

COGITO ERGO SUM: BUILDING COURAGE AND AGENCY IN ETHICAL DECISION- MAKING IN GRADE 9 BOYS

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Abstract

I have been a house tutor for the past 8 years and during this time I was struck by the considerable time spent dealing with disciplinary issues concerning Year 9 boys having to make ethical decisions. Our Deputy of Student Affairs, without hesitation, confirmed that it is consistently the Year 9 boys who find themselves embroiled in serious disciplinary issues, often with devastating outcomes.

I therefore chose to focus my action research project on my Year 9 tutor group to determine whether they had access to the necessary skills to exercise agency when faced with a series of self-generated and challenging ethical dilemmas. The self-generated dilemmas aimed to provide the boys with a platform from which to explore how they approached and reacted to ethical dilemmas on a daily basis. I was curious to see to what extent the boys felt empowered to make independent ethical choices when offered the space to explore their critical thinking in circumstances that they felt were beyond their control.

Throughout the 8-week project, the 21 boys worked in six self-divided groups and were asked to construct two ethical dilemmas, each of which they considered to be relevant to their daily lives. These dilemmas (see Appendix A) ranged from academic cheating and being tempted to use illicit substances, to making life and death decisions involving pets and people.

The final product was six ethical models in the form of a mnemonic or an acronym that they could use to assess and analyse their ethical dilemmas. The groups were issued with the self-generated ethical dilemmas (not their own), and they had to apply their model and evaluate whether it was effective in assisting in their decision-making.

My research findings suggested that the boys were daunted by the fact that there was no easy and right answer to most of their questions and dilemmas. They viewed school rules and, to some extent, the rules imposed on them at home, simply as a guide of how much trouble they were in or the severity of the punishment that would be metered out, and not as moral or ethical guidelines. Beyond the obvious questions, they needed to grapple with the fact that their choices may not be empowering for their social status - ethical decision-making is not always popular.

Glossary

Agency refers to a sense of being in control of one's actions and decisions. Kabeer (1999) describes it as "people's capacity to define their own life-choices and to pursue their own goals, even in the face of opposition from others" (p. 438).

Critical thinking is defined by Scriven & Paul (2007) as "the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analysing, synthesising, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action" (p. 90).

Empowerment is defined by Zimmerman *et al* (2019) as "a process by which individuals expand their aspirations and goals and gain greater autonomy allowing them to achieve their goals" (p. 1).

Ethical dilemma is aptly defined by Shapira-Lishchinsky (2010) as an "inner conversation with the self" (p.1) often to negotiate two or more decisions about a course of action to take. The "negotiation" is further complicated when "obstacles on each side hinder the decision as to which course to pursue" (p.1).

Introduction

I was inspired to conduct my research by Australian author Tim Winton (2018) who contemplates the fact that we often tell boys how not to behave, but the examples and cues on how to behave are few and far between. A crucial question for me was whether we empower boys to make ethical decisions or whether we "disable" them because of the old adage, "boys will be boys." I wanted to observe whether boys could be empowered when given the opportunity to devise tools and the time to engage with critical "inner conversations" when confronted with ethical dilemmas.

The IBSC 2019/2020 Action Research topic *Agency: Boys voice and choice* afforded me the opportunity to look at how our school engages with boys in guiding and equipping them to make ethical decisions. This is how I arrived at my research question: *How can a series of self-generated ethical dilemmas empower independent ethical decision-making in Grade 9 boys?*

Action research seemed the perfect method by which I could investigate the questions that often arose when ethical dilemmas emerge. Mertler (2017) states action research is "any systematic inquiry conducted by teachers, administrators, counselors, or others with a vested interest in the teaching and learning process" (p. 4). However, what really struck a chord with me, was the fact that action research is characterised as research "done by teachers for themselves" (p .4) and that it allowed me, as a teacher to "focus specifically on the unique characteristics of the population" (p. 4). The most important aspect for me was that this research offered me the time not only to reflect on my own practices, but to question and, hopefully, improve them. In addition to the latter, St John's College is home to an incredibly diverse society where upbringing, economic status, religious affiliation and

nationalities have an impact on the boys' dealings with ethical dilemmas. Action research made allowances for this to be taken into consideration.

