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Conflict resolution in peer cultures

– Children's perspectives on negotiating and solving social situations with their peers

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Abstract

This study aims to explore children's perspectives on conflict resolution within their peer groups. Children's peer groups and cultures are a crucial setting for social and emotional development and can be reflective of broader peer cultures. This is an area of great importance within child studies and has been influenced by Corsaro's ideas around children's social worlds (Corsaro, 2009:321). More specifically, this study is built around the following research questions: 1) What do children perceive as positive ways to solve a conflict? 2) What do children perceive as negative ways to solve a conflict? 3) How do children perceive the role of adults in conflict resolution? Previous literature provides an insight into this topic that comes often through the adult lens (Jones, 2020: 479). This study aimed to include direct child participation in research, allowing agency and voice in the research made about them (Corsaro, 2009:321). To address the research questions, a qualitative study with twelve children in their second year of school, around the ages of seven and eight, was conducted. The children were given an opportunity to talk about their perspectives and viewpoints by engaging in discussions, by using arts-based methods and creating visual materials in the forms of mind-maps and lists as are common within Participation Visual Methods (PVM) research.

The written data that was derived from the creative methods was analysed using thematic analysis, with the direct observations and visual drawings used to support our interpretations. The main themes that arose from this study can be explained using verbal, non-verbal and ambiguous strategies for resolving conflicts. Further subthemes such as displaying pro-social behaviours, apologising, compromising, and hostile expressions were identified through our data analysis. This study contributes to sociocultural research in child studies. This study grants insight into child-centred research about navigating conflicts as fundamental components of human relations.

Keywords: child perspectives, conflict resolution, peer cultures, social emotional development

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Introduction

Everyday around the world children are picked up from school by an adult and asked a version of the question *'How was your day?'* Common discussions that follow revolve around a topic or skill taught within the classroom, a meal that was consumed or most importantly, recounts of both happy or frustrating interactions with their peers. The peer relations and interactions that take place within schools are momentous in developing children for successful and sustainable futures (León-Jiménez, Villarejo-Carballido, López de Aguileta, and Puigvert, 2020:1). As children interact with their peers, they are practicing important communication skills such as sharing opinions and considering the viewpoints of others, expressing needs or wants, seeking compromise and agreement with their peers. This thesis seeks to explore children's perspectives around conflict and conflict resolution. More specifically, this thesis elicits children's views on conflict resolution. The research is designed in such a way that participating children are granted the position of expert and informant. For the purpose of this study, the term 'conflict' is defined as any interaction between two or more peers with opposing needs. This definition of conflict resolution is in alignment with Pieng and Okamoto's (2020: 597) idea of constructive strategies that coordinate one's own needs with those of opponents. To explain the context of this study, the following topics will be discussed: 1) School settings, 2) Importance of conflict, and 3) Children's voice and agency.

School settings

For this study, we have elected to focus on conflict resolution within school settings. This provides opportunity to analyse peer relations within a specific age range. Children's social and emotional development is reliant on their peer interactions and the school environment serves as a major setting for this (Jones, 2020:466). Within the school environment, there are many sub-environments that include playgrounds, lunchrooms, sports clubs, after school care, and classrooms. It is within these gathering points that children meet and connect with their peers, form friendships, and establish a sense of belonging within their peer community. In fact, León-Jiménez et al, (2020:3) explains that the peer cultures within a school setting transcend beyond the school and can be representative of the broader peer cultures. These settings can include a diverse range of social experiences, as children are participating with one another and working towards individual or shared goals. Some experiences may be formal, such as deciding on roles and conducting a science experiment in a small group. Other interactions may be brief and informal such as lining up to enter a room. The school setting provides opportunity to explore how children's individual perspectives around conflict resolution could intersect with the social norms and codes of conduct of a formal school setting. We recognise the

advantages such as focusing of research on children who are familiar with creating mind-maps and lists as part of their regular learning curriculum and whom through their curriculum are familiar with discussing constructive conflict resolutions. and limitations of exploring conflict resolution within a specific context such as a school setting. In terms of limitations, we acknowledge how the power relations between children and adults within a school environment could influence the data and the behavioural norms of a school setting could impose onto children's perspectives. When analysing data, we have taken on Spyrou's views on reflexivity in research (2011:159). Using critical analysis will allow us to seek findings within this sociological context.

Importance of understanding conflict and conflict resolution

It is worth explaining the importance of conflict as well as defining conflict resolution within the context of this study. Pieng and Okamoto (2020:597) explain how young children experience frequent moments of social conflict with their peers during daily routines, for example, turn taking and sharing. These interactions are valuable in shaping children's peer cultures and there is great evidence documenting the importance of discussion, debate, and conflict (Corsaro, 2009:313). Pieng and Okamoto (2020: 597) argue how conflict experiences are important for the development of intrapersonal (relation to oneself) and interpersonal (peer) relations. Through conflict resolution children are able to find ways to communicate, negotiate, compromise, consider alternative viewpoints and in doing so, they are shaping their social worlds (Corsaro, 2009:321). Navigating these conflicts can help children develop resilience and build confidence as they overcome challenges and practise making life choices (Jones, 2020: 463). These are lifelong skills that will shape and form the individual and collective peer cultures. This study aims to explore the strategies that children choose to navigate conflict resolution with their peers. It allows for analysis of what strategies children consider to be valuable as well as those they consider ineffective or negative.

Child voice and agency

This study seeks to explore child's perspective; therefore, the concept of child voice and agency is central for the research design. When considering child voice, there is extensive research, derived from an adult perspective, that suggests that external influences shaping children's peer relations include the influence of family values, practising of faith or school curriculum. As Jones (2020:479) reiterates, these theoretical perspectives belong to the adult, the assessor, rather than the child (Jones, 2020: 479). Throughout our study we have actively sought for the inclusion of children's voices in our research and data collection. By doing so, this study takes on Corsaro's ideals for new theoretical approaches that see children and their peer cultures as worthy of study in their own right (2009:301). As Hammersley (2016:114) argues, previous research has relied on adult views and failed to consider

children's experiences and perspectives. We, as researchers, see children as active, knowledgeable agents who can contribute immense knowledge to this study (Barley and Russell, 2019:224). We seek to learn which conflict solving experiences children value and disregard within their peer cultures. Through involving direct participation from children, we are giving them ownership of their values, opinions, and experiences (Corsaro, 2009:321). The intention of this small-scale study is to contribute to our understanding about children's social and emotional competence, recognising that children have ownership and can articulate their experiences (Jones, 2020: 479). We see navigating conflicts as fundamental components on human relations and value children's perspectives in this realm.

Research problem and questions

This study builds on the ideas around peer cultures that are presented by Corsaro. A central theme within children's peer cultures according to Corsaro (2009:302) is that children are engaged in negotiations to gain control over their lives and to share that control with each other. In doing so, children develop strategies to gain autonomy within their social lives. These strategies can take various forms and be expressed in different ways whether this may be through negotiation, seeking support from peers or adults, conflict avoidance, acceptance or other strategies, skills, or other mechanisms. In addition, Corsaro notes that children are always participating in and are a part of two cultures, their own and that of adults (2009:301). In this study, we seek to gain insight and to explore the notion of conflict resolution within children's peer relations and to understand how children perceive the role of adults in conflict resolution.

To reach a conclusion, the following questions will be examined:

1. What do children perceive as positive ways to solve a conflict?
2. What do children perceive as negative ways to solve a conflict?
3. How do children perceive the role of adults in conflict resolution?

We have chosen to focus on children in their second year of school, primarily around the ages of 8, to gather their insights and perspectives. We had access to a school through one of the researchers who also teaches at this school. To promote children's participation, we opted to use Participatory Action Research (PAR) in our study (Darling-McQuistan, 2017:284, 287). Essentially this means that children engaged in the research process by writing and drawing their responses about conflict and conflict resolution strategies. To collect our data, one of the researchers observed an activity involving child participants which was facilitated by the class teacher. Within PAR, a specific method of using arts-based methods and Participatory Visual Methods (PVM) has been widely used in research that involves children. PAR studies, and in extension PVM research, seeks to maximise the agency of

children participating in research and therefore are designed to access children's voices by using visual materials in the data collection process such as drawings, creating mind-maps, taking photos or drawing maps. Within PVM there is a consensus that the use of visual methods enables children to feel more at ease and promote their engagement and participation in research.

In terms of the visual materials generated by the children in this study, as these may be in the form of drawings and illustrations, it is important to highlight that we are not assessing the quality of drawings or any aesthetic features and therefore put no value into how well-produced, messy, or aesthetically pleasing a drawing may be. All visual materials produced for this study, were deemed equally important as part of the data collection process and formed the basis for our thematic analysis.

Rationale and relevance

With this study we aim to examine an important component within the everyday life of children, namely conflicts. Previous research conducted which has examined peer conflicts have highlighted the importance of understanding conflicts and their resolution as these impact relations between children in their peer groups. Noakes and Rinaldi (2006) note that children who have difficulty in dealing with conflict management tend to be rejected by their peers and may experience low self-esteem and poor school achievements. While our study does not aim to determine whether the children in this study experience any of these impacts, these impacts highlight the relevance of examining the multiple dimensions of childhood which include relations between children in their peer groups including conflict management and strategies pertaining to these. In the context of an educational setting, studies relating to conflict resolution between children has focused on examining conflict as a means of learning from these in attempts to minimise conflicts between children. Reasons for this being that conflicts between children at school may cause disruptions to the child's learning environment. However, in doing so, there is a risk that children do not get to engage in conflict which may support their social developmental skills and potentially even strengthen their peer relations if the conflicting parties are able to resolve their conflicts in a constructive manner. As researchers interested in the topic, we hypothesise how children within school environments and in their homes may be prompted by adults to apologise at the sign of a conflict children maybe experiencing with their peers regardless of whether this is the most adequate conflict resolution or not. We also hypothesise, that children may often be told to turn to an adult for support or to turn to an adult if they are experiencing problems. However what children might do when they experience conflicts may not at all follow this adult guidance.

With our study we aim to examine what children perceive as potentially good or bad ways of resolving a conflict and whether and how adult intervention forms any part of these strategies. Based on our review of conflict and conflict resolutions studies we note that these have often been conducted

through ethnographic observations or through various types of interviews or assessments. Examples of interview studies are Troop-Gordon and Asher (2005:568) and Chung and Asher (1996:125), both involving children responding to hypothetical conflict prompts. León-Jiménez et al (2020:1) and Deutz et al (2015:43) are examples of ethnographic studies taking place within a school setting.

This research project aims to explore the topic more openly, inquiring into what children themselves could identify as strategies without adult nudges on what a 'correct' or 'incorrect' response may be. With our chosen methodology of providing children the possibility to both respond to open questions as a group, and to further elaborate their own thoughts by creating mind-maps, lists or drawings, we hoped this would allow for a more open and engaging atmosphere in which the children could decide how much detail they wished to give. With the use of their own classroom materials for writing and drawing in our data collection activity, the children were in control of what they produced. And whilst our analytical approach was based on a thematical analysis, we also wanted to consider the visual materials produced as a whole and therefore not only selecting the information we found to fit our own purpose of responding to our research questions. We therefore also looked at the illustrations that were included in the visual materials and how these could be interpreted together with any written inputs provided.

