As an Experiential Coordinator I am challenged with educating boys and inspiring them to have brave hearts and bold minds. The IBSC action research topic, Adaptability in a Changing World compelled me to question whether a boy’s approach to risk-taking would impact his adaptability, specifically his behavior, thoughts, and feelings before, during and after a risk-taking activity. Would the promotion of socio-cognitive mindfulness not only grow boys’ desire to take risks, but also their capacity to adapt?

I focused my research on student involvement in an agricultural program, where inherently risky actions might encourage risk-taking amongst teenage boys; specifically, the vaccination of steers and the cleaning of horses’ hooves.

Martin’s (2013) division of adaptability into cognitive, behavioral, and emotional domains gave me the impetus to research whether boys were aware of how they felt, thought, and behaved. Adaptability (defined in this context as the willingness to risk take effectively) often necessitates failure. Rolfe (2010) contends that risk-taking - as a 21st century skill - requires the understanding of, and the coping with, failure. Brown (2015) suggests that to better cope with failure, support and guidance by important others (mentors) is significant in providing the necessary points of connection.

**The Research Question**

**How might involvement in an Agricultural Program encourage risk-taking in Year 9 boys?**

**Research Context and Participants**

- The Scots College is an independent boys’ school in Sydney’s Eastern Suburbs.
- The School has a reformed Presbyterian heritage and draws on its Christian values to shape and inform its practice.
- This project was conducted with students from Glengarry (The Scots College outdoor education campus situated in Kangaroo Valley, NSW).
- The action for my project took place at The Scots College Bannockburn campus situated near Glengarry. Bannockburn campus is a 300 hectare rural experiential landscape
- The research project, to help guide and foster adaptability in all of the stakeholders travelling with us.
- This project was conducted with students from Glengarry (The Scots College outdoor education campus situated in Kangaroo Valley, NSW).

**The Research Action**

- “Risk” as a conceptual notion was unpacked and investigated.
- Descriptive language needed for reflection was taught and practised.
- The risk-taking activity involved working with animals in an agricultural program.
- The activities were unpractised, conducted in a strange environment and undertaken with large, potentially unpredictable animals.
- Each boy was asked to needle a 400 Kg steer with the appropriate volume of vaccination chemical.
- In a second action, each boy had to clean the hooves of a horse.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

- In-class sessions were used to preload the boys with understandings of the notion of “risk.”
- During these sessions the boys recorded their reflections in notebooks.
- Prior to and immediately after the actions, online surveys were completed.
- Each action was videoed to capture the boys’ behaviour.
- Analysis of notebooks, survey data, and video was undertaken and commonalities were identified.
- From these common threads, categories were assigned and resultant themes emerged.

**Key Findings and Discussion**

- The emergent themes were:
  - Security and trust.
  - Experience, shared risk, and enthusiasm.
  - Experiential Achievement (overcoming a challenge).

- Security and trusting the process and mentors was prevalent in reflections.
  - “I would be cautious because I have never done anything like this. That is why I would be careful.”
  - “I will listen to the steps and instructions given by the teachers because they ensure my safety.”

- Confidence was limited by perceived levels of experience. Risk appeared diminished if it was shared, indicating the importance of connectivity.
  - “I have more confidence so I am not worried.”
  - 20 of the 24 boys were enthused by the impending actions.

- Providing a new experiential challenge provided the boys and ensured engagement.
  - “It’s risky, and it’s going to be challenging.”
  - “Because I would want to get the job done.”

- With collaboration, I hope to engage my peers with my report findings and improve capacity and confidence in their pedagogy. The Scots College is currently on an experiential education journey and I hope, with the help of my research project, to help guide and foster adaptability in all of the stakeholders travelling with us.

**Key Readings**