Literature Review

Winton (2018) makes the observation that boys initially have a “great native tenderness,” are “dreamy,” “vulnerable,” and “beautiful creatures” (para. 4). He observes, however, that something happens on their way to becoming young men that diminishes these characteristics. He speculates that the problem is two-fold: boys are under constant pressure to behave in a misogynistic manner, and boys are often told explicitly how not to behave but the behaviour that has been “taken away” is often not replaced with anything else. Winton (2018) states further that boys are “wordlessly looking for cues the whole time” (para. 7) and that they are “left with values that are residual, fuzzy, accidental or sniggeringly conspiratorial (para 8). He concludes that “we have left our young people to fend for themselves” (para. 9).

Winton's observations are not new and they link in with the commonly used mantra, “boys will be boys.” As Pinkett in Moorhead (2019) explains, the dilemma with which we grapple today is that this mantra “plays into a narrative that says boys produce more testosterone, and that's why they fight and punch, that's why they don't sit quietly in lessons, that's why they're harder to control, that's why we have different expectations about what they can do” (para. 6). Pinkett also suggests that “it's more about the environment than biology” (para. 6).

While the environment can be interpreted as the physical environment in which boys find themselves, I would also argue that environment could mean how and what we teach boys in classrooms and the school in general. The question arises whether we as teachers buy into the “boys will be boys” mantra and “excuse” boys from unethical behaviour. Hurst (2019) cautions us against providing boys a “get-out-of-jail-free” card for unethical behaviour and instead urges that we can change this through explicitly teaching boys how to critically think about the situations in which they find themselves, and, in the process, give them agency and a voice to come to a decision through ethical reasoning.

The fact that adolescent boys react impulsively, as well as taking risks, is not in dispute. Schwartz (2015) explains that the prefrontal cortex responsible for planning, thinking ahead, and weighing risk is most malleable during adolescence. In conjunction with this, puberty releases sex hormones that also affect brain functioning, adding more dopamine to the system. Schwartz notes, “the imbalance between an aroused dopamine system and a still developing prefrontal cortex, which would inhibit some of the risky pleasure-seeking behaviours, is why adolescence is such a dangerous time” (para. 2). Although this may seem as a conundrum of sorts, Schwartz (2015) offers hope and an alternative, stating that the imbalance, although quite daunting, actually “represents a unique opportunity to reach adolescents with positive stimuli that will be hard-wired in high definition years later” (para.3). She goes on to argue that we do not challenge boys often enough about their own thinking and reasoning

and we are missing opportunities to utilise the development of the malleable prefrontal cortex which could result in advanced thinking and self-regulation. This could translate into finding opportunities for adolescent boys to empower themselves, to give them agency, through critical thinking, ethical reasoning and ethical decision-making.

The opportunity for greater autonomy in boys, links to empowering individuals through agency. Richardson (2019) suggests the “ability to learn on (their) terms what, when and how to learn ... leads to learning that ‘sticks’ far more than when (they) are given little or no choice” (para 6). Michael Morris (2017) further confirms this link between empowerment and agency by stating that, “agency does not give us power over another, but it gives us mastery over ourselves” (para 6). I proposed, therefore, to investigate how boys could be empowered by providing them opportunities to identify and explore the ethical issues with which they grapple.

Literature abounds with research on the importance of teaching critical thinking and ethical reasoning in schools (Carlgren, 2013; Hart, 2018; Hughes, 2010; Snyder & Snyder 2008). Sharikova (2007) stresses the importance of teaching critical thinking because it enables students to engage with a variety of problems. Researchers agree that critical thinking is a skill that is learnt; teaching students how to think instead of what to think (Carlgren, 2013; Snyder & Snyder, 2008). It is, however, often side-lined in schools because educators are not adequately trained, lack time to incorporate it into an already overloaded curriculum, have the inability (or no defined measures) to assess this skill, and deny that critical thinking and problem-solving are particular skills that require explicit instruction (Carlgren, 2013; Hughes, 2010; Snyder & Snyder, 2008).