To the extent possible, without overshadowing our thematic analysis, we also looked at the overall visuals to see if illustrations had been included and how these corresponded to the written text included in the produced materials. To the best of our knowledge, this methodology has not been applied in previous research on children and conflict resolution. The reasons for this may potentially be that the notion of conflict per se, may be quite an abstract concept to illustrate or capture visually. However, in our review of previous studies which have employed visual research methods we found several studies which approached somewhat abstract topics and were successful in eliciting insightful findings from the participating children. Examples of this include a study where children were asked to 'draw the internet' (Botturi 2021), or to 'draw tourism' (Ertaş et al. 2021), or even approaching difficult subjects through drawings such as the loss of a sibling (Einarsdottir et al. 2009), or representations of loneliness (Misailidi et al. 2011). It is important to highlight that all these studies do not solely rely on purely visual data materials but emphasise the importance of incorporating the drawing and creative elements of this type of methodology with a dialogue or discussion with the child, a draw-and-talk approach.

Literature review

Conflicts in peer relations

Earlier we expressed our alignment to Pieng and Okamoto's (2020: 597) definition of conflict resolution. To reiterate, we use the term 'conflict' to explain any interaction between two or more peers with opposing needs. The ideology behind conflicts can be expanded on using previous literature. For example, conflicts as relational components within childhood friendship in the study of friendship jealousy and satisfaction were the focus of research conducted by Deutz et al (2015). In this study Deutz et al. observed the interactions of nine-year-old children in a 30-minute closed-field observational setting which involved observing interactions between friends (2015:39). This study involved a population of around two hundred children and examined specifically jealousy within friendships, finding that friendship jealousy and conflicts of this nature are an important construct in children's lives (2015:54).

In research aimed at understanding peer conflict, Laursen et al. (1996) described peer conflicts as interpersonal conflicts which often indicate the presence of a perceived inequality or imbalance within the relationship (1996:86). The conflicts themselves should not be seen as entirely negative as Laursen et al. note, these 'may promote improved relations and understanding among participants' (ibid). In this study and previous research cited, Laursen et al. also found that conflicts differ depending on those engaged in the conflict whether it be between family members, close friends, or classmates (1996:77). What seems to be the difference in how conflict is managed lies in the social interactions or the social rules and sanctions which differ and exist in different spaces and relations.

Within peer relations such as in friendships, MacEvoy and Asher (2012:108) examined the different responses of boys and girls when dealing with conflicts in friendships finding. This study employed almost 270 participants around the ages of 9-11 years old, where the participants were presented with hypothetical scenarios including conflict situations based on transgression one may observe in a friendship and the participants were asked to rate their feelings, conflict resolution strategies and their goal (ibid). The conflict resolution strategies identified in this study were clustered as being either problem-solving strategies, denial strategies or aggressive strategies (2012:110). The problem-solving strategy involved actions to work things out with the friend, the denial strategy involved pretending everything was fine and the aggressive strategy included verbally aggressing leading to the termination of the friendship (ibid). This study found girls to appear to be more sensitive to transgressions of core friendship expectation than are boys (2012:114) and that girls and boys endorsed aggressive strategies just as much, contrasting previous research showing boys to be more

aggressive in their conflict resolution strategies. However, as discussed by the researchers, this may very well have to do with the causation of the conflict where conflicting over limited resources or social norm violations may display certain conflict resolution strategies whereas friendship transgression conflicts may result in other strategies (ibid).

Research focused on understanding if, how, and when children adjust their conflict resolution strategies in relation to their own goals was the primary focus for the research conducted by Troop-Gordon and Asher (2005) and Chung and Asher (1996). Both studies used hypothetical peer conflict situations as the foundation for conducting interviews with children (Troop-Gordon and Asher 2005:568, Chung and Asher 1996:125). These hypothetical scenarios were verbally presented to the participating children, ages 9-12 in both studies, which led to the coding of the children's responses and discussions which had been audio-recorded, transcribed, and thematically analysed. Troop-Gordon and Asher (2005) identified the following strategies in their study: aggression, assertion, manipulation, fair solution, polite request, compromise, assistance seeking and acquiescence (2005:573). While Chung and Asher (1996) identified strategies and coded these as pro-social strategies (e.g., accommodating needs of both parties), hostile/coercive strategies (e.g. counteracting the other person in an unfriendly manner), assertive strategies (e.g. demanding and asserting wants), passive strategies (e.g. forfeiting, giving up), and adult-seeking strategies (requesting assistance) (1996:131-132). Interesting here in the comparison of these two studies despite being conducted nine years apart, is that the strategies identified are similar in their nature of what was observed in the children's behaviours and responses.

It is noteworthy to highlight the use of hypothetical scenarios which present a conflict scenario in conducting research with children on the topic of conflict. This approach was used by both Troop-Gordon and Asher (2005) as well as Chung and Asher (1996). Other examples which used hypothetical conflict scenarios was a study conducted to examine preschool children's, ages 3 to 6, social understandings, their skills and strategies during conflict situations (Kazura and Flanders 2007). In this study, children were presented with hypothetical situations and then used puppet interviews to represent themselves and other children. With the use of the puppets, children could act out how the hypothetical conflict should be resolved (Kazura and Flanders, 2007:550). This enactive approach aimed to make the child more involved in the research process, providing them playful means of expressing themselves as opposed to interviews between the child and the researcher. The use of hypothetical conflicts in research with children seems to be a widely used approach in conflict research and particularly in research with children. It has been used to determine how children might resolve conflict but also to assess their understanding of effective resolution strategies (Noakes and

Rinaldi, 2006:883). Since using scenarios has proven to be a fruitful method for generating data about conflict strategies, we used this method as well, which allowed us more control about the data quality.

Conflict between peers in educational settings

There is an interest within childhood education research for examining conflicts in a learning environment as conflicts may cause disruption to the teaching and learning aims, and cause children to feel uncomfortable at school and in extension having a negative impact on their learning. For this reason, it is understandable that research conducted from a social developmental and child educational perspective may aim to understand conflicts between children and their peers, to support and influence school policies, curriculum, and educators with information on how to manage, minimise and prevent conflicts between children and their peers. One such example is a study conduct with children of preschool-age (3-5 years old) where 30 children were observed during freeplay focusing on examining the children's understanding of intentions within conflict (Pieng and Okamoto, 2020:597). This study aimed to examine how children's understanding of their peers' intentions could predict their conflict resolution strategy. This study coded the identified strategies into categories of being 'self-oriented' which focused solely on one party's needs and wants or 'other-oriented' in which both parties engaged in the conflict resolved the conflict considering the others' needs, wants and perspectives (Pieng and Okamoto, 2020:597).

Understanding children's conflict resolution strategies within a specific context such as play at school has been the focus of other studies too. One such study was conducted in a preschool context in Sweden, where the focus was to examine young children's play (ages 1-4) and conflicts as well as how adults respond to these conflicts (Holm Kvist, 2018). This study took on an ethnographic methodology and sociocultural perspective while focusing mainly on the phenomenon of crying which had resulted from the conflict. French et al. (2011) also conducted their research within the context of play, observing specifically Chinese and Canadian 7-year-old children as they played with a single attractive toy. This study showed that children when faced with a potential conflict over a limited resource, react and display behaviours which are culturally formed which shows evidence of cultural scripts impacting how conflicts are dealt with (2011:830). Also, this study suggests that children learn their conflict resolution strategies through adult instruction and observation early in life, and practice and transform these strategies into their own interactions with their peers (2011:840). Including an analysis of a cultural dimension adds to the complexity of conflict research. While French et al. (2011) includes a cultural analysis, Ross et al (2006:1730) examine the conflicts between siblings (ages 4-12 years old) noting that high levels of sibling conflict are associated with

poor peer relationships, academic difficulties, conduct problems and aggression. While the research on sibling conflict branches off into a narrower path of conflict research literature, it is noteworthy to understand that conflict resolution strategies may vary depending on who is involved in the conflict whether this be a sibling, a close friend, or a peer at school, as expectations within these relationships vary as may the degree of transgression acceptance. Ross et al. (2006) also notes that resolution strategies, focusing solely on negotiation strategies, differ depending on whether the child is an older or young sibling. For instance, older siblings were found to provide leadership by suggesting, justifying, and requesting assent within negotiations compared to younger siblings who were more likely to disagree and counter in negotiations. Other interesting concepts within conflict research which Ross et al. (2006) discuss are the concepts of constructive and destructive conflict where constructive conflict includes reasoning within conflicts, and resolutions of differing goals as well as enhances interpersonal processes and understanding. Destructive conflict, on the other hand, undermines interpersonal relationships, is hostile and leaves the conflict unresolved (2006:1730). Smith (2007) also having examined conflicts between siblings (ages 5-10 years old) emphasises the association between sibling conflicts management and peer relationships, noting that how siblings learn to deal with conflicts in terms of cooperation, comforting and general perspective-taking has an impact on how they will be able to manage peer conflicts constructively (2007:790).

While studying conflict within a school setting seems to engage research including children of various ages, the methods vary seemingly dependent on the chosen age groups. We can see for instance that play and observational, ethnographical studies of children engaged in freeplay and potential conflicts arising in these situations are often employed with younger children under the ages of 7. Whilst for older children, other methods are employed. Dhillon and Babu (2013) illustrate the latter, exploring children's perceptions (ages 6-10) of conflict with peers in the school setting. In this study, the 40 participating children were interviewed individually in familiar settings at their schools, and they discussed the nature of what a conflict and how these are handled at school (Dhillon and Babu, 2013:370). Interestingly, one of the research questions posed in this study was also to understand how children perceived the role of third parties such as adults within children's peer conflicts. The method chosen for this study was interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) which bears similarities to content analysis but accords the highest importance to the narrative portrayal as it captures the experiences and examines the meanings that these experiences hold for the narrator (2013:373). The results are similar to thematic analysis clustered by themes which are derived from interview transcript analysis. The conflict resolution strategies found in this study included apologizing, taking a diplomatic stand, submitting, ignoring the provocation, withdrawal from the situation, negotiation, agreeing to disagree and third-party intervention. As the data was presented the

strategies were not ranked by means of frequency of how often they were mentioned or not, instead the data instead showed what strategies emerged from the interviews. With regard to the third-party intervention, the researchers found that teachers would more likely be asked to intervene in cases of serious conflicts (2013:386) or when the child's own efforts to resolve the conflict had failed, a last resort perhaps.

