a play or outcome at the

end of a given class, the sense of ensemble is important to eliminate egos and create a safe space

where people feel supported.

In our first session, we started with acting games to break the ice and create a sense of

ensemble (e.g., name game, winds of change, the machine). However, we realized quickly that

this group already had a pre-established sense of kinship, if not the full intimacy of friendship,

that came from being a part of each other's daily lives. When the time came to separate, we

believe they resisted because that sense of group and purpose was paramount to their experience.

Asking for more Time

Another element that arose naturally from the format of the Drama Club was the children

asking for extra time. In Session 8, we brought up to the children that their time in the project

was coming to a close. At that point, we had established a sense of trust between the adults and children where the children were encouraged to speak their mind. We believe it is why they felt comfortable enough to ask for more time with us. Due to sporadic attendance and switching games, we learned to be flexible and work with whatever the kids were bringing to each session. Part of that flexibility meant offering more time either at the beginning or end of each session. At first, only FD seemed interested, and he would be the first one at the door, sometimes waiting for us to arrive between 3:30 and 3:45.

However, after Session 8, Never, Caitlin and Abraham began to come early as well, and requested to stay until 5:30 pm. In some cases, they even moved their schedules to improve their attendance. Caitlin asked her mother to cancel her tutoring sessions and Never, who had just joined the Lacrosse team, asked her coach if she could be excused from practice early. In fact, Never was authorized to take herself home after school, either by bus or walking, and chose to stay longer than necessary until 5:30 pm.

Interestingly, while they expressed wanting more time in order to complete their film project, they did not use the extra time to do so. Instead, at the beginning of the sessions, the children took a few minutes to eat a snack and chat with me or each other about their day. In between working on the Movie, they either played other games (e.g. ninja or hangman), coloured or played with playdoh, and even tinkered on the piano. There was little sense of urgency, and socializing seemed more of a priority. Since our research goals were not outcome-based, we did not enforce a work ethic or impose deadlines on the children. The only way I supported them was by keeping them were aware how much time they had before they had to go home, and that was only because they requested it. Instead, the 90-minute sessions allowed for more breathing room and, as a result, the sessions took on a 'clubhouse' feel, where the children would float in

and out of their groups and in-between stations and activities as they saw fit. A more relaxed social atmosphere emerged.

It is an important reminder that the time between 3:30 and 5:30 pm is one of the few times where schoolchildren are not overscheduled. The after-school program at this school is designed as a mix of free play and structured activities to give the children the chance to be stimulated and learn, while also providing them the opportunity to decompress after a long day at school. Since our project was creative and process-based, perhaps it provided a balance to fulfill children's needs. It gave them a motivating external goal to occupy their minds (i.e., completing the Movie), while also allowing them to unknowingly practice their social skills and relax in a pressure-free environment.

A study by Vandell et al. (2006) supports these conclusions. The authors found that elementary and middle school students from low-income families exhibited better socioemotional health and academic benefits when enrolled in a semi-structured after school program coupled with either some unsupervised free time, or with a variety of enrichment programs. This was in contrast to children enrolled in only a semi-structured after-school program or were fully supervised at home. The researchers recommended that children be offered a variety of enriching after-school opportunities as well as consistent adult relationships, coupled with a certain amount of unsupervised play. In other words, simply being enrolled in an after-school program did not have the same benefits as children who were in these programs but also had some free time; or had the option of multiple different types of activities. Also, consistent child-adult relationships had a bigger positive effect than interactions with many different adults.

This extension meant we no longer had to stress about transitioning between activities, which is where the children would most often lose focus. When the sessions were limited to one hour and attendance was sporadic, trying to fit all the games and activities we planned while remaining flexible was a challenge. With the additional time, it gave both the facilitators and the children time to ease into the session. When the time came to play or film or edit, the energy in the room was more focused and relaxed.

Emunah (1994) stresses the importance of creating a semi-structured program when planning a session, especially when dealing with children or adolescents who are quicker to lose focus or suggest alternatives The goal of the facilitator then is to create a flow of the session while being mindful of the group's needs and moods. By extending our sessions, I believe we achieved the right flow for this group, making the experience more enjoyable and, ultimately, more productive. She also recommends that early sessions be highly structured in order to alleviate anxiety and establish routines before becoming less and less structured over time as participants gain confidence and show more initiative, something I believe we witnessed as we shifted from Phase 1 to Phase 2.

Video Modelling

An aspect of the original project design which had to be drastically altered was that of video modelling. Initially, the idea was to introduce scenes and scenarios in Phase 1 that would help the children confront situations they may encounter in their day-to-day lives. In Phase 2, these scenes/scenarios would be rehearsed, filmed, and edited, during which time, the facilitators would use prompts to ask the children to reflect on the behaviours of the characters and how they might relate to their own lives. However, the original timeline shifted from 10 to six weeks due to delays and schedule conflicts. For this reason, we had to choose which aspects of the project

to focus on and we decided that supporting group cohesion and self-expression was more of a priority than scenework. Also, as discussed, the group was resistant both to the idea of introducing real-life scenarios and splitting up into pairs, which also necessitated a change of format.