Critical thinking was necessary if I wanted to provide the boys in my Year 9 tutor group with life-long skills to negotiate the number of ethical issues that they may face. Ethics in its simplest form can be considered to be “a set of principles for what constitutes right and wrong behaviour” (Sternberg, 2016, para. 2). This is taught in many environments, such as home, school, a religious institution, and through various experiences in life. The definition in itself presents the complexities of ethics: it is often determined by religion, culture and upbringing. This dilemma points out the importance of teaching critical thinking in order to engage with ethical reasoning. Hughes (2010) defines ethical reasoning as encompassing motivation and conviction and “the conscious affirmation of and pattern of living habitually ... in accord with (one’s) moral or ethical judgement” (p. 15). In short, how do boys determine whether their actions either enhance or harm the well-being of themselves and most importantly that of other people?

Research indicates that there are several ways in which critical thinking and ethical reasoning can be taught. Carlgren (2013) states that the teaching of critical thinking skills needs to be student-centred, where the teacher is merely a mediator of the learning. Snyder and Snyder (2008) affirm this: “If the focus is on learning, students should be given the freedom (and responsibility) to explore the content,

analyse resources, and apply information” (p. 92). One way, argues Blumenfeld et al. (1991), that critical thinking can be incorporated effectively in the curriculum is through project-based learning (PBL), which is “a comprehensive approach to classroom teaching and learning that is designed to engage students in investigation of authentic problems” (p. 369). PBL can be incorporated into a variety of disciplines and learning opportunities and is drawn from everyday situations requiring problem-solving. The problem, therefore, is contextualised and “learners construct knowledge by solving complex problems in situations in which they use cognitive tools” (Blumenfeld et al., 1991, p. 371). To this end, Hughes (2010) suggests that students can respond to case studies, recordings of observations in media diaries, journals or logbooks, role plays, skits, and debates. This type of teaching and assessment allows the study of critical thinking and ethical reasoning to be student-centred when they generate evidence “as they observe or confront authentic ethical dilemmas and apply their knowledge and cognitive skills” (pp. 6-7).

Research Context

St John’s College is an independent Anglican day and boarding school situated in Johannesburg, South Africa. The school accommodates boys from nursery school to Sixth Form with approximately 1400 boys and 80 girls. The school is composed of boys from mainly middle to high socio-economic backgrounds and has a very solid reputation as an academic school. Nearly 125 years old, the school also prides itself in its school prayer on educating boys “rightly trained in body, mind and character,” and its very strong sense of tradition.

I chose my Year 9 tutor group for this action research because I have had the chance to develop a relationship with them over the past two years and their diversity (race, religion, economic background, academic and sporting abilities) made them ideal to observe.

Parents were advised of the nature of the action research project and their consent, along with their son’s, was sought. Assurance was given that data collected would only be used for educational purposes and anonymity was maintained by withholding the boys’ names when discussing data, responses and during video recordings.

The Action

At St John’s College, tutor periods are less structured than lessons and provided the ideal time to explore this intervention. The action research took place over eight weeks in September 2019. I met my 21 tutor boys twice a week for 45 minutes, and then again for 15 minutes at the end of the week. The majority of the research was conducted face to face, but the boys also had an online presence using platforms such as Google Forms and Flipgrid.

It was very important to ensure that the boys had autonomy throughout the project and it was with this in mind that the first session established the “rules of engagement.” These rules were basic concepts

concerning the way in which they would communicate with each other within their groups and engage with the topics and ideas. I wanted a safe space for the boys to open up about the ethical dilemmas they faced and the difficulties they have in making ethical choices. It was important that *they* establish the rules and this was the first step in demonstrating to them that *they* are, in essence, in control of this process.

The following sessions were then roughly divided into four stages. During the first stage, the boys divided themselves into six groups (roughly three to four boys per group) and established two ethical dilemmas (see Appendix A) pertinent to their lives. I wanted to ascertain if the boys understood the complexities of their dilemmas. During the second stage, I encouraged the boys to delve deeper into their dilemmas with the help of some key questions (see Appendix B).