Concluding thoughts

To conclude, our literature review has shown that research on conflict has been conducted with and about children in their peer cultures from several perspectives and through various methods. We have seen that ethnographic studies have often observed the play of younger children and as children age, the use of more verbal methods such as interviews has been used. The researchers have therefore adapted their methods, taking into account the age of children involved in the research and their capabilities. We have seen that a peer culture or relationships vary depending on their setting. In some cases this has been defined as the interactions between children within a family as siblings, or within friendships or peers at a school. The terminology is broad, and a fruitful study requires a setting or particular culture to be determined and described. With regard to actual conflicts, we see that this term also requires a setting or explanation as this concept may be rather abstract. Some studies have gone into detail to formulate a definition of how conflict should be understood whilst others have not defined conflict per se, but instead used hypothetical scenarios to construct a situation which can be interpreted as involving a conflict without predefining this. What we also have seen is the importance of understanding children's lives, including the component of conflict resolution as this has great bearing on the social lives of children and how they manage their relationships. Some research has gone further to link the capabilities of children to constructively resolve conflicts as a possible determinant of how well they will cope with relationships in their lives later on in life as well. In our study, we see the participants and their peer cultures and relations of worthy of study in their own right, without linking this to adulthood and the notion of a productive adult in society. We wanted to gain insight into how children consider conflicts and what actions and resolutions they perceive can be taken to resolve conflicts. Considering the previous studies conducted within conflict research we also wanted to adapt our methodology to our participants allowing them to engage with this topic in an age-appropriate way. In addition, considering the complexity and depth of what conflict may mean for each participant, we wanted to ensure a safe setting and discussion forum, hence the use of hypothetical and fictive scenarios.

Methodology

Data collection process

The school

This study took place at a small international school in an urban area in Sweden. As mentioned earlier, one of the researchers works as a teacher at this school and therefore we were able to gain access to this school. Many of the families have chosen this school for their children to attend due to the small class numbers and having English as the language of instruction. Families pay a tuition to have their children attend this school, compared to Swedish public schools that commonly have no tuition fees. There are several other qualities that differentiate this school from typical Swedish schools. This school has a school uniform in typical British style: a polo shirt, book bag and caps/beanies with the school logo. This aims to promote a sense of equality and belonging amongst peers. This school also has only 6 classes from Year 1 to Year 6/7 (the final grade is a mixed age class) each class with between 12-20 children. There is only one class in each grade level, compared to other international schools in the city that could have 2-3 different classes within each grade level. These qualities all contribute to a sense of community within this small school designed so that children feel recognised and appreciated by their peers.

The classroom environment

The study took place with the Year 2 classroom. This was a place of familiarity for the participants and important in ensuring they felt comfortable in their participation. The classroom was well decorated with artwork, posters and materials around the room. There was a display called *'Busy Bees'* where participants could sign up for a class job such as Whiteboard Monitor or Cloakroom Monitor. This suggested that participants actively participate in the care and upkeep of their environment. There was a small box called a *'Worry Box'* where participants could write anonymous notes of concern to their teacher when seeking support for various reasons. A small playroom called a 'snug' was attached to the classroom. The teacher explained that this was used for free play and social activities including role playing. A set of soft toys and puppets were available for the children to interact with. This made for an interesting link to Kazura and Flanders research on the use of toys and puppets to involve children with acting out hypothetical scenarios (2007:550). Another display was entitled *'Our Class Rules'* which was made up of statements handwritten by the participants such as 'We will be kind to one another'. The handwritten signs suggest that the participants were able to share their perspectives and opinions when deciding on the classroom rules. This aligned well with how the principal and teacher explained the child centred approach to schooling. The teacher had

expressed examples of children voting, student council meetings, children participating in planning of events as ways that children can demonstrate agency and show their voice within the school setting.

The curriculum

The teachers explained that a school wide curriculum called P.S.H.E. (Personal, Social Health Education) had been incorporated, in alignment with the British P.S.H.E. Association. This curriculum has three main themes, Health and Wellbeing, Relationships, Living in the Wider World (Jones, 2020: 467). An example of a lesson within Relationships could be "about ways of sharing feelings; a range of words to describe feelings" (Jones, 2020: 467). The teacher explained that hypothetical scenarios are often used as the basis for discussion during these lessons. The scenarios are drawn from storybooks, short films and educational material that is prompts discussion around feelings and emotions. This provided an insightful link to the literature on hypothetical scenarios presented by Troop-Gordon and Asher (2005) as well as Chung and Asher (1996). Other lessons could be around mental health such as moods and emotions, sharing, supporting others, and seeking support. The teacher explained that children have familiarity with vocabulary around communication and conflict resolution based on the weekly 45-minute lessons from the P.S.H.E curriculum.

The data collection methods

When discussing methods that would allow the participants to share their viewpoints and perspectives, the teacher suggested that mind maps and/or lists would be suitable ways to capture participants' voices. These are two writing skills that are introduced and practiced throughout the school year and would be age appropriate for the study. The teacher also explained how participants would enjoy and show more interest in sharing their knowledge when they can choose their own method. This was in line with a routine that they do for their Creative Homework task, a weekly independent activity where the children show their knowledge of a concept or topic in their own creative way.

The participants

This study took place specifically in the Year 2 class. The staff at the school explained that the class was made of 18 children with an equal number in gender. At the time of the study most of the participants were 8 years old, with two participants soon awaiting their 8th birthday. All the participants were confident English speakers, however for different reasons. Some participants had an English-speaking parent at home or had attended the nearby English day care during their early childhood. Other participants were new to Sweden but had attended English speaking schools abroad. Whilst there were participants who spoke English as a first language, there were none who had

English as their only spoken language. Many participants also spoke Swedish, having grown up in Sweden or having a Swedish speaking parent at home. Some students also spoke Indian languages including Telegu, Hindi and Marathi. Throughout the study small moments of 'code switching' was observed. It was common to see short interactions where participants would switch languages quickly. This allowed them to clarify their thinking, communicate clearly and efficiently or connect with a peer.

Planning and collaboration

There were several planning stages leading up to the data collection. Through researching age-appropriate activities as well as collaborating with the teachers at the school we were able to tailor our study to the specific group of participants. This was in line with MacDonald and Headlam's recommendations to encourage the sharing of perspectives (1986:48). After an initial meeting with the School Principal and Head Teacher, it was recommended that this study take place within the Year 2 classroom. The principal explained that this class had changed their teacher several times throughout the year already and therefore the participants were quite receptive to new adults coming into their classroom. He also explained that this was an age where most children could write and draw with increased confidence, compared to earlier schooling years where children would be reliant on oral communication. He elaborated to say that Year 2 was also the first year where children were given weekly homework tasks and therefore the children would be familiar with completing tasks independently. This aligned well with our intention for gathering data in an engaging way (Barley and Russell, 2019:225). When presenting the idea of mind maps and lists to the principal, he approved these methods and explained how lists and mind maps are often used within the Year 2 curriculum as strategies to communicate knowledge. We discussed how this visual method could provide an interesting and engaging experience for the participants whilst also fulfilling the research component. MacDonald and Headlam (1986:54) express great support for mind mapping as an open-ended method for representing information visually. Through collaborating with the principal, we were able to consider the participants involved and appropriateness of this technique.

A second meeting took place with the current class teacher who reiterated the ideas suggested by the principal. The class teacher elaborated on the participants' ability to share their knowledge by explaining how they currently receive a weekly Creative Homework task where they could create their own work piece to show their knowledge of a topic. It was helpful to have the mind mapping activity reinforced by the staff who work closely with the selected group. Our chosen activity and using visual methods and prompt such as the use of mind mapping, also aligned well with Barley and Russell's (2019:225) idea that visual methods are a tool for reflection, engagement, and representation.

After gaining approval of the structure of the discussion and activity with the staff at the school, we followed their advice to plan and incorporate a small pilot activity that would give us an insight into what kind of output we may find with the participants. This was suggested by the classroom teacher who explained that using a pilot activity prior to the data collecting would help us as researchers gain familiarity with the kinds of samples that the participants could produce. We were advised to plan the upcoming Creative Homework task, following in the same age-appropriate wording as previous weeks. This pilot activity allowed us to gain an insight into the participants' ability to articulate themselves and allowed us to gauge what potential results we may gather from the study. This activity was a valuable contribution to our participant observation. As Dell Clark (2010:47) explains, quality fieldwork is persistent and vigilant and even the simplest routines or events show insight. This activity allowed us to foresee and adapt our questioning and prompting for the eventual data collection. It enabled us to consider the wide extent of understanding that could be grasped from the participants and how also to assess their understanding of effective resolution strategies (Noakes and Rinaldi, 2006:883). There are two examples of the pilot activity in Figure 1, where the creative prompts responded to the question *What can you teach others about wellness?*

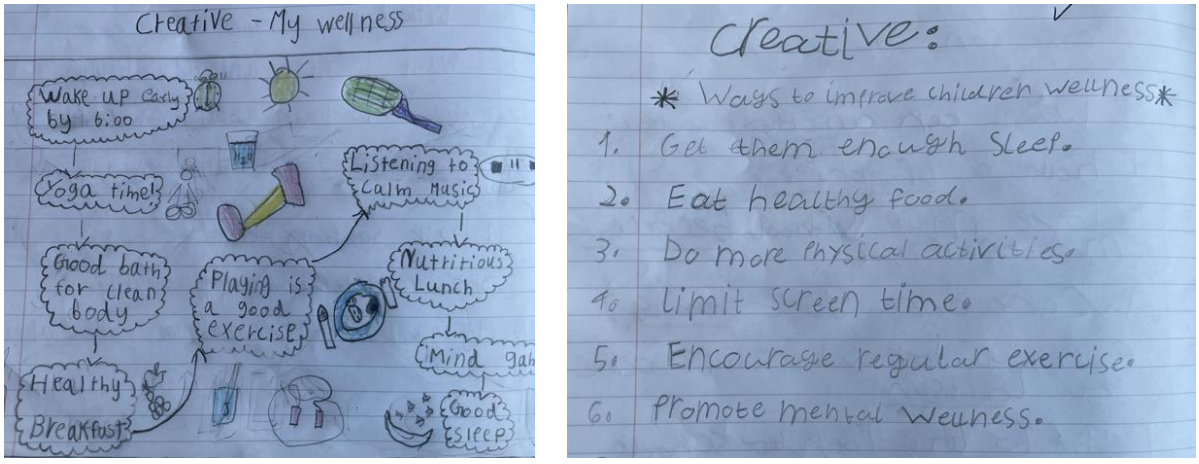

Figure 1 Creative prompt from pilot activity

Introduction and informational letter

Prior to the study taking place, the class was visited by one of the researchers, and following an introduction the class was given a brief explanation of the study. The language for this presentation was adjusted to be age appropriate for the participants and increase their understanding and comprehension of the study. The children were given the opportunity to ask questions about the researcher, studies at university, the topic chosen and why it was considered important. The introduction was intended to create a sense of equality as the researcher was able to be introduced to the children as both a student and a learner, with the participants being the experts and teachers in

this topic. Emphasis was put on the importance and value that children had within this study, in alignment with Hammersley's views on child agency (2016:122). At dismissal on the same day, families were provided with copies of an informational letter (Appendix 1) and consent forms for their child's participation in the study (Appendix 2). The researcher was at this point also available to talk to any families if they had questions about the research. In addition, the informational letter was also sent to families through the online school platform, as well as through the class Twitter account. Families were encouraged to reach out with any questions or comments prior to the data collection activity taking place.