Initially, we attempted to adapt to these circumstances by integrating prompts for reflection into acting games or during editing, but these moments felt shoe-horned in and the children seemed uncomfortable or confused (see Never's reaction to my question about Jermimus in Session 10). It seemed that they were more interested in the fun and make-believe aspect of acting, and asking about their real lives was an intrusion. The difficulty with moments like these is that decisions must be made on the spot. I had to decide whether or not pursuing these questions would be beneficial or would harm my relationship with the participants, something that is crucial to this type of work.

In Dramatherapy, similar moments come up during 'role play' exercises in which a client may be asked to play a role that allows them to explore parts of themselves that make them uncomfortable. Emunah (1994) underlines the importance of not forcing a person to vocalize their emotions during this type of work, as it may be too soon in their therapeutic journey. She also acknowledges that this type of 'role play' work may be challenging or inappropriate before adolescence. With all this in mind, I made a choice that I felt was protecting my relationship and the well-being of the children.

However, in Session 11, we had an unexpected occurrence. Jermimus, Caitlin, and FD were the only ones present at the time. Because their scene partners were not there and they did not feel comfortable editing, I suggested we watch another movie produced by children to give them inspiration. I pulled up a video made during in 2018 during Creative Video Summer Camp,

which is run by COOP collective vision. The film was 15 minutes long and was a high school

movie parody written and produced by youth aged 11 to 14. My only goal was to inspire film

ideas. Instead, the subject matter, in which a teenager is transferred from Canada to an American

high school, inspired a 15-minute conversation about bullying, standing up for others, and why

some people exclude others for being from a different country.

Several insightful ideas emerged from that conversation that made me feel like I know

FD, Caitlin, and Jermimus better now. For example, I learned that they are all familiar with the

concept of racism but have trouble believing that they might encounter someday. I learned that

Caitlin was under the impression that women who wore hijabs were oppressed, and that FD and

Jermimus disagreed. (Incidentally, Caitlin was open to listening to her peers and told me

afterwards that she learned something new and was happy she was wrong about women with

headscarves.) I also found out that Jermimus would stand up to bullies if he saw someone else

being bullied.

All of this might have been hidden from us had it not been for the ideas sparked by this

viewing. While we were not able to utilize the video component as we wished, it did appear to

play a part, at least regarding Caitlin, Jermimus, and FD and this discussion. It would be

interesting to explore in the future how discussing video on social issues with children can help

us understand their beliefs and values.

Empathy

One of the original goals of this project was to observe whether we could affect empathy

skills in children who displayed more social competence. However, the tools we were counting

on to observe this potential effect were not used as originally intended. That said, we witnessed

moments pertaining to empathy from members of both groups. The expectation is that children

with lower social competence may struggle with emotional connection, impulse control, and

shows of helping and empathy (Rose-Krasnor, 1997, Reber, 2012). However, instances of

empathy may manifest differently depending on context.

Take for example the conversation mentioned from Session 11. When discussing the role

of the hijab in Islam, it was Jermimus and FD, members of the lower social competence group,

who showed empathy and influenced Caitlin's opinion. Of the three, only Jermimus said he

would step in and help someone who was being victimized, while Caitlin and FD expressed

wanting to run away.

We saw smaller instances of empathy as well. In Session 10, FD was holding the camera

and Never asked him to take out the SD card. He appeared to be struggling. Never, who has

taken stop motion and photography classes before and knows how to use the camera, seemed

somewhat frustrated, sighing a little bit at FD's struggle. However, rather than reprimand him or

hurry him up, she asked if she could show him how to use the card slot. He refused at first and

she waited patiently until he asked for her help. While her educators did mention that Never

sometimes uses teachable moments like this to show off her skills, that is not the feeling I got in

this moment. By waiting for FD to ask for her help, Never showed more concern with retrieving

the SD card and helping FD than she did with demonstrating her knowledge of cameras to him.

These moments were small but significant, and reflect a potential for empathy growth in

both types of children.

Blurring the Lines

As was shown in the previous section, an element which we believed was more pertinent

to the higher social competence group ended up being witnessed in both groups. This was a

recurrent theme throughout the project. While we recruited the children for the two groups and

observed them accordingly, we believe because we observed them in the context of a larger group, we witnessed authentic interactions that showed how nuanced these things can be. While knowing if a person has difficulties or a disorder is important in some ways, at the end of the day, they are an individual with a multiple individual traits that we must address (Gestwicki, 2014).

