

"THEY'VE WALKED IN OUR SHOES"

THE POWER OF OLD BOYS' STORIES TO DEVELOP CHARACTER IN YEAR 5 BOYS

Duncan Kendall and Elisabeth Smith
The Scots College, Sydney, Australia

Further Information
This poster and further information is available at
<http://www.theibsc.org/>

Researcher's Emails:
d.kendall@tsc.nsw.edu.au
elisabeth.smith@tsc.nsw.edu.au

How might the shared stories of Scots' Old Boys impact Year 5 boys' understanding of the qualities of a "Fine Scots Boy"?

Introduction

Central to The Scots College Preparatory School's pastoral care and welfare policy are the responsibilities, attitudes, and values of a **Fine Scots Boy**. These elements are represented using the College's symbol of the Rampant Lion.

Research has shown that the narrative structures within stories we hear are actively sought out by the human brain, helping us absorb information and connect it with personal experiences (Juliani, 2017). **Connecting personal choices with the act of storytelling** has been shown to be a vehicle for understanding moral experiences and character (Tappan & Brown, 1989).

Through the storytelling of Old Boys' personal narratives and the crafting of Year 5 students' own narratives linked to the 'Fine Scots Boy' attributes, meaningful connections could be made for students. The boys deepened their understanding of these qualities, knowing how to enact them and, therefore, have a greater desire to be a 'Fine Scots Boy'.

Research Context and Participants

This project took place at The Scots College, an independent school for boys, located in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney, Australia. Being a Presbyterian Church school, the Christian faith is foundational to its mission and shapes its pastoral curriculum and learning. The 25 participants of this study were a class of Year Five boys, aged 10-11.



Year 5 boys with a Scots Old Boy and taking part in a "fireside chat"

"When they used Old Boys, they are closer in age to you than the teachers so you can connect to them more, and you just have fun."

"In a story, you actually get an example. Someone can tell you something and you may not understand it, but in a story context you understand the whole thing and understand how it impacts on your life."

The Research Action

Four recent Old Boys of the College were chosen to share their personal stories, which richly exemplified one of the attributes of the "Fine Scots Boy" (Faith, Courage, Compassion or Integrity). The Old Boys were specifically chosen because of the strength of their personal character and exemplary role modelling for younger students, their age, and the connection their stories had to boy's interests.

After sharing his personal story in a campus wide context, the Old Boy and Year 5 Boys took part in a **"fireside chat,"** sharing their personal stories together, debating the attribute, answering questions, and together considering how they could display these attributes in everyday contexts of their own lives. This action was intended to develop a real-life, meaningful connection to the qualities of a "Fine Scots Boy," thereby developing a rich understanding.