The data collection activity

On the day of the data collection, the researcher who had previously met with the class was present during the data collection activity. The researcher visited the classroom during lesson time and observed the class teacher conduct the planned data collection activity with the participants. The discussion questions and activity were planned by us, the researchers, however having another adult conduct allowed for opportunity to observe and take field notes of the experience. This was an advantage for us and is supported by MacDonald and Headlam's (1986:46) ideas of having the note taker sit in on discussions rather than facilitate them. By having the researcher present in the classroom setting, we intended to meet children in their own environment and natural domain, rather than remove to them from this (Dell Clark, 2010: 41). We also chose to conduct the data collection within a classroom environment due to the idea that the classroom culture is a safe place for children not only to engage in learning but also to have opportunities to articulate, grow, and enact their own cultures (Jones, 2020: 479). The teacher had collaborated with the researchers and was guided on how to structure the discussion and pose questions that allow participants to share their perspectives. The discussion served as a window into children's perspectives and their relations both amongst themselves as well as with adults (Dell Clark, 2010: 43). We collaborated with the teacher and incorporated routines such as sitting in a circle that promote communication and a sense of openness for the participants to contribute their viewpoints comfortably. The teacher began by recapping how the P.S.H.E. lessons usually run. The teacher reminded the participants of previous lessons where a story was read and discussed, or a puppet show was acted out to express a scenario. This supported participants with feeling comfortable with the environment and style of activity that would take place. From here, the teacher transitioned into discussions around conflict resolution. Questions that the teacher used to prompt the discussions with the participants included:

1. What do you think is a positive way to solve a conflict?
2. What do you think is a negative way to solve a conflict?
3. Is a grown up involved in solving conflicts? If so, how?

The children raised their hands to contribute ideas and perspectives and the discussion, in line with the conduct rules of the classroom setting. The researcher noted that participants engaged more with the first and second questions. For example, when their name was called, children would list a strategy using short sentences such as 'You can say sorry' or 'You can let them go first'. When in agreement with the speaker, other children would show a hand signal where the thumb and pinkie finger were pointed, and the wrist was shaken lightly. The teacher explained that this was a behaviour that children were taught in the classroom to show agreement without interrupting others. Some children chose not to speak individually however showed engagement through this hand signal. The strategies shared by individual children ranged from one, up to three strategies. The overall discussion took 12 minutes. During the planning phase the teacher had explained that small discussions between 10-15 minutes were used to start the lesson that usually took place during this timeslot, for the subject called P.S.H.E. (Personal, Social Health Education). Using this timeslot and following the structure of the usual lesson was intended to support the participants with keeping the daily routine familiar as they did not experience disruptions to regular lessons.

The teacher then redirected the participants to the whiteboard, where the Google Slides were shown that would structure the data collection. There is a copy of the slides that were used to explain the activity to the children in Appendix 3. Our intention here was to use forms of communicating and topics that would be in harmony with daily routines for the participants (Dell Clark, 2010: 39). When explaining the activity, the teacher showed the participants samples of their own prior lists and mind maps which could be used as templates to prompt the children. This supported the participants with feeling a sense of familiarity to their usual class activities and helped them decide which method they will use without influencing the ideas, perspectives, or opinions. The teacher explained that the outcome of this activity would be that the participants could 'teach' adults about both positive and negative ways that children solve conflicts. The instructions lasted 5 minutes with opportunity for questions from the participants. One participant asked if they could take their work home at the end of the project, which was allowed. Another participant asked how long the activity would last and it was explained that it would take up to 30 minutes. The times on the clock were acknowledged as the teacher pointed out that it was currently 14:30 and that the end of the school day would be 15:00. Another participant asked if they could decorate their work, which was allowed. All participants showed an understanding of the task as they moved to their tables, selecting their stationery and paper for the task.

Throughout this data collection session as well as in the informational letter, introduction and instructions for the activity, participants were reminded that they were the experts on this topic. Terms such as 'opinions' 'experiences' 'knowledge' and 'expert' were used to emphasize the agency that children have within childhood studies (Hammersley, 2016:119). Before they began their task, this was reiterated again so that the participants were empowered with their knowledge and encouraged to communicate their perspectives. They could choose to design a mind map, write a list, or categorise friendship behaviours as positive or negative. By using these creative methods for data collection, we provided opportunity for diverse ways for the children to share their perspectives (MacDonald and Headlam, 1986:53). Mind mapping especially can increase the likelihood that children may find their participation more interesting and interactive whilst also drawing out rich qualitative data (MacDonald and Headlam, 1986:54). We also operated under the idea that children who may struggle to articulate themselves verbally or in writing might find themselves better able to communicate through drawings and creating visual media (Spyrou, 2011: 153). Along with the mind maps the participating researcher took notes of direct observation paying close attention to the discussions between participants whilst they completed their task as well as any statements children shared with the researcher. The participants appeared happy and engaged with the task. There were a variety of choices made including mind maps, lists, tables, and drawings. The participants were eager to elaborate verbally when prompted. Taking on an ethnographic approach, the researcher prompted participants to elaborate on their ideas by asking open ended questions such as 'Can you tell me more about that?' or 'What does that look like to you?'. This was inspired by Barley and Russell's (2019:227-228) ethnographic process when using participatory visual methods for social emotional themed studies. Through these informal discussions, or 'chats', the participants could answer in their own manner, without the formalities of a structured interview. It allowed the participants opportunity to share the hypothetical scenarios that they felt best depict conflict. Some children verbalised sharing toys or playground equipment as a source of conflict whilst others chose to depict a scenario of verbal conflict such as yelling or shouting. As discussed in the literature review, the focus of these informal chats was to involve the child in the research process, providing them playful means of expressing themselves as opposed to interviews between the child and the researcher. The theme from these informal discussions were written on post it notes and added to the visual data materials created by each respective participant.

Five minutes prior to the activity ending, the teacher put on an end of day clean up song. This signalled to the children participating that the activity had concluded. The children tidied their tables, returning stationary to respective cupboards and drawers. They returned to the carpet and instead of sitting in a circle as they had done in the beginning of the session, they sat in their 'carpet spots', a

designated place for each person on the carpet. The teacher thanked the participants for their contributions and concluded the session by resuming the end of day routines for the classroom. The participating researcher collected the visual data materials that had been produced and proceeded to organise the direct observation notes.

Data analysis process

Having collected the visual data materials produced in the activity with the children, pseudonyms were applied to each visual data material. These were then uploaded to a secure online folder and shared with the second researcher, who had not participated in the data collection activity as well as the thesis supervisor. Both researchers reviewed and conducted an independent analysis on the visual data materials and then presented their analysis to each other for discussion and alignment on identified themes, subthemes, and categorisation of the visual data material. A thematic analysis was used to identify trends and patterns of reoccurring texts within the data collected as suggested by Clark et al (2021:538).

As part of the data collection process, the participating researcher had spoken with those children who had wished to provide further explanation of their visual data materials which in many cases included both written statements and illustrations. The researcher took notes of these conversations on post-its and added these to the respective data material. The explanations provided were also reviewed as part of the familiarisation step and helped to provide more context on what a child had meant or wished to focus on in their process of creating their visual data materials in response to the questions posed during the activity. This was inspired by Barley and Russell (2019:227) who had involved participants in the analysis and interpretation process with the aim of reducing power differentials between the children and the researcher. Throughout the discussion and activity, the researcher also collected data through direct observations, taking notes of the class setting and evidence of peer relations. The idea was that the field notes would be analysed alongside the participants' creative tasks, as suggested by Barley and Russell (2019:239).

Ethical considerations

This study focuses on children’s perceptions of conflict resolution in general and does not intend to focus on specific personal experiences of conflict in peer groups. This is important to highlight as a study examining the latter may have taken on a different methodological approach and entail additional ethical considerations to approach this more sensitive topic. The methodology chosen and how the activity is facilitated for this study, helps us to lean away from the personal experiences of

children as to avoid any sensitive personal disclosures of information and rather to nudge the participating children towards reflections on friendship and conflict resolution in general.

Our research was reviewed to ensure its integrity and quality. Collaboration with our thesis supervisor, the Ethical Vetting Board at Linköping University, the principal, teacher, families, and participants prior to the data collection ensured that there were ongoing discussions around how we could best respect the participants and the outcomes for the study (Farrell, 2005:28). Discussions with the participants themselves were also held to ensure that the research activities could be designed to engage and empower participants with their voices and contributions, rather than have their participation be simply tokenism (Dell Clark, 2010: 34). When meeting with the principal, teacher, and participants, we shared our intention to regard the participants as consultants, or experts, as recommended by Dell Clark (2010: 34). Our dialogue around children maintained a view of children as strong, resourceful, and able to collaborate with adults, giving them agency and integrity within this project (Farrell, 2005:30).

Throughout the research project we continually reflected on the research aims and motivations. This was a crucial ethical consideration to ensure that the research was free of any conflicts of interest or partiality, this was of particular importance as one of the researchers had access to the school where the study took place as she works there as a teacher. A decision was taken to not have the researcher conduct the study with her own students, and instead the study was conducted with a different group of children and the activity was facilitated by their regular class teacher. Using the class teacher as a facilitator of the data collection activity meant there was an emphasis on the outcomes of the session. This was important for all involved and was inspired by MacDonald and Headlam (1986:49). The clear objectives ensured that the data collection could contribute to the overall research and allowed the participants to fully grasp their role. Our motivation here was seeing children as comprehensible, when approaching them in child-relevant ways (Dell Clark, 2010: 4). The ongoing discussions around ethics and best practice in research encouraged us to design a project that would amplify children's voices and recognize each child as full, agentic human beings (Dell Clark, 2010: 27). In continued evaluation of our personal aims and motivations we were able to meet the usefulness requirement of our research plan.

Clear communication about the research aims, methods, and what the participation entails was another important ethical consideration. Having multiple meetings with the staff members at the school, the introduction and presentation to the participants as well as the informational letter to families ensured that all those involved had opportunity to consider the research project from different perspectives. We created time and space for questioning and discussion between these groups where

they could share both individual and collective perspectives. Having an introduction and presentation for the participants themselves was important, especially as children tend to hold secondary status in giving consent (Dell Clark, 2010: 27). Our intention here was to grant authority and power towards the children as they are given clear communication in an age-appropriate manner (Dell Clark, 2010: 19).