The PYD approach that we took was supported by the format of our project. While we knew that the children had characteristics which made them more suited to one social competence group over the other, by not strictly boxing them into these categories, we allowed for their individual strengths and characteristics to shine through. Furthermore, by having three of the four members of the research team come in blind, the children did not have the same expectations of behaviour that they may experience in their day-to-day lives. After all, they have attended this school since they were five years old. While this has its advantages, in terms of comfort and a sense of belonging, it also means that a reputation may follow them. Though educators are encouraged to approach each child as an individual, my experience in schools has shown me that teachers talk to each other about students. Therefore, a teacher may already have a bias toward a child before they have even met them (Gestwicki, 2014).

This is also the reason we chose not to know if the children had IEPs or diagnoses. While those reports play an important role in how a child learns and what kind of support they might need, they can also create biases in educators who are facilitating an open-ended activity, such as Drama. This stigma is something we chose to actively avoid and waited for the children or parents to share information if they wished. For all these reasons, I believe we approached these children individually to the best our abilities. Of course, I had my preconceived notions that I had to keep in check. The research team, through discussion, shared their perceptions that helped me

check my own biases. Where quantitative research seeks to nullify bias, qualitative asks

researchers to acknowledge their assumptions and biases. I asked my team to challenge my

biases and I strove to do the same for them.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations within this study. Foremost was the fact

that there were multiple delays which had a ripple effect throughout the project. First, due to

timing around the holidays and then the request for a revision, ethics approval was obtained 4

weeks later than expected. Recruitment also took 2 weeks longer than expected which further

delayed our plans. Due to this delay, one of my original observers could not stay on with the

project. We therefore had to find a replacement only days before the project began. These factors

meant that there was no time to effectively train both my observers. I had to rely on their

previous experience, which was limited, and I had to train them on the job, while the project was

ongoing. Finally, this delay also meant that R2 and O2 were not available at the end of the

project due to prior commitments. For this reason, and also because the school year was ending,

we decided to reduce the length of the project from 10 weeks to 6. Despite this change, R2 and

O2 still had to miss the final two weeks of sessions, and O2 was not able to come to the closure

activity. As such, in Session 10 and 12, I was charged with taking notes and running the program

simultaneously. Not only was this challenging because it split my focus, but it also means that

the notes and observations around those sessions only reflect my impressions. I did discuss these

with O1 after the fact so that I had an objective voice to share opinions, but since she was not

present at the time, her opinions were based on previous interactions with the children and not on

what transpired during those two sessions.

As discussed, we also had to contend with inconsistent attendance among the participants. While we were able to modify our plans to accommodate these absences, it made it hard to build on themes from week to week. Also, certain children, such as FD and Caitlin, had more individual attention than others because they were able to attend more sessions.

We also decided not to record audio or video of the sessions in order to reduce observer effect. However, since we also chose to only have one observer present at a time, it meant that they could not capture the full scope of the sessions. Initially, we wanted to use event samplings and behaviour checklist to better track instances of social competence and shows of empathy. However, we realized quickly that to capture all those elements in real time would have been difficult if not impossible for one observer, therefore we chose to focus on quotes and running records. Had we chosen to record audio and video, the observers could have reviewed the sessions multiple times and given multiple accounts from the same footage.

Future Directions

For future studies, I would recommend a 10 to 12-week program over a six week one, which is standard in after-school programs in my experience (At this elementary school, for example, all enrichment programs run for 13 weeks). In our case, our group members had previous positive dynamics, so we did not need to work hard to build group cohesion or trust. However, with children who are strangers, a longer 'getting to know you' period in Phase 1 might be beneficial. Furthermore, all these children had taken photography, film classes, and stop motion classes with the COOP before in the after-school program so they were familiar with the equipment. Children with less experience may need more time learning how to use the cameras and editing software. I would also extend the time from 60 to 90 minutes. Alternatively,

this project can run as a week or two-week long intensive, where the children are together for six

to eight hours at a time, much like a day camp.

I would also change the design so that the children were paired from week 2 so that they

get used to the idea of pair work immediately and are less resistant to it. Our initial design had

Tuesdays put aside for pair work and Thursdays put aside for group work. Due to sporadic

attendance, we could not implement this plan. However, I would recommend this format if

possible because it would allow for one-one-one observations as well as group observations. I

would also switch the pairings in the first phase so that every child gets a chance to work with

each other. I would recommend the group stay small. We agreed that our sample size of six with

two facilitators was the right size, as it allowed for more detailed observations and more

individualized attention during sessions.

In terms of observations, I would record all sessions in the future on an HD cameras in

order to ensure more rich and accurate observations that can be reviewed. I would still have an

observer present during the sessions to capture the energy in the room and in case something

happens outside the scope of the camera that is worth recording. Two observers were sufficient

in our case during the project though more than two may be used when reviewing the recordings.

I would also recommend training them before they begin their observations and checking their

work throughout the sessions. I would also standardize how they recorded their observations, as

certain details were not written down and had to be recreated retroactively.