For the third stage of the action the boys were required to think critically about the questions that arose from the investigations of their ethical dilemmas. At this stage, I explicitly taught them critical thinking skills. The aim then was for the boys to separate, after their critical analysis, the information that they thought was key to their ethical decision-making and to develop an ethical model in the form of a mnemonic or an acronym. These models were presented to the other groups who, using their critical thinking skills, had to conduct a peer review of the other groups' models. The groups were then given feedback from their peers and an opportunity to observe and incorporate the feedback into their models.

The fourth stage of the action required the boys to test whether their models would work in an ethical dilemma. The twelve self-generated ethical dilemmas were, therefore, distributed amongst the boys, ensuring that they didn't receive their own dilemmas. They applied and tested their ethical model to see if it assisted them in dealing critically with the ethical dilemma and if there was a change in their approach to solving some of the complex situations they might find themselves in.

Data Collection

Several methods were used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. A combination of methods ensured that I could polyangulate my data. Polyangulation recognises that social research is “nuanced and not simple and ... any attempts to analyse and understand it must begin from that perception in order to capture it properly” (Mora, n.d. para 1). Very important to my research topic was the notion that polyangulation recognises the different realities of participants, the different milieus in which ethical dilemmas occur, as well as the nature of the researchers themselves. Mertler (2017) adds that polyangulation “enables the researcher to get a better handle on what is happening in reality and to have a greater confidence in research findings” (p.11).

The eight-week action research programme commenced and ended with baseline surveys using Google Forms. The surveys used a combination of rating scales, Likert scale questions, as well as open-ended questions. This allowed me insight into the boys' initial attitudes, perceptions and

behaviour in terms of ethical dilemmas. Furthermore, I hoped that the surveys would give me an idea of where ethical behaviour is learnt and whether the boys saw themselves as engaging critically with ethical dilemmas. The intention of the post-project survey was to indicate whether the intervention had an impact on the boys' view on ethical dilemmas and how they could empower themselves to solve an ethical dilemma in several ways.

Data were collected through filming and interviewing groups, one-on-one interviews and detailed notes recorded by the boys themselves. I also gained some valuable data by just being an observer walking around listening to the boys. These observations were recorded as field observations in my research diary. Finally, the boys recorded their responses to two concluding questions I posed on Flipgrid after the action. Using filmed discussion, recorded interviews, and Flipgrid reflections assisted in obtaining trustworthy information and authentic voices.

Data Analysis

At the completion of the project, I considered the data. I transcribed the recordings, written responses, and survey results, and collated these along with my own field notes. I also compared themes from the pre-project survey to see if, at the conclusion of the project, there had been a change in the boys' responses.

I also considered the self-generated ethical dilemmas as well as the boys' analysis of their allocated dilemmas. I was looking for evidence of the boys taking control of a dilemma through independent critical thinking. I compared the boys' analysis of their ethical dilemmas before and after I explicitly taught a lesson on critical thinking. I wanted to observe in particular, whether there had been a shift in the way in how they approach ethical decision-making. Were they able to recognise the factors that have an impact on their decision making and did this empower independent decision making?

Discussion of Results

When I considered the data and really started "listening" to the voices of the boys coming through the words on paper, the following became evident:

1. Self-generated, school-based ethical models relevant to Year 9 boys empowered them to question their decision-making;
2. The boys became more autonomous and ethical decision-makers when they were taught critical thinking skills;
3. Ethical decision-making models empowered the boys to consider their decision-making skills and provided them with a range of choices.

Self-generated, school-based ethical models relevant to Year 9 boys empowered them to question their decision-making;

The initial survey indicated that the majority of boys were vaguely aware of ethics and its role in their lives. Fourteen of the 21 boys stated that they learnt ethical behaviour by observing their parents and only four stated that school plays a role in their ethics education. This potentially presented somewhat of a conundrum for the boys whereby the ethical behaviour that their parents' model might not have related to the ethical dilemmas the boys faced at school amongst their peers and away from their parents' guidance.