Expanding on the notion of consent requirements, throughout the research project we reflected on the importance of ongoing consent and how to ensure best practice with this. Farrell (2005:31) posed an insightful question that was the basis for reflection, *'Is the research explained clearly enough so that anyone asked to take part can make an informed decision about whether they want to consent or refuse?'* Formal discussions around consent with the gatekeepers, namely the principal and teachers as well as the consent forms signed by the guardians granted us access to commence this project, however our research was motivated by the sociocultural engagement of children and using their direct voices was a priority, especially as adult proxies can be biased or lack meaning (Dell Clark, 2010: 6). Therefore, ongoing consent expressed from the participants themselves was crucial in our practice. In considering notions of consent, we recognized the influence of power relations and the problematic nature of a classroom setting where adults exert authority over children (Dell Clark, 2010: 18). It was important that the children's participation in this project was voluntary and free from any cohesion (MacDonald and Headlam, 1986:59). We recognized that not all children will share the motivation or take interest in the project and were open to participants withdrawing at any point in the project, regardless of reason or logic (Dell Clark, 2010: 37). Opportunities were granted at various points, such as during the introduction presentation, and prior to the data collection where the participants were offered an alternative activity. Age-appropriate language was used to explain how their participation was voluntary and options to terminate participation in the project if one felt it necessary. It was a priority to listen and take seriously both what the participants say as well as any nonverbal expressions that could indicate a change of mind in their role in the study. Whilst challenging, considering the ethics of consent from all groups was enlightening and allowed us to develop our field work (Dell Clark, 2010: 48).

A specific consideration regarding ethics and consent in relation to the use of visual data materials, such as those created by the children participating in our study, is highlighted by Rose (2016:363) who notes that gaining consent is not solely about the data collection stage of research but is also important in the later stages of the research project. Examples of this include ensuring that consent has been sought for the reproduction of the visual materials if these are published in a research paper.

Confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity were also important themes for ethical considerations. We considered Dell Clark's (2010: 32) idea about children's pride in their contributions and desire for public acknowledgment. Contrastingly, we were open to participants who prefer to keep their contributions private (Dell Clark, 2010: 33). This research study involved collecting physical samples of children's work as well as direct observations of any explanations that the children would share verbally. It was therefore important, as MacDonald and Headlam (1986:42) point out, to recognize the importance of using quotes properly and considering confidentiality (MacDonald and Headlam, 1986:42). When it came to the mind maps or other drawn visual materials created, the participants were offered the opportunity to take their original work home, after it was photocopied for the data analysis. They were also informed that they could continue to work on their mind map and visual materials, adding names and personal information after they had taken it home as it would no longer be a requirement to maintain confidentiality. Through this strategy, we were able to adapt for various children's interests as well as maintain privacy in a well thought out and appropriate way (Dell Clark, 2010: 25). Throughout the project, the participants were able to view the direct observation and field notes taken by the researcher. It was important for us to consider the ethics of sharing information and allowing children to feel empowered as informants, and better understood on their own terms (Dell Clark, 2010: 3). MacDonald and Headlam (1986:51) discuss how observations rely heavily on the assumptions and prior experiences of the adult observer so it was important for us to allow opportunity for children to reconsider or reinforce their perspectives. We acknowledge how without intending to, researchers can act as gatekeepers to children's voices (Spyrou, 2011: 154).

Potential power relations in research are worthy of ongoing consideration. Throughout the project we reflected on the adult-child power structure and planned for any problems that could arise, as suggested by Dell Clark (2010: 48). Having the class teacher conduct the activity was one method in considering the relationship between researcher and researched (Dell Clark, 2010: 19). It also suited the environment for the participants and was intended to give a sense of familiarity and reduce anxiety (MacDonald and Headlam, 1986:44). We also recognized that an attempt to simply blend in with the children does face criticisms (Spyrou, 2011: 154). Power relations mediates all research and our intention as the participant-observer was to be adaptable, reflexive, tolerant of ambiguity, and able to sustain unrelenting effort, as recommended by Dell Clark (2010: 40). the role as observer to remain focused on asking relevant questions (MacDonald and Headlam, 1986:45). It is worth highlighting that we were not motivated by personal stories of children's social experiences and were sensitive and adaptable to any dialogue that the participants might share on this.

Analysis

Overview of the data collected

Each participating child in our study created a visual material which we could include into our research. In total, twelve children participated in our study and as shown in Appendix 4 we were able to collect an output from each child. As shown in our methodology, to be able to identify common themes and subthemes from our thematic analysis, we first needed to get familiarised with our data.

Having collected and examined each visual material created we were quickly able to conclude that each participant had contributed to our study, all participants had handed in their contribution. This is something we had hoped for given that we had explained the purpose of our research and that the visual materials that had been produced would eventually be handed over to the researchers. However, given that all participation in our research was of course voluntary, we could only hope that the participants would in fact want to contribute their work to our study and therefore not want to take home their work, which otherwise might be their expectation when creating drawings or work produced at school. All visual materials included the participants contribution in response to the questions posed during the activity. To reiterate, those questions were:

1. What do you think is a positive way to solve a conflict?
2. What do you think is a negative way to solve a conflict?
3. Is a grown up involved in solving conflicts? If so, how?

	Positive	Positive & Negative	Negative
Mind-maps (6 total)	3	2	1
Lists (6 total)	0	6	0

Table 1 Overview of data collected

As summarised in Table 1, three children chose to focus their responses solely on the positive ways to resolve conflict, whereas one child chose to highlight only negative ways with the remaining eight children including both positive and negative examples in their responses. It was the preference of most of the participants to respond to both positive and negative conflict resolution strategies and only one participant refrained from focusing on the positive strategies, only responding to the second question of negative strategies.

In terms of what the visual materials consisted of and how the responses to the questions were presented, we can conclude that responses were represented in two ways. The first being what we can view as the mind-mapping approach, where the main concept was written in the centre and ideas relating to the central concept were evenly placed around the centre creating a circle formation. Lines

were then drawn to connect the central concept to the adjoining ideas, showing the relational status between each idea and the central concept. The second means of visually representing the responses and ideas to our questions came in the form of list where the so called good and bad ways were described in bullets under each heading. The good ways were all placed on the left-hand side of the paper and the bad ways of resolving conflict were always listed on the right-hand side of the paper. The similarities in the structures provided by the participants confirmed that this type of visual representation of thoughts had been used as part of their curriculum and that the participants were comfortable sharing their ideas in these ways. It was interesting to see that in these lists, the participants seemed to aim at having equal amounts of ideas represented on both sides.

Whilst our research sample is limited to the number of participants, we can still draw some conclusions based on the visual materials produced for our activity. We can for instance see that those who chose to use the list approach provided responses to both positive and negative conflict resolution strategies. The mind-map approach seems to have been more limiting in terms of responding to both questions identifying positive and negative strategies. Perhaps this has to do with the nature of the mind-map, that it often focuses on one central concept. Creating two mind-maps on a single piece of paper may not be the usual way of creating mind-maps, as the participants were accustomed to. We should note that the participants were not limited in how many visual materials they could produce, there were no limiting instructions given to the participants except for the time limit for the full activity, yet they only chose to create one piece of work each. While our population is limited it would be interesting to see how a larger population would choose to include or exclude questions based on the visual representation method chosen.

When it comes to the written inputs included in the lists and the mind maps these take on different formats. We found examples of the written inputs being in the form of a dialogue to narrate an illustrated scenario, see Appendix 4 for the work by George, Monique, Laksmi and Samuel. We also see the written inputs as descriptions of strategies which are accompanied by illustrations, see Appendix 4 for the work by Ali, Danielle and Yasmin. Regarding the illustrations, these seem to either be of a symbolic nature (e.g., hearts, rainbows) or direct representations of the written inputs. In both cases, we interpret the illustrations as reinforcing the written inputs and adding to the storytelling component of what the participant is displaying through their text. This may be by reinforcing a sentiment, as with the display of the hearts to presumably symbolise positivity, happiness, love, peace etc. or the direct representations where the illustrations provide a visual restatement of the written inputs.

Overview of the themes and subthemes

The results of this study highlight three main themes that children perceive as conflict resolution strategies. Within each theme, subthemes were identified and named taking inspiration from Chung and Asher (1996) as well as Troop-Gordon and Asher (2005).

Theme	Categorisation	Subtheme	Examples showing written inputs from participants
Verbal strategies	**Positive**	Apologising	"Say sorry if you did something" "Say sorry when they are sad"
		Communication	"Tell someone how you feel" "You could have my toy"
		Pro-social behaviours	"Offer to help someone" "Say thank you and please"
	Negative	Hostile expressions	"Screaming" "Shouting" "You are not my friend" 'Saying rude words"
		Inaction	"Not saying sorry" "Not saying please"
		Third party intervention	"I am going to say to the teacher"
Non-verbal strategies	**Positive**	Pro-social behaviours	"Give someone a gift" "Do the right thing"
		Compromising	" A timer" "Taking turns"
	Negative	Hostile expressions	"Snatching" "Fighting "
		Inaction	"Not sharing things" "Don't make a big fuss"
Ambiguous strategies	**Negative**	Hostile expressions	"Being rude" "Hurting people's feelings"
		Inaction	"Not helping someone"

Table 2 Overview of themes and subthemes

The strategies identified were clustered as mainly verbal or non-verbal strategies whilst in a few cases where the data did seem to directly match as verbal or non-verbal, we clustered these strategies as ambiguous. These strategies are not assumed by the children to be exclusively positive or negative. It is instead evident that these strategies can be perceived as both positive and negative interchangeably.

Communication as a verbal strategy, for example can be perceived as both as positive means to solve a conflict (‘*Tell someone how you feel’*) as well be seen in a different context as hostile expressions and thus, a negative strategy for conflict resolution (*‘Hurting people's feelings’*). Inaction as a non-verbal strategy can be seen as both positive (*‘Don’t make a big fuss’*) and negative (*‘Not sharing things’*).

A wide range of data was collected under the first theme of verbal strategies as a means of conflict resolution. To answer the first research question, verbal conflict resolution strategies were further thematically identified as positive such as apologising, communicating feelings and demonstrating pro-social behaviours such as manners and offering help to others. Verbal conflict resolution strategies could also be further thematically identified as being negative, such as demonstrating hostile expressions, third party intervention by involving an adult or inaction, such as not apologising when doing wrong by a peer or showing manners towards others. These strategies address the second research question by providing insight into negative verbal strategies. Through the emergent theme of pro-social behaviours, children perceived the responsibility to resolve conflicts as being within their own peer group. In this sense, participants recognise the role of an adult as being a last resort, rather than a primary strategy. The observing researcher also noted that the participant discussions revolved around children’s peer cultures and did not necessarily include adults. There was one reference to involving adults when resolving conflicts and this by the participant notes as a negative strategy. ‘*I’m going to say to the teacher*’ could be identified as a threat rather than be seen as a positive strategy when navigating conflicts. This data responds to the third research question regarding adult interventions.

A second theme that arose from this study surrounded non-verbal approaches to conflict resolution. In addressing the first research question, these strategies could be further thematically identified as positive, such as demonstrating pro-social behaviours or compromising. Non-verbal strategies could also reflect a subtheme of being inherently negative, such as the use of hostile expressions. These negative non-verbal strategies address the second research question. The children in this study seem to express an idea around responsibility towards participating in their peer cultures. This could be seen with pro-social behaviours such as *‘Do the right thing’* and compromising, ‘*Taking turns*’ and ‘*Using a timer*’. Again, there was insufficient data to comment on the role of adult in navigating conflicts, however the lack of recognition could suggest that participants place the responsibility on themselves. This data speaks to the third research question, again reinforcing the role of adults as being secondary in conflict resolution strategies.