I would also shift to a mixed-methods approach. While running records and some event-

samplings were useful in capturing the experience of the sessions, we did not collect sufficient

data on friendship making, conflict resolution, and shows of empathy to capture rich quotes and

in-depth observations. I also think this was because the length of the project was too short and attendance was too inconsistent to see changes in the children's interactions.

I would also recommend looking at the children's lives outside of the project to see if the experience had any influence beyond the scope of Drama Club. To do so, I would hold interviews both before and after the project with the children, their parents, and their teachers, focusing on empathy and friendship. I would also integrate child agency as a theme into the project as this had a major role to play in our project. One could also observe the children during class time, lunchtime, or after school time if they wanted more first-person observations of how the children are behaving outside of the project.

Role of the Researcher

In my literature review, I touched upon how research looks at well-structured extracurriculars and after-school programs as positive influences on development (Masten, 2014, Vandell et al., 2006). I also looked at how drama can be used as a therapeutic tool and can foster positive development in children. On a personal note, I was a youth who benefitted from both extracurriculars and drama.

While I was a good student and excelled academically in both elementary and high school, I would have belonged in the low social competence group. The environment I grew up in, while enriching, was mainly focused on school achievement. Schools at the time did not have the same resources and support staff that they do today. One of the things I struggled most with in elementary and high school therefore, was finding where I belonged.

When I was 19, I auditioned for school plays because I happened to become friends with the 'drama kids' in my CEGEP. When I got on stage for the first time, I felt a sense of home that I never experienced before. The more classes I took, the more drama kids I met, the more I felt I

found my people. Not only that, but the more I found ways to express myself on stage, the safer I felt with this group of misfits called 'theatre folk', the more it made life outside of theatre easier to deal with. Most importantly, finding my voice in drama helped me find my voice outside of it. To this day I wonder how life might have been different had I discovered theatre when I was younger.

Before I became a researcher, I started working with children in drama and other forms of creative expression. I saw the environment that I wished I had when I was younger. I know that acting or drama will not have the same impact on every child that it had on me. However, well-designed extracurriculars and after school activities have measurable positive influence on the children's future outcomes (Durlak et al., 2010; Masten, 2014; Vandell & Hembree, 1994; Vandell et al., 2006).

Furthermore, I have had the privilege to work with many actors, Dramatherapy students and Dramatherapists. Most of them are young, compassionate, intelligent individuals who agree that there is a lack of concrete research in their field. This gap in research means that their field is not as well-respected as some others. These same individuals also told me the same thing when I asked them why they were not doing the research they so badly believed they needed. Their answer: I am an artist, not a researcher.

I cannot blame them for that was my attitude as well. When you receive a degree in the arts, you are told, both implicitly and explicitly, that research and art are separate. In my experience, they are complimentary, especially when it comes to qualitative research.

What I appreciate about qualitative research is the transparency afforded to the reader. Where in quantitative research, all elements must stay constant to minimize bias and confounds, qualitative research asks us to acknowledge these elements because they strengthen your findings

rather than put them into question. Each of us on the research team have our own lens and therefore cannot fully capture what the children experienced throughout the project. However, our acknowledgement of our own biases and willingness to listen to the participants was what allowed for multiple new angles to emerge. I believe this gave the participants a fulfilling experience that reflects what I have seen in after-school programs and creative activities in general.

Practical Applications

I believe our project showed that children with different levels of Social competence can thrive in integrated settings. Research has shown the benefits of semi-structured extracurricular activities coupled with free time (Vandell et al., 2006). We also see that drama is a recommended activity to help children connect with themselves and with one another (Emunah, 1994). Research is looking at the benefits of Video Modelling coupled with dramatic play (Hui et al., 2016; Akmanoglu et al., 2014). This project combined all of these and took a child-centric and process-oriented approach.

We assumed that we would see differences in the way the children with the different levels of social competence would use the space and the materials. What we found was that offering a creative space where children were free to create a dramatic experience, supported by consistent adult relationships, allowed both groups of children to take advantage of the space, albeit in a different way. In terms of best practice, I believe this project helps legitimize how children with different levels of social competence can help each other learn and grow in subtle ways. Furthermore, we saw changes in both child agency and flexibility across both groups.

The introduction of digital materials (i.e., the cameras and the computers) also shows a reduction of conflict and a creative goal saw a rise in negotiation and compromise. It is notable

that we saw this emerge within a rigid school environment. The implication is that after-school care can benefit from being more child-led and less concerned with rigid programming. Smaller groups and more one-on-one interactions, consistently with adults that place themselves more horizontally and less vertically may also be beneficial to long term social development.