Data Collection and Analysis

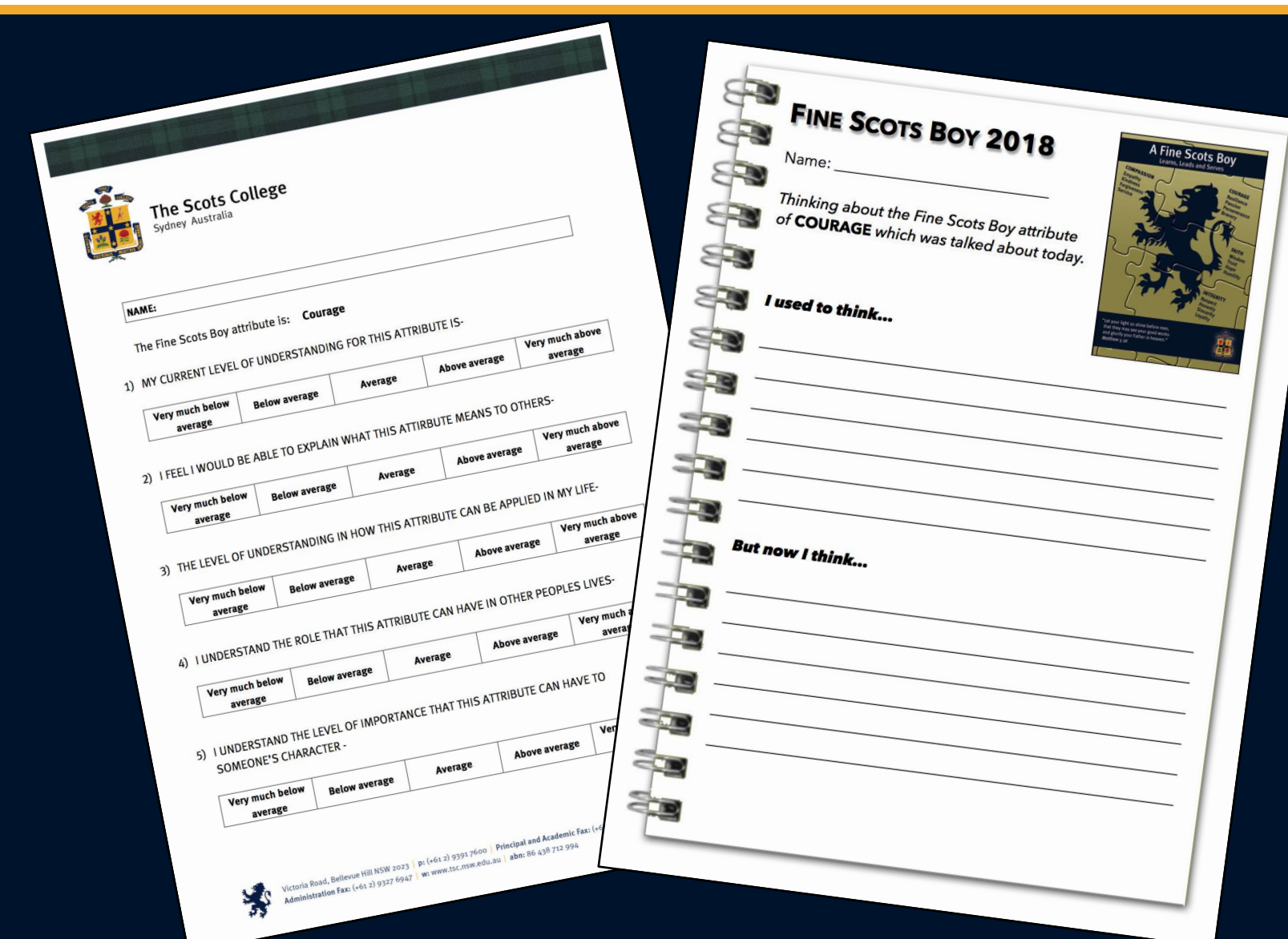
Questionnaire
(quantitative)

Exit ticket – "I use to think...Now I think"
(qualitative)

Transcribed "fireside chat" videos (qualitative)

Transcribed semi-structured exit interviews (qualitative)

Coding and categorising of themes
Polyangulation of data



Questionnaire

Thinking Routine Exit Slip



Video and Exit Interview Transcripts

"The Old Boys motivated me to share my own story. It was very helpful. It was sharing with everyone and helping everyone to know something new."

Key Findings and Discussion

Clear themes emerged as to the impact of the shared stories of Old Boys on Year 5 boys' understanding of the 'Fine Scots Boy' attributes.

1. The attributes of a Fine Scots Boy became **personalised**: They changed from being abstract to being lived out in the physical example of the Old Boys.
2. Boys learnt the **meaning** of the qualities to their own lives and asked for guidance and wisdom from the Old Boys on how to apply these qualities.
3. Boys could **communicate through their own personal stories** their understanding, explaining why the attributes were important and how to apply them to their lives.
4. The "fireside chat" changed the hierarchical structure usually observed in a classroom. The Old Boys and Year 5 students felt it was a **shared experience**, developing community and camaraderie.

"Now I know they actually matter in your life and affect how you do things. Now I know what it [the attributes] can do in your life and what good things can come from these attributes and have a good life."



Attributes and Characteristics of a Fine Scots Boy



A Scots Old Boy sharing his story of Integrity

"I first thought courage was standing up for people and like helping them have courage to do things. But courage can also be on the other side, saying no to people to do things right like if someone was being bullied, helping the in times that are hard for them."

Conclusions

- This research found that the shared stories of Scots Old Boys **significantly impacted** students' understanding of the qualities of a "Fine Scots Boy."
- This project highlighted the positive impact which "A Fine Scots Boy! Positive Behaviour Plan" is having in shaping the character of young men, reflecting the notion that "Scots boys grow into fine young men."
- The conclusions drawn can have **positive implications for the use of storytelling**, in particular "fireside chats," to lessons within the "Fine Scots Boy" program, as well as pedagogical approaches to other teaching areas.
- The project highlights **the important role of Old Boys** in the lives and development of Preparatory students.



Key Readings

- Blinne, K. C. (2014). Performing critical pedagogy through fireside chats. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*. 5(2), 131-144.
- Juliani, A. J. (2017). *The hidden importance of teaching with stories*. Retrieved from <http://ajjuliani.com/hidden-importance-teaching-stories/>
- Tappan, M. B., & Brown, L. M. (1989). Stories told and lessons learned: Toward a narrative approach to moral development and moral education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 59(2), 182-205.