The third theme that was identified through data analysis involved ambiguous strategies. This theme contained data which could be understood as both verbal and non-verbal, hence ambiguous. These strategies provided were exclusively negative and therefore spoke to the second research question. Children identified different forms of hostile expressions to be primarily negative. There was also an acknowledgement of inaction, or 'not helping someone' which could be explained as avoidance.

Verbal strategies

Almost half of the inputs provided could be classified as verbal strategies. These were understood to verbal strategies as indicated by the written statements which explicitly used verbs such as 'saying', 'telling', 'communicating', or 'talking'. Some of the written statements we interpreted as verbal based on the implied required verbal communication that would likely have to take place for the written statement to be fulfilled. An example of this is written inputs given within the subtheme of pro-social behaviour which state an 'offer to help other people' or 'offer to help someone'. Children perceive the responsibility of pro-social behaviour to be on themselves rather than on an adult. While the offer may include non-verbal actions, the offer to help has been interpreted to be a verbal action. In the next section more details will be provided on the positive verbal strategies we identified namely the apologising strategy, the communication strategy, and the pro-social strategy.

Positive verbal strategies

Apologising

Within this subtheme examples were found to be both apologies if for example one party within the conflict has done something to upset the other party but was also perceived to be a conflict remedy. The latter suggest that merely saying sorry may not truly show evidence of remorse but was perceived to be the right thing to do when a conflict arose. The example provided by Laksmi, Figure 2, shows this use of apologising to resolve conflict. Laksmi specifically states that a positive way to resolve a conflict is to 'say sorry when they are sad'.

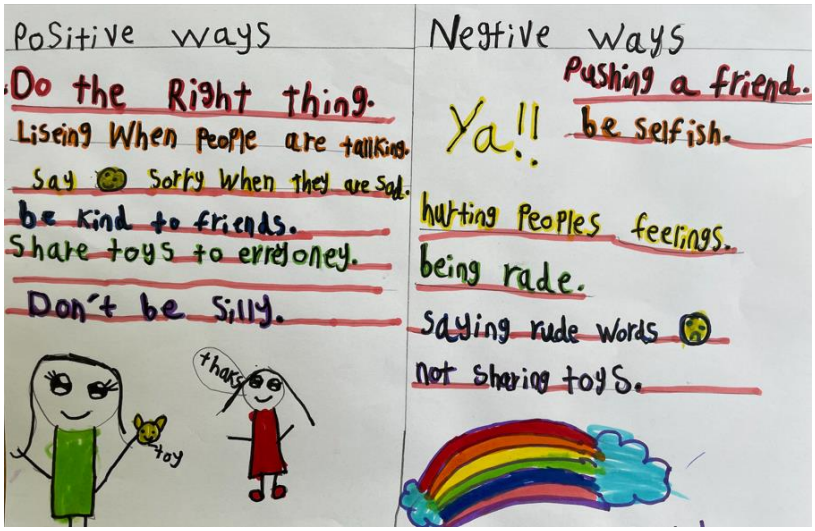

Figure 2 Laksmi, positive and negative strategies

Communication

Within this subtheme, participants listed specific examples of dialogue which indicates communication between two parties was taking place such as:

George, Figure 3, first example:

- "You could have my toy"
- "Thank you so much"

George, Figure 3, second example:

- "You could join our game"
- "Yes!"
- "Thank you"

Others listed the actions of communicating such as 'talking' or focused the communication on expressing feelings and telling someone how you feel as a means of resolving a conflict in a positive way. Based on the dialogue presented by George (Figure 3) as well as the drawings illustrating child interactions as shown by Laksmi (Figure 2) there is a strong indication that the communication the participants are referring takes place amongst children and their peers.

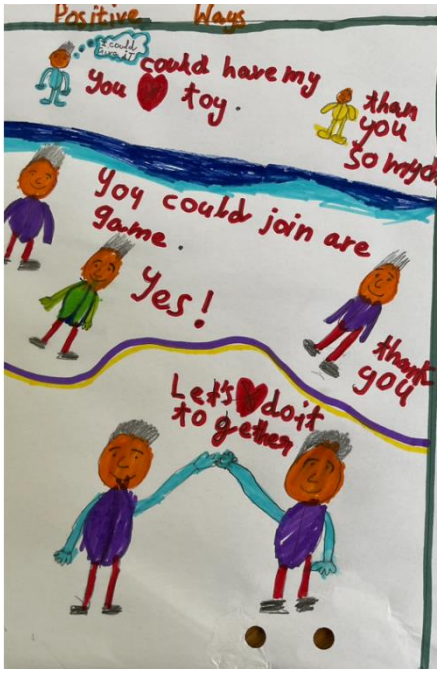

Figure 3 George, positive strategies

Pro-social behaviours

Verbal pro-social behaviours were found to all have a component of being helpful or polite. Written statements were clustered as pro-social as they included not only the perspective of one party but also considered a hypothetical counterparty. George, Figure 3, illustrates two characters holding hands or possibly giving each other a high-five whilst the written input is "Let's do it together", this clearly demonstrates the pro-social behaviour having a positive outcome as the characters are smiling and there is a heart embedded in the written input. Other participants listed using polite language such as saying, 'thank you' and 'please' or offering to help someone. Jessica, Figure 6, includes specific communication and pro-social behaviours in her positive ways of resolving a conflict. In the mind-map, Jessica lists saying sorry if you have done something, or telling someone how you feel as well as offering gifts and using polite language. Giving a gift is further illustrated as a drawing of two characters with a packaged gift between them.

This subtheme can be considered a win-win strategy, where the strategy offers benefits to both parties without compromising the needs of any one party in the conflict resolution. All the examples provided by the participants were listed as positive strategies by the participants.

Negative verbal strategies

Hostile expressions

This subtheme emerged having identified written statements which explicitly mentioned the use of words, language, or expressions thereof which had a negative connotation. An example of this is

shown in Figure 4 where participant Thomas has drawn figures who are engaged in fighting as shown in the illustration on the left side (classified as non-verbal hostile) or saying bad words, illustrated on the right side and classified as verbal hostile, as indicated by the written explanations provided.

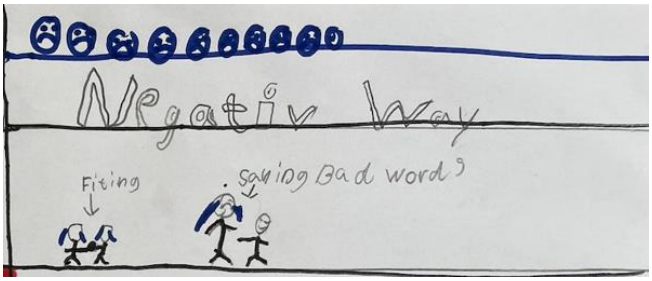

Figure 4 Thomas, negative ways to resolve conflict

The subtheme's name 'hostile expressions' was chosen as to cover not only specific language such as saying bad words, but to also include actions which express hostility or aggression. Examples of this are shouting and screaming as shown in Danielle's list, Figure 5, of bad ways to resolve a conflict.

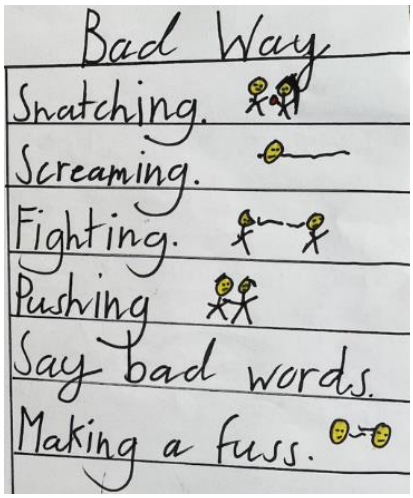

Figure 5 Danielle, negative ways to resolve conflict

Inaction

The inaction subtheme included statements where the strategy was expressed as a negation, or as a non-action, a passivity of sorts. Naming this subtheme was rather challenging as we wished to express the action of being inactive and merely naming and describing this subtheme as passive might remove the agency from the action of refraining from action. For example, *not* saying please, or *not* saying sorry were listed as examples which were categorised as verbal inaction strategies. The inaction is derived from the expectation of what one may seek to display to resolve a conflict in a good way. With the inaction, this is perceived as a bad way to resolve a conflict. A clear example of this is Jessica's negative ways of resolving conflict, Figure 6. As displayed in Jessica's written text and

drawing, “not helping someone”. “don’t say negative words” or” not saying please” are examples of the inaction examples of this subtheme.

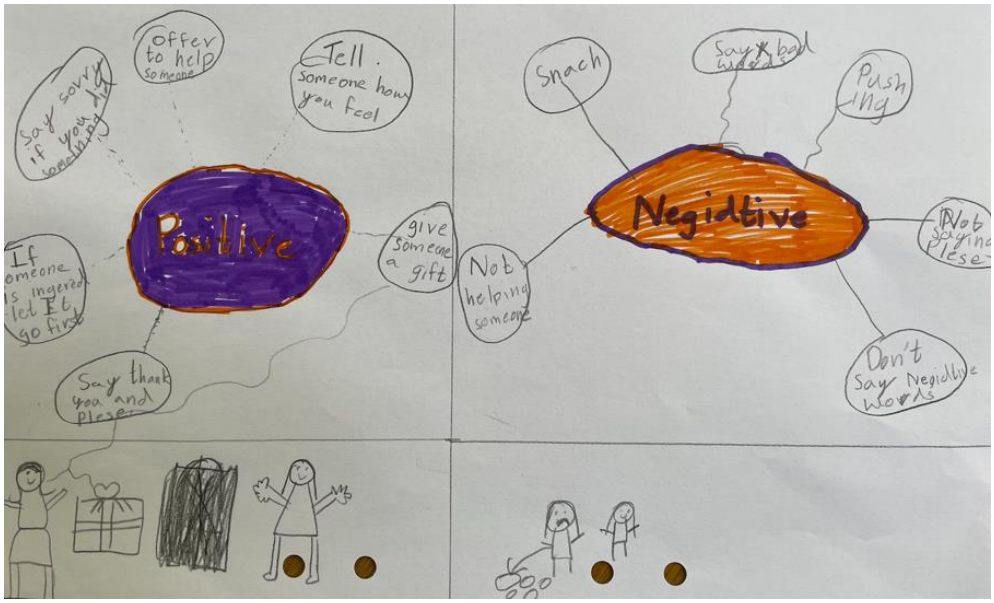

Figure 6 Jessica, positive and negative strategies

Third party intervention

This subtheme, named third party intervention was identified and illustrated by George, see Figure 7. George has drawn two characters, one smiling and one frowning, and given the following written statement: “You are a buteks (i.e., buttock).” and “I am going to say to the teacher”. The significant part of this dialogue with reference to this subtheme, is the statement which seeks adult intervention in the form of a teacher as a means of resolving the conflict. This is listed as a negative way of resolving the conflict in the example given by George. The negative resolution strategy is emphasised by drawings of broken and crossed out hearts. George is also the only participant who has referenced any adult intervention. It is noteworthy that only one participant referenced adult intervention as part of a resolution strategy.