It was therefore not surprising that the boys indicated in the initial survey that their experiences with ethical dilemmas often made them feel disempowered because, often in school or peer situations, the behaviour has not been modelled. As a response to such disempowerment, the boys indicated the following: Firstly, confusion at the possible ambiguous nature of the ethical dilemmas. As Boy A stated: "there is sometimes a grey area which makes it hard to see what the right thing is to do." Boy B echoed this when he said that "the 'right thing' varies in every scenario." Secondly, Boys C and D felt that often it is too hard to decide and found they resorted to quick "gut" feeling decisions when they respectively stated "you mostly have to take educated guesses" and "in the moment you often have to guess which side has the valid points." Lastly, Boy E found that reactions are often directed by what the majority (peers) decide, even if it is wrong: "people sometimes put pressure on you to do the wrong thing." Boy F's response linked to this "sometimes it [the right thing] makes you an outcast."

I hoped that the empowerment of the boys would lie in them developing the ethical dilemmas that needed modelling. The ethical dilemmas boys created were predominantly concerned with life at school. These can roughly be divided into the following themes: academic dishonesty, use and distribution of illicit substances, cyberbullying, and unfair behaviour by teachers. The ones not directly linked to school were concerned with life and death situations (of animals and people) and consent. In some ways it was easy for the boys to come up with ethical dilemmas. They are surrounded by them and I noted in my research diary: "I was taken by surprise the speed with which the boys came up with their ethical dilemmas - maybe they know more than I think."

It was only after the second activity, where the boys were asked to probe deeper into the nuts and bolts of their ethical dilemmas through a set of predetermined questions, that I began to understand the significance of this exercise. I noted in my diary: "Boy C stayed behind today. He is often quiet and withdrawn during tutor sessions. So, I was surprised when he shared with me that he never considered a scenario surrounding illicit substances as such a complex ethical dilemma with such far-reaching consequences. He admitted that it has changed his thinking." It transpired later on that some

of his friends were vaping at school and he engaged with them, intervened and stopped their behaviour.

In giving the boys autonomy to construct ethical dilemmas familiar to them, they were given the opportunity to indirectly speak their fears and concerns. In giving them the time to dissect the ethical dilemmas and do more in-depth questioning, the boys felt empowered to know that a situation is not always what it seems at face value and that they have the power to analyse dilemmas and influence people. As one boy stated, “[it] deepened my understanding of possible scenarios and possible solutions.”

The boys became more autonomous ethical decision-makers when they were taught critical thinking skills

During the initial survey, the majority of the boys chose the definition of critical thinking to be “analysing information and situations objectively.” However, when they were asked what they relied on to make difficult decisions, the majority of the boys stated that they relied on what they have learnt from people around them such as parents, teachers and peers - which I interpreted as negating some sense of objectivity in critical thinking. A quarter of the boys' responses orbited around “gut feeling,” with responses such as, “my emotions,” “is it nice,” “my gut,” and, “how I feel.” The minority of the boys indicated that they involved some degree of critical thinking.

I thus realised that: there was a discrepancy between what critical thinking is on paper and in reality for the boys; they had a vague sense that thinking is part of ethical decision-making but they were unsure of how to direct their thinking; and intentional teaching of critical thinking empowered the boys to make informed decisions.

The five questions I gave to the boys to analyse their self-generated ethical dilemmas were meant to guide them through analysing their dilemmas critically, while I observed whether this gave them greater autonomy in understanding an ethical dilemma in order to make an ethical decision. I collated their responses and their level of engagement with these questions indicated that they were capable of critical thinking when guided to do so. They explored the complexities of friendships, effects on peers and family members, legal consequences and how their decisions could make themselves and others feel.

The presentation on critical thinking was to affirm that they had been using critical thinking to analyse their ethical dilemma and to reinforce that they now needed to employ critical thinking independently to construct ethical models. Similarly, a short presentation on the concept of an ethical model provided guidance for the next stage: devising their own ethical models to use in ethical dilemmas.