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Appendix A

Exercise Used	When
Line Repetition	An exercise done at the beginning or end of the session between two or more partners. It is recommended for establishing connections between new partners. It also allows a participant/actor to layer different emotions and interactions onto a neutral sentence.
Group Mood	A group exercise done at the beginning or end of a session designed to establish group connection through practicing of nonverbal interactions. It also teaches how to display and read nonverbal cues and emotional expressions.
Sound Machine	A group activity done at the beginning of session as a vocal and physical warm up. It can also be done at the end of the session to establish a feeling of group closure. It establishes group connections and develops non-verbal communication.
Dodging	A walking around group activity that works on listening and flexibility. IT is normally done as a physical warmup but can also be adapted to develop character traits
People puppets	An activity where 1 to 5 actors are physically manipulated to play out a scene. This is normally used for physical connection and partnering work.
Calling out emotions	This game is for the whole group and is usually done at the beginning of a session as a warm-up game. It helps develop emotional expression, listening, and flexible thinking.
TV Interview	This game is for two players and is usually done in the middle of the session to build character and develop listening skills.

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Appendix B

Main things to look for:
- Instances of child agency
- Anytime a child asserts their own choices and their own realities
- Anytime the child speaks up to create their own reality

Secondary aims:
- Look for gender dynamics

Kids: Caitlin (C), Flexible Dude (FD)

Warm-Up – *begins at 4:15pm*
- R1 asks FD and C if they want to play a game or journal first?
  - FD: "Game! Let's do the boring things last."
- Both warm-up games take place on the stage

Basic Ninja:
- The kids are listening well to game instructions
- Both appear to have low energy (lower than normal – still enthusiastic about game)
- R1 asks if they want to begin with the basic or elemental version of Ninja
  - FD wanted to start with basic version
  - Caitlin wanted to start with elemental version
- FD is following rules better than Caitlin (which is the opposite of last week)
  - FD is quick to tell R1 that she is out of the game – it appears that he also wants other people to follow the rules
- Before starting elemental ninja, Caitlin says, "Wait! I have to say something important." Then she runs towards me (the observers) and whispers, "Caitlin is awesome."

Elemental Ninja:
- Group is discussing what powers should be associated with each element
  - Earth = not allowed to attack but can evade
  - Fire = (?)
  - Wind = slow motion
  - Water = blindness; close eyes for 1 turn
- FD & C are both suggesting what the elements should represent
  - They are communicating and getting along very well with each other
  - When one suggests an idea, the other agrees but further expands on the idea
  - Both asserted what they thought the elements should mean while listening and adding onto one another's ideas
- When FD and C are asked what the limits of the game are, FD suggests "You can only go on the wood?" (referring to the wood floor of the stage)
  - Then FD adds, "What about you can't go past the left leg of the chair?"

- Both kids are asserting and specifying rules of the game
    - FD: "You can only use an element once per turn."
    - Caitlin: "We should count the [number of] turns that people sit out so we know when to come back in."
- They begin the first round by each calling out which element they will begin with
    - Then FD points to everyone in the circle to clarify what their powers are: "You blind, you knock back, you slow…"
- Caitlin wants to attack R1 and R2 the most
- R2: "When I come back in, where do I go?
    - FD: "You can go there (points to a spot) but you can't go right near someone"
- FD is starting to take charge and lead the game
    - FD: "It's your turn!"
    - FD: "Okay, you're no longer blind."
    - FD: "Come attack me please!"
- Because C isn't attacking FD (i.e., she is directing her attacks to R1 and R2), he is less involved in the game
- Once Caitlin gets R1 and R2 out of the game, only the two kids are left so FD says: "Okay, now it's my turn!"
- They are laughing as they attack each other
- C loses and says "Noo!" and FD raises his two arms in victory (in a playful manner)

Activity 1: Emotional Thermometer – *begins at 4:35pm*
- Group is sitting on the steps of the stage
- C: "I'm kind of Meh because I want other people to hear us too…" (she wishes more kids were here today)
- C places her magnet on the thermometer: "I'm right here, in the middle of happy and Meh"
- FD says he feels victorious (but this emotion isn't on the board), so R1 asks if he would like to add this emotion to the board. FD responds, "I don't know how to spell it" so R1 writes the emotion on the board
- After R1 lists 3 different emotions that she is feeling, FD says "Okay, so you can use three [magnets]."
- R1: "Do you guys want to do journaling, or we can skip that?
    - FD: "Next game!"

Activity 2: Interview Game – *begins at 4:42pm*
- R1 describes 2 games that they can choose from and FD says, "Maybe we can do both?"
- FD and C go on stage and each sit on a chair (facing each other)
- For the first round, C is host and FD is guest
- FD: "Okay I have a topic!"
    - Then he whispers it to R1 at the side of the stage before coming back to his chair on stage
- Both kids still seem low energy