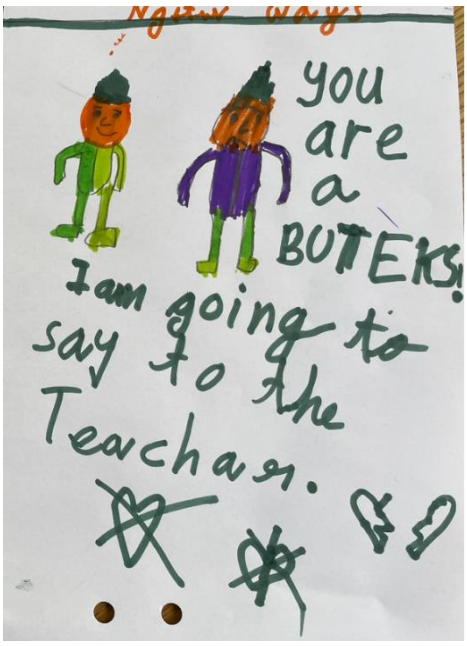

Figure 7 George, negative strategies

Non-verbal strategies

The second theme captures the actions, or lack thereof, which we understood to be non-verbal.. Rather than viewing these as physical expressions as the opposite of verbal expressions, the term 'non-verbal' was chosen as it was found to be more encompassing capturing both expressions which are physical in nature such as movements of 'snatching' but also could include expressions which could be understood as wider such as the case for 'doing the right thing' or 'smiling'. This example can be understood to have a physical action related to them but may also be a non-verbal expression which communicates a sentiment or create a positive atmosphere.

Pro-social behaviours

Within this subtheme the act of sharing, helping, or giving was identified as actions which were perceived as positive ways of resolving a conflict. The act of sharing was explicitly listed by the participants with examples given such as 'sharing things', 'sharing toys', or 'share toys to everyone'. In terms of helping or offering assistance, the following examples were noted: 'Help people who are hurt', 'Helping people in fights' or 'Hold the door'.

The pro-social behaviours subtheme also included behaviours such as being kind to friends, doing the right thing or smiling. Lily displays through her illustration several positive pro-social strategies, Figure 8. Lily has also provided a drawing to accompany her written inputs. Lily has drawn the earth seen from a far as well as two large hearts, all coloured in. Her mind-map inner circle also includes small illustrations which both emphasise and illustrate the written input.

Figure 8 Lily, positive resolution strategies

Compromising

The cluster of actions categorised within this strategy all include actions which indicate a compromise of an objective or an adjustment to behaviours to resolve or prevent any perceived conflict. The participants suggested for example ‘taking turns’ or ‘waiting in line’ or ‘listening when people are talking’. These can be understood as self-adjustment actions. William, Figure 9, suggested compromising resolutions (e.g. making up a new game, taking turns) and pro-social behaviours (e.g. sharing things) as part of his response to positive ways of resolving conflict. In looking at the illustrations provided by William, he has chosen to illustrate both the positive and negative statements with a scenario played out between two characters. As both the images depicted on the positive and the negative side very much resemble each other, one may speculate this to be the same characters and events taking place but from a positive and a negative perspective. The placement of the characters and the rainbow strongly resemble each other. One the positive side, the two characters seem to be playing with an object, perhaps a ball which is being tossed in the air between the characters. They are smiling with their arms raised upwards, displaying joy. There is a large colourful rainbow above their heads. The illustrated and colourful rainbow is interestingly placed on both the positive and negative side rather than just on the positive side as one may be inclined to associate the rainbow with positivity and joy. It is also noteworthy that Laksmi, Figure 12, has also elected to draw a rainbow on the negative side of her conflict resolution strategies.

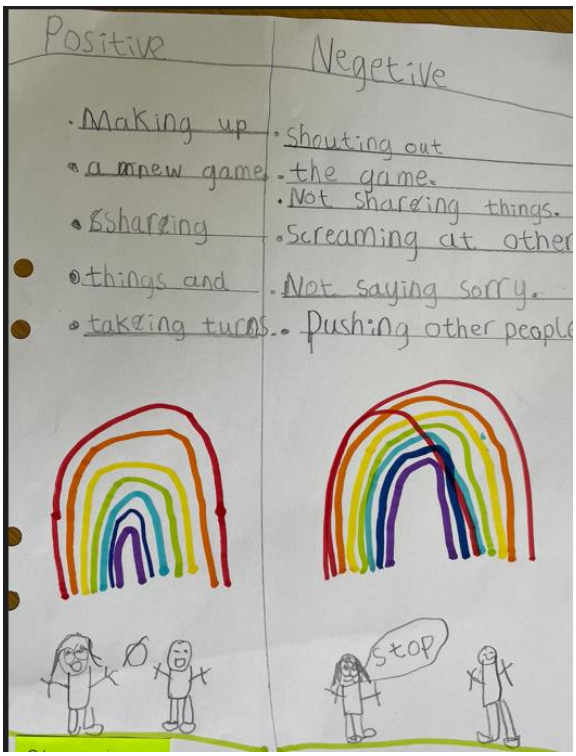

Figure 9 William, positive and negative resolution strategies

Hostile expressions

Hostile expressions were grouped together as these indicated an action such as pushing, hitting, breaking toys, or fighting. It can however be argued that fighting can take many forms as both verbal and non-verbal or that the verbal and non-verbal happen together. The accompanying illustrations in these cases provided support in interpreting what type of fight was being addressed (verbal or non-verbal) such as in the case for Thomas' illustration and written input (see Figure 4). Here Thomas has drawn two characters who are engaged in a physical fight with their arms and hands raised as to indicate a fist fight.

Yasmin (Figure 10) also uses illustrations as an extension of the narrative input provided. Here the shouting is clearly verbal and illustrated further by the distance between the two characters. With the non-verbal, in this case physical hostile expressions, Yasmin has noted 'pushing', 'breaking toys' and 'snatching' as negative strategies in conflict resolution. With the illustrations each has a direct link to the written input with the purpose of reinforcing what is written. There is also a physical closeness between the characters engaged in the pushing, breaking, and snatching which is not the case in the verbal negative expression.

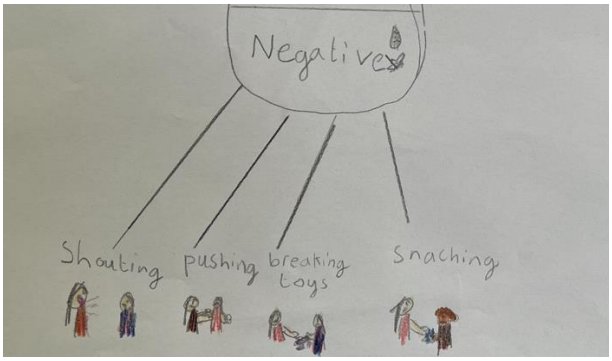

Figure 10 Yasmin, negative ways to resolve conflict

Inaction

As with the verbal inaction, the non-verbal inaction consists of written input, which is expressed as a negation, highlighting the lack of action. These are categorised as both positive or negative as is expressed and illustrated by Danielle (Figure 11) and Laksmi (Figure 12). Danielle highlights not making a big fuss as a positive conflict resolution strategy. This is an inaction, as the action of creating a big fuss is understood to escalate the conflict. Here the inaction supports a positive resolution. Laksmi uses the inaction as also being something negative as in "Not sharing toys", where the opposite would have resulted in a more positive outcome, a more constructive resolution.

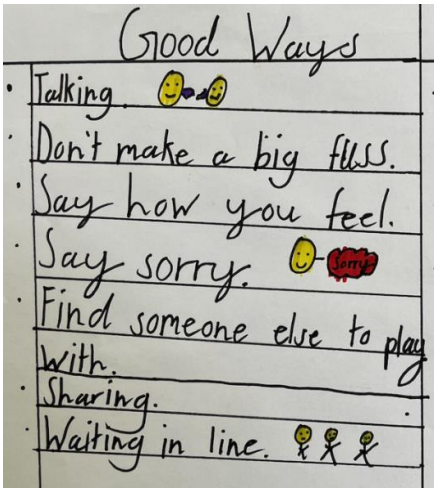

Figure 11 Danielle, positive ways

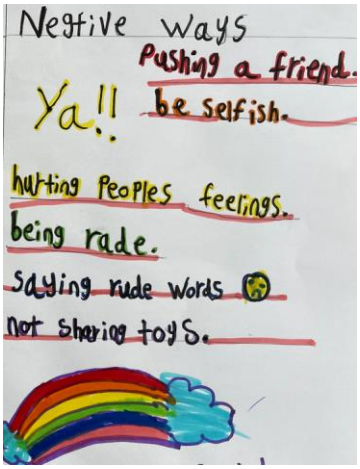

Figure 12 Laksmi, negative ways

Ambiguous strategies

The final theme captures the written statements which we could not clearly interpret as verbal or non-verbal, hence named ambiguous. This includes two subthemes: the hostile expressions strategy and the inaction strategy.

Hostile expressions

Common for the hostile expressions were examples of unfriendly behaviours such as being rude, selfish, or jealous. As these can be expressed both verbally and non-verbally, they were categorised as ambiguous. To the extent possible we used any illustrations depicted which would provide further understanding of a verbal or non-verbal display of conflict resolution strategies. Joshua (Figure 13) has created a mind-map to illustrate and organise the negative ways to solve a conflict with examples of verbal, non-verbal and ambiguous strategies which includes hostile expressions and inactions. Examples of ambiguous hostile expressions include "Being jealous", "Being rude", "Being selfish", "Hurting people's feelings" and "Making a fuss". These were categorised as ambiguous as it was not clearly expressed if for example being rude was through verbal or non-verbal actions or expressions. Similarly, hurting someone's feeling or making a fuss can be achieved in various verbal and non-verbal ways.

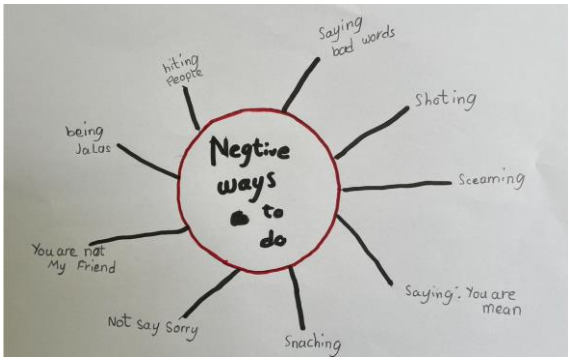

Figure 13 Joshua, negative ways to resolve conflict

Inaction

In contrast to the verbal and non-verbal pro-social behaviours such as helping, using polite language or the subtheme of apologising, the inaction identified in this subtheme 'not helping someone' was deemed ambiguous as helping someone may be expressed through both verbal and/or non-verbal strategies.