Groups congregated to work on their ethical models. From their ethical questioning exercise, they determined the key concepts, thoughts, and values they would want to “hold on to” when they are in

situations where they need to solve ethical dilemmas, often under pressure. Groups presented their ethical models to the class whilst their peers assessed the models. This required independent critical thinking and constructive feedback from individuals to groups. The group feedback had mixed success, depending on how much the boys invested in providing peer assessment as much as how prepared they were to take it on board. The positive feedback indicated that some insights were gained where groups stated that, “they [the feedback comments] helped guide my group to change parts of it to make it better,” “the feedback helped my group improve on what others thought was wrong with our model, and it helped us improve our model,” “it opened many doors to change my perspective,” “it gave you an idea that your idea won’t work for everyone,” and, “it was a bit harsh but it helped.” The groups who decided to forgo peer input stated that feedback was often “contradictory,” “not well thought out,” “unrealistic,” and not “very descriptive.”

Thinking, and in particular critical thinking, incorporated in various forms certainly empowered the boys. This was evident in Boy A’s final reflection comment: “I have learnt to improve my thought processes for ethical decisions.” Boy B acknowledged that, “to think constructively” will benefit his problem solving, and Boy C and D said that critical thinking helps you think about “possible outcomes” and “evaluate the situations.” Boy E stated that critical thinking helped him face ethical dilemmas “in the right way and not just come to a conclusion that makes the situation worse.”

Ethical decision-making models empowered boys to consider their decision-making skills and provide them with a range of choices.

As indicated above, critical thinking was closely linked with the creation of ethical decision-making models and I was hoping that the latter would be concise models of critical thinking that could assist boys in addressing ethical dilemmas. The ethical decision-making models proved to be successful in providing the boys with agency when applying it to their self-generated ethical dilemmas. Boy E observed that implementing the ethical models “helped me decide and analyse my own decisions/pathway to solving an ethical dilemma,” whilst Boy F stated that this exercise “made me actually stop to think about what all of these values mean.”

In a way, the ethical models also assisted the boys who initially stated that they simply rely on “gut” reactions. The boys responded that ethical models “took away the struggle,” provided “further depths” to their decision-making process, and created empathy for those around them: “it has made me more aware that decisions impact others” and “I understand more of what people’s opinions and views are.” The ethical models further illuminated the fact that ethical dilemmas are not one dimensional: “I’ve learnt that I need to assess all aspects of the dilemmas” and that dilemmas are ever-present because it “plays a role in our everyday lives.” Probably the most telling of the boys’ empowerment is held in the comment, “I learnt that I share similar ethical morals to my peers and that *I can modify my own strategy*,” and further that the ethical models assisted in “learning and guiding your *own path*.”

Conclusions

Asking 15-year-old boys to self-generate ethical dilemmas provided them with a chance to exercise autonomy in directing the action research. The time that was afforded them to grapple with the critical thinking involved, coupled with dissecting their dilemmas, empowered them to come to independent conclusions. The real effect of exercising their agency during this action research came to fruition when they designed and implemented ethical models to solve their ethical dilemmas. It was rewarding to watch the boys create complex dilemmas and also to engage with finding solutions to deal with them.

At the conclusion of the action research, the boys were asked whether they thought ethics should be taught explicitly in the school curriculum; in which subject, and why. All the boys believed that ethics should be taught in school. Most of them thought it would fit into the Life Orientation curriculum, with some seeing it fit for the Divinity class. The underlying message of their responses to the “why” can be summarised in this one comment from a boy: “Please teach ethics in Grade 8 for the whole of first term, so that the boys can learn how to handle a situation and how to move forward in the college and not feel scared and not being able to know what choices to make.”

The unplanned benefit of this action research project was the development of a deeper relationship between the boys and, most of all, the trust. I had given them a platform to raise their voice, which empowered them to question themselves and their ethics which in turn gave them the freedom to confide in me.