- C begins asking questions:
    - "What's your name? What's your job?"
        - FD: "I'm not gonna answer that."
    - "What's your favourite thing?"
        - FD: "I'm not gonna answer that either"
    - "What do you really like?"
        - FD: "All these questions are the same thing—what do you do, what do you like… I'm not gonna answer that."
    - "What did you do today?"
        - FD answers for the first time: "I went to school."
- R1 jumps in to ask a question: "How many hours a day do you stand?"
    - FD: "I like to sit and stand."
    - FD: "How much time does she have [until the end of her turn as interviewer]?"
- C continues to ask questions:
    - "Are you young or old?"
        - FD: "In the middle."
- By the end of the interview FD has revealed very little information about his character, only that he sits and stands during the day, and his parents don't know what he does
- C isn't able to guess his character after 3 tries
- Then FD says he was a gamer
- For the second round, FD is interviewer and C is guest
- C goes in the hall with R2 to discuss character
    - FD attempts to follow them and overhear what they discuss; he puts his ear against the door
    - R1 tells FD to stop but he replies, "C tried to eavesdrop too! And *I* stopped her. She's not trying to stop me."
- When C returns, FD begins to ask questions:
    - "Are you in touch with your parents?"
        - C: "Yeah"
    - "Do you fix stuff?"
        - C: "I fix stuff in a way…"
    - "Do you do your job (whatever it is) for good or for bad?"
        - C: "Depends… just kidding! For good."
    - "Does it help people in any way?"
        - C: "Yeah"
- R1 says FD only has 1 min left, but he replies that C got more time (when it was her turn as interviewer)
    - FD asks, "Are you a doctor?"
        - C: "In a way…"
- C reveals that she was a surgeon
    - FD exclaims that he guessed it right because a surgeon is a doctor!

Freeze Game – *begins at 4:56pm*

- Group is discussing rules of game on stage
- FD describes a rule (by rephrasing a rule that C suggested)
    - Then R2 asks C if she is okay with that rule, and FD says "She [Caitlin] is the one who said it!"
- Then they begin the game (they use the entire room to play the game)
- FD is the person who is 'it'
    - FD: "I got 3 of you!"
    - FD: "By the way if I'm coming in, you can go wherever you like."
- C tells FD, "One of the rules is that you can't stand still!" (because he isn't moving)
- Near the very end of the session, the kids suddenly become energetic
    - They are chasing each other and running around space
- Then R1 tells them to do a "face-off" on stage to declare a winner

Magic Bucket – *starts at 5:02pm*
- They update their emotions on the thermometer
    - FD wants his victorious to be higher than C's
- FD: "I put everyone in a bucket and I take out my freedom!" Then he walks out the door dramatically.
- R1 asks what he seriously liked about today and FD replies, "I like that C is in the bucket!" Then he says that he liked the games and he didn't like how R1 mentioned journaling.
- During the bucket game the kids are fooling around, pushing each other and not listening to R1
- C put in that "there weren't a lot of people" and took out the last game they played

Ends at 5:08 pm

Appendix C

Dear Teacher

I am a Master's of Child Studies Candidate in the Concordia University Department of Education. I have an extensive background in performance art and am interested in looking at how drama activities and film-making can help children make friendships and develop empathy in a school context. I am looking for children who enjoy multimedia activities and performance art to participate in a study.

We are looking to recruit two types of children to our project. The first type of child should display some emotional or behavioural difficulties, such as difficulties with making and maintaining friendship, conflict resolution and emotional regulation. These children may or may not have an IEP or academic code. The second type of child is one with no noticeable emotional or behavioural difficulties. These children should have no difficulty making friends, or managing their emotions. They are the type of student teachers may expect to show empathy and understanding to fellow classmates. They should have no IEPs or other forms of learning differences or behavioural difficulties.

If you consent to participating in this procedure, you will be asked to:
   a) Attend a meeting with the other educators from Cycle 3 and the research team to discuss the project in detail
   b) Approach the parents of the children you wish to nominate. This contact will be at your own discretion, either through email, phone call, or in person.
   c) Invite the parent to contact the researcher, who will further explain the nature of the project
   d) Keep the nature of the project, as well as the identity of the children, confidential
   e) Be interviewed after data collection is complete in order to contextualize the observations; specifically in regards to how the participating children behave when making friends and resolving conflict.

Please note that any information collected and/or discussed regarding participants must remain confidential to protect their anonymity.

The project will be designed to feel like an after school club, and to appeal to your child's interests. This is an exploratory project. We are endeavoring to create a relaxed and natural atmosphere to allow the children to explore their creativity and self-expression, as well as exploring how film and video affect relations between two types of children.

The children may benefit by learning a new set of skills, making new friendships in a relaxed environment, and encouraging them to reflect on friendship through performance art. We also would like to encourage the students to express themselves, empowering them through the use of their own voice.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me, Talar Kalaidjian, at 514-264-6846 or talarkal@yahoo.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Hariclia Petrakos at 514-848-2424 ext. 2013 or hariclia.petrakos@concordia.ca.

Sincerely,

Talar Kalaidjian

Project Researcher

Hariclia Petrakos, Ph.D.

Faculty Supervisor

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate.

NAME (please print)   _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Appendix D

Hello (*parent/guardian)*:

We are writing to inform you of a research project that will run during the after-school program that may interest you. Talar has been part of the home-and-school team for the past five years. She may have taught or supervised your child in the past. She is currently working towards her Master's degree in the Child Studies program at Concordia University. She is putting together an after-school drama and video club for children. The goal of her research is to help with friendship building, conflict resolution, and empathy building. Children who are invited into the club will act, play drama games, and shoot and edit video. We believe your child may enjoy participating in this project.

Your child will get a creative outlet and learn new skills in drama and video creation while also getting the chance to socialize in a small group. We know the researcher and her team, and trust in her ability to create a safe and fun environment for your child.

The project will run on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 4 and 5:00 pm. The project will last for 6 weeks and will begin on April 3rd. Timing is flexible: if your child is only available on one of the days or cannot stay for the full hour, we would still like to extend an invitation to join.

If you are interested, you can contact Talar directly, or inform us that she can contact you. She can give you more details about the project. Please know that if you speak with her, you are under no obligation enroll your child in the club. This is simply an inquiry on your part.

Her name is Talar Kalaidjian. She can be reached at 514-264-6846 or talarkal@yahoo.ca. Please contact her by Friday, March 30th. She is also available to speak in person if you would like to meet her at the school. Her supervisor's name is Dr. Harriet Petrakos. She is a school psychologist and will be overseeing the project. You can contact her at haricliapetrakos@gmail.com.

Thank you!

Appendix E

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s),

My name is Talar Kalaidjian and I am a Master's of Child Studies Candidate in the Concordia University Department of Education. I am under the supervision of Dr. Harriet Petrakos. I have an extensive background in performance art and am interested in looking at how drama activities and film-making can help children make friendships and develop empathy in a school context. I am looking for children who enjoy multimedia activities and performance art to participate in a study.

If you consent to allowing your child to participate in the study, they will be asked to:

a) Participate in drama and video based activities for one hour twice a week
b) Work in groups and/or with a partner to work on scripts
c) Improvise and develop fictional characters that may reflect experiences from their daily lives
d) Talk about their experiences with making friends in a school setting. They may share with a group or on an individual basis.
e) Perform in front of their peers
f) Film and edit footage of themselves and their peers performing

These activities are voluntary, and the child can modify them or opt out of them at any point in the process without consequence. The project will take place twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for approximately one hour during after school hours. The project will run from April 2018 to May 2018. The sessions will be run by two facilitators and an observer will be present.

Your child's identity will remain confidential. While the home and school office and educators will know of the study's purpose, other students and teachers will not be made aware of the content of the club without you and your child's consent. The footage containing their image will remain on encrypted USB keys. The footage will be erased once the project is completed. Pseudonyms will be used when referring to your child in writing.

The project will be designed to feel like an after school club, and to appeal to your child's interests. Your child may benefit from participating through learning a new set of skills, making new friendships in a relaxed environment, and encouraging them to reflect on friendship through performance art. We also would like to encourage the students to express themselves, empowering them through the use of their own voice.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me, Talar Kalaidjian, at 514-264-6846 or talarkal@yahoo.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Hariclia Petrakos at 514-848-2424 ext. 2013 or hariclia.petrakos@concordia.ca.

Sincerely,

PARENTAL/GUARDIAN

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: An exploratory study of drama and video activities in late childhood

Researcher: Talar Kalaidjian

Researcher's Contact Information: talarkal@yahoo.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Hariclia Petrakos

Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: hariclia.petrakos@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study: SSHRC

You child is being invited to participate in the research project mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please take the time read it carefully, and discuss it with friends and family if you wish, before deciding if you would like your child to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to explore how friendship making, positive social behaviours, and conflict resolution can be facilitated through drama games and film-making.

B. PROCEDURES

If your child participates, he or she will be asked to attend meetings twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for approximately one hour per meeting. The club will run during after school hours, between 4:00 and 5:00 pm. The schedule and timing are flexible according to the needs or request of the parents and children. The project will last for 6 weeks, meaning your child will be asked to participate for a total of 12 hours.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

The risk to your child are minimal in this project. They will be asked to share memories and emotions related to friendship and play, which may be uncomfortable at times, but this discomfort will be minimized to the best of our abilities and your child will not be pushed past their comfort zone. The emotions will be framed within dramatic play, which should also minimize any impact.
Your child may benefit from this research in that they might learn new ways to make friends and handle their thoughts and emotions. They will also be exposed to various acting games and activities, as well as technology which will enable their creativity and self-expression.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

As part of the research, there will be an observer present in the room recording the children's behaviours and taking down quotes to be used later in our analysis and report. The researcher and a research assistant will also be taking notes on the children's experiences. However, we will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

The information gathered will be coded. That means that the information will be identified by a code or pseudonym. The researcher will have a list that links the code to your child's name. However, this list will remain confidential, and only research team members will know your children's identity. The list will remain on a password protected word document. We intend to publish the results of the research. However, it will not be possible to identify your child in the published results.