Reflection

I have virtually studied every year since I graduated from University. I am your classic eternal student. I am also a late addition to the education system, which often makes me restless if I find that things have not changed since I was at school. One of the things that still haunts me, growing up as an Afrikaans girl in South Africa during Apartheid, is the way in which teachers robbed us of our voices if we did not tow the party-line. I still react quite vehemently if I feel that I have been disabled and silenced by those who have more power. And I think in my heart of hearts, this is the reason why I became a teacher.

In addition to the above-mentioned, I have also felt that since I started teaching at an all-boys school, so many trespasses by boys, often serious ones, were relegated to the domain of “boys will be boys” and, in some ways, their gender gives them the opportunity to behave in less ethical ways. I started to play around with the idea of incorporating an ethics course, explicitly teaching ethics, to one of the year groups. I achieved this somewhat through a programme I run called *#JoziYethu*. I incorporated a two-hour workshop during this programme aimed at Year 9 boys. When I started to read the reflections that the boys had written as part of the workshop, I knew I needed to pursue this area and that it could have value.

I was therefore delighted when my proposal for the IBSC topic, *Developing Agency - Boy Voice and Choice* was accepted and action research was the perfect medium to gather information for what I wanted to achieve. I could spend time in the company of a group for whom I will be responsible until they leave school. The nature of action research is such that we could mutually contribute to each other's education and I have grounds to further pursue implementing this in the curriculum. As I am writing this, we are on Day 35 of National Lockdown in South Africa due to the COVID-19 pandemic and I find myself thinking about how this situation can be used in a school curriculum to investigate and question the ethical dilemmas that are born from this.

Lastly, the time spent in Montreal with fellow researchers provided a safe space in which we could debate ideas and challenge each other to find the ideal topics. I will fondly remember this as a time of incredible growth and friendships. I am forever indebted to the wonderful people who surrounded me through the process. Thank you to St John's College who afforded me the opportunity and financial assistance to pursue this research, Margot Long for lending an ear when I was running into walls, Irene Basson who abounds with creativity, an incredible sense of humour and the ability to bring out the best in those around her. Last, but by far not the least, Polly Higgins for your endless pit of patience, pertinent questions, incredible sense of humour and honesty when dealing with my content and struggles. Without all of you, this project would not have been possible.

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Appendix A

Self-generated ethical dilemmas

Group	Ethical Dilemma 1	Ethical Dilemma 2
1	You are at school and have an important test that you didn't study for and there is a way to cheat without being caught. If you fail your parents will be really mad but if they found out they cheated they will be even more mad. Should you cheat?	There is a bank robbery and the robber gets shot. He is bleeding out and you are the only person that can save him.
2	Your friend asks you to tell him what was in the test that you just wrote which he has not written yet. Do you tell him or not?	Your pet dog is very sick and he will be able to survive but in very adverse circumstances. Is it more ethical to euthanize your dog or let him survive?
3	You have your final biology exam tomorrow and you are stressing because you haven't studied at all. While you are walking past your biology teacher's office, you see the exam papers for tomorrow through the window, neatly stacked on his desk. The door is unlocked and he is nowhere to be seen.	One of your friends has started taking unprescribed steroids.
4	You are at a party and your friends are all smoking a cigarette, they offer you a hit. What do you do?	There is alcohol doing its rounds at a party, all your friends say you should have a sip. What do you do?
5	Many teachers have said on numerous occasions racist/uncalled for jokes/statements about or towards students.	A student has made fun of and started rumors about certain boys/girls causing backlash towards them in a negative way.

6	You're convinced to go to a house party and you realize the host parents aren't there (so there's no parental supervision) and certain members of the party have brought illicit substances. All your friends are consuming these substances and pressure you to try some.	A female is under the influence and is asking you to participate in sexual intercourse, you have to come up with the decision on whether you'll do it or not.
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Appendix B

Questions given to boys to encourage critical thinking while they analyse their ethical dilemmas.

1. Write down what you think all the ethical dilemmas/ questions are in this scenario.
2. What are possible risks/ consequences for you if you act in the way that is perceived to be ethical?
3. How does it affect other people if you act in a way that is perceived to be ethical?
4. What is the best possible outcome? Is it the easiest outcome for all involved?
5. Which strategies do you employ/ use to analyse these scenarios?