Any information gathered, including field and observation notes, journals, and video, will be stored on encrypted harddrives which will be kept in a locked drawer in Dr. Petrakos' lab. Only the main researcher, the research assistant, and Dr. Petrakos will have access to this drawer. The videos the children create will not contain any identifiers, including the children's names or locations. Digital copies of the videos may be given to you if you wish to keep them. Otherwise, they will be erased once the project analysis is complete. The written analysis will remain on an encrypted harddrive in a locked drawer. The information will be kept for at least 7 years after the completion of the project, as per standard research procedure. However, if at any point, you wish to withdraw your child from the project and do not wish for the researchers to use the data gathered, you may do so without consequence. Once you inform the researcher, the data will be destroyed immediately.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

Your child does not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If your child does participate, they can stop at any time without fear of consequence. You and your child can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher before the final session of the club. Any data gathered pertaining to your child or that could identify them will be destroyed.

G. PARENT/GUARDIAN DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been

answered. As parent or legal guardian, I agree to allow my child, _____(child's name) to

participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the
researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.
If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics,
Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca

Appendix F

Concordia

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Ms. Talar Kalaidjian
Department:	Education
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	An Exploratory Study of Drama-Based Therapies and Video Modelling in Late Childhood

Certification Number: 30009197

Valid From: March 08, 2018   **To:** March 07, 2019

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee
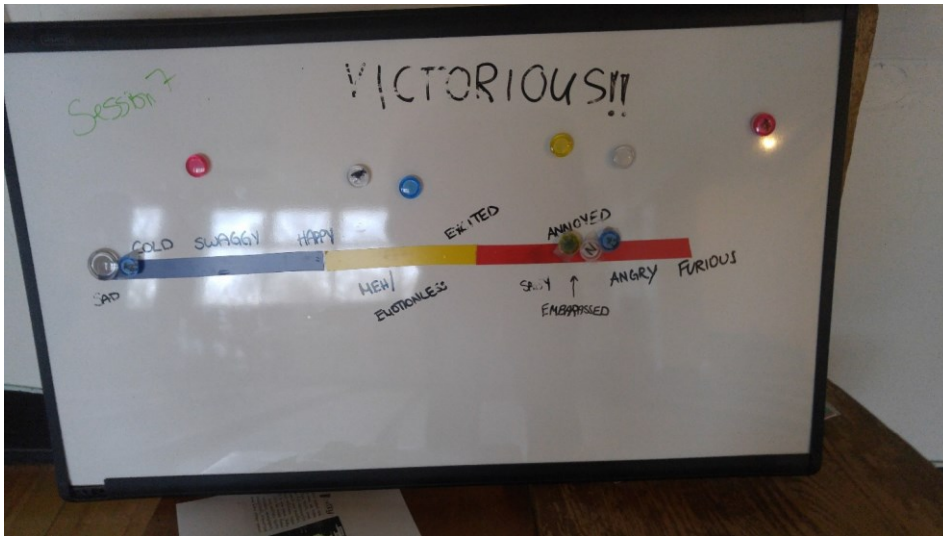
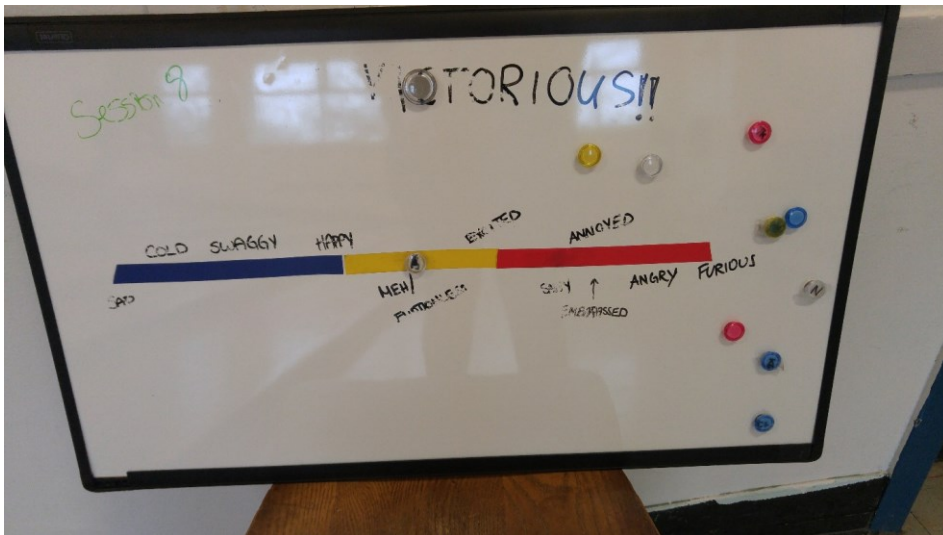Appendix G

Session 3

Session 5

Session 7

Session 8

Session 9

Session 10

Session 11

Session 12

Closure Activity