Summary of findings

In our research we were able to identify several subthemes responding to our search for positive and negative conflict resolution strategies. As the participants themselves had grouped their responses as positive or negative, we did not need to interpret this information. What the participants included in their mind-maps or lists through illustrations and written statements are what we did interpret resulting in our identified subthemes.

The positive subthemes included apologising, communication, pro-social behaviours and compromising. To the extent possible we aimed to cluster the written statements into subthemes which would provide more information than merely categorising all positive strategies as pro-social behaviours. Of course, these are all pro-social in essence as they have a positive outcome for the parties included in the conflict or they indicate constructive resolutions which aim to perhaps resolve or end a conflict in different ways. Having more subthemes provides more depth to the analysis and helps to further differentiate the strategies. The negative subthemes we identified included hostile expressions, inactions and third party interventions.

It was interesting to further identify the nature of the subthemes in terms of these being verbal or non-verbal or potentially both, noting that the participants had identified both verbal and non-verbal ways in which a conflict could be resolved. One may argue that a negative strategy may not actually resolve the conflict, perhaps conclude it for a winning party or delay the conflict for a period of time.
It has been our concious decision not to quantify the frequency of strategies or subthemes within the data. This is aligned with the approach taken by Dhillon and Babu (2013) in which data is presented but not ranked in any ways.

Our identified subthemes align with the findings of Chung and Asher (1996) who in their study on conflict resolution strategies identified pro-social strategies as well hostile strategies. The subthemes also resemble those identified by Troop-Gordon and Asher (2005) with regard to polite requests,

using please and thank you, compromise and assistance seeking from an adult. Regarding the adult intervention or assistance, it is noteworthy that this strategy was in our study categorised as a negative strategy, from the child's perspective. Involving an adult resembled a threat rather than a support in the conflict resolution in our study. Dhillon and Babu (2013) also discussing the role of adults, an in particular teachers, as third-party interventions on conflicts between children at school found that teacher were often brought into a conflict when the involved children were unable to resolve it themselves, acting as a referee.

Further studies which draw on similar strategy resolution findings are Dhillon and Babu (2013) who identified negotiating as a form of compromising as well as apologising as constructive ways to resolve conflict. Considering the perspective of constructive as well as destructive conflict in line with Ross et al. (2006), we can see that the positive strategies identified in our study align with the concept of constructive conflict and the negative strategies align with the concept destructive conflict as presented by Ross et al. (2006). Given our participants, 12 in total, it is quite interesting to see that there are so many similarities regarding the identified conflict strategies derived from our data compared to more comprehensive studies which have involved up to up to a few hundred children.

Concluding discussion

The findings from this study were rich and varied. Through the methodology, the participants were given direct access to the research questions and therefore the qualitative data collected through this study addresses the research aims in a clear manner. As with all research, adaptations to the methodology could be useful to expand on data.

When considering the first research question about positive ways to solve a conflict, participants provided a range of both verbal and non-verbal strategies. For this peer culture, which is specific to the 7-8 aged students attending this school, verbal communication through apologising and demonstrating compromise is considered a strong and positive approach. This data aligned with previous research around children's constructive strategies to coordinate ones needs with others (Pieng and Okamoto, 2020: 597). These strategies placed the individual as responsible in establish and maintaining peer cultures. It is likely that the academic environment influenced the data that participants presented. It could be said that this first research question regarding positive conflict resolution strategies prompted a significant amount of data, possibly due to the sociocultural setting of a school where positive behavioural norms are modelled and encouraged. Ideas around institutional contexts were considered in planning the data collection, as explained by Spyrou (2011:155). To clarify, the social-emotional expectations of this environment established through curriculum, class rules and the child-adult relations between the participants and their teacher could influence the responses that participants and data analysis reflected this. An adaptation to the methodology that could be insightful would be conducting the study in different settings including the home, a sports club or a social setting such as a birthday party. This would allow the researcher to analyze and compare the influence of environment and presence of adults in children's perceptions and experiences.

The second research question regarding negative ways to solve a conflict was also answered with a broad range of data. Participants identified a range of strategies, both verbal and non-verbal as negative. Hostile expressions were a strong subtheme under both the themes of verbal and non-verbal strategies. This could again be discussed through the sociocultural lens of the school setting, where behavioural expectations are established and practised. Again, these findings are specific to this age group within a specific school setting. As Spyrou (2011:154) explains, practising reflexivity when considering the data ensures that the participants responses are not simply taken for granted. The participants recognise verbal expressions such as screaming and non-verbal expressions such as snatching to be exclusively negative. This could speak to the power relations between children and

adults within school settings where children are expected to adhere to behavioural norms as presented through class rules and teacher expectations. An adaptation to the methodology that could address this could be to observe the participants in the playground or class environment and take direct observations of the conflict resolution strategies that are demonstrated.

An interesting concept that arose from the data analysis was the role of the child as primary in resolving conflicts. There was very little data that arose from this study involving adults as valuable sources in conflict resolution. This data, or the absence of recognition of adults, reinforces the idea that children see themselves as active participants in their own peer cultures. This speaks to the third research question regarding the role of adults in navigating conflict resolution within children's peer cultures. The data from this study suggests that children do not perceives adults to be a valuable source in shaping peer cultures through conflict resolution. This aligns with Corsaro's (2009:321) explanation of how children find ways to communicate, negotiate, compromise, and consider alternative viewpoints. The emphasis is on the individual child and their role in constructing and maintaining their own peer cultures. In hindsight, this lack of data could have been impacted by our chosen methodology. The participants engaged extensively with the first and second research question, their work samples often depicted positive and negative strategies in a comparative context. Upon reflection, an adapted data collection activity which focused more on asking participants to identify adults who support their conflict resolution strategies, may have prompted richer data corresponding to our third research question. We also recognise that our collected data for this study, is produced within a school setting where children are encouraged to show responsibility and ownership for navigating their peer groups.

Knowledge contribution

Through our research we have taken on a widely researched topic within child studies and approached it from a methodological perspective which has, to our knowledge, not been used within conflict resolution research before. We have previously discussed the reasons for this, one being potentially that the topic of conflict is so broad and abstract, bearing different meanings to each person. The study participants have engaged in group discussions and created their own responses to our research questions as they have interpreted the concept by writing and drawing thus engaging in Participatory Action Research within the field of Participatory Visual Methods. We have looked at how children in our study *view* or *perceive* conflict resolution strategies, noting that this does not necessarily coincide with how they would act or react behaviourally if confronted with a conflict in their peer groups. As was highlighted in the literature review of previous studies, observing the behaviours of children engaging in actual conflict during play, at school or within peer groups has

been a popular method for researchers to take, when wanting to learn from children. In our study we have instead looked at what children might think rather than their actions, allowing our participants to engage with the topic by creating a safe and familiar space where they can discuss, write, draw and talk as a means of approaching the topic and engaging with their thoughts. We have also formulated our research questions and posed these to our participants with the prenotion that there are positive and negative ways to resolve conflict, this can be debated as to how and why a strategy can be determined to be positive or negative and from who's perspective this would be the case.

Theoretically we have approached our topic from a thematic perspective, identifying themes and subthemes within the textual inputs provided by the study participants. We have also considered the illustrations which accompanied the textual inputs. A greater emphasis could have been put on focusing solely on the illustrations and what these meant from a semiotic perspective but as the participants chose to display their ideas through mainly textual inputs, a thematic analysis of the written content was deemed to be the most relevant means of identifying similarities between the produced materials and data. The illustrations provided were viewed in conjunction to the texts, and it was clear that the illustrations were created to exemplify and enhance the textual inputs.

Reflections on future research

Conflict resolution within children's peer cultures is a relevant topic within the field of childhood studies. In considering sociocultural perspectives, children's peer groups and cultures can be said to be a valuable setting for social and emotional development. As Corsaro (2009:302) explains, it is within this context that children are engaged in negotiations to gain control over their lives and to share that control with each other. In this study, we have sought to gain insight and to explore the notion of conflict resolution within children's peer relations from a children's perspective. In addition, we aimed to understand how children perceive the role of adults in conflict resolution. This study contributed to greater research around social-emotional and peer culture theories in child studies.

As León-Jiménez et al (2020:3) explains, the peer cultures that are formed in school environments are of great significant in developing children for future adult peer cultures. This study provides substantial insight into the peer cultures that exist within one specific group of children within an international school in Sweden. To expand and continue to contribute to this field of study, adaptations could be made to strengthen both the methodology as well as the research conducted. An alternative method for data collection is an example of this. It may be insightful to have an ethnographic study of a peer culture setting such as a playground or a social club. Examples of these studies include the ethnographic studies of León-Jiménez et al (2020:1) and Deutz et al (2015:43). Direct observations on children as they interact and navigate conflicts within their peer cultures could

provide data on strategies that children are practising. It would allow the researcher to quantify the frequency of conflict resolution strategies in an authentic, interactive setting and may provide richer data. Through this methodology, the researcher can gain direct insight into the strategies that children use to communicate, negotiate and compromise, thus shaping social worlds (Corsaro, 2009:321).

Expanding on the possibilities for future research is the potential for conducting this study with different groups of children and an exploration of variables such as age, gender, academic institution, religion or cultural background. As Jones (2020:466) explains, school settings serve as a major setting for the development of peer relations and expanding on the research conducted around conflict resolution strategies within schools could ensure ongoing contribution to this topic. An example of this could be a comparative study of two school settings with differing curriculums which would allow researchers to gain an insight into the children's perspectives on conflict resolution within contrasting environments. Likewise, comparing groups of children in different age groups could allow an insight into the progression and adaptation of conflict resolution strategies. Continuing research through this child agentic approach ensures that future research can acknowledge and consider children's experiences and perspectives. By doing so, this study ensures that ongoing research will recognise children as knowledgeable, valuable sources in the research made around them.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Informational letter to guardians

Dear Year 2 Guardians,

One of our staff members, Miss D'Souza, is currently undertaking a Master of Child Studies through Linköping University. This program is based around children's rights and the importance of empowering children. There are many connections to our school where students are encouraged to share their perspectives and opinions about the world around them.

This Spring Miss D'Souza would like to conduct a small study with the Year 2 students at Tanto as part of her research. The study explores friendships and ways that children navigate and resolve conflicts with their peers. The study will take place during one 45 minute period, scheduled for Monday, April 4, 2022. It will be a fun and interesting experience for the students who will get the opportunity to be an expert and 'teach' Miss D'Souza. The students will then create a poster listing strategies that they feel will help others resolve a conflict. An example is shown alongside this text.

A consent form will go home with Year 2 families today and any students who would like to participate can return the form by Monday, April 4, 2022. If you do not wish for your child to participate, there are alternative activities that they can do during the allocated time. Miss D'Souza will be available at pick up during the afternoons next week if you have questions about the study or your child's participation.

Appendix 2: Informed Consent

Consent to data processing

I hereby consent that Linköping University processes my personal data in the form of a paper sample of my child's thoughts and opinions on friendships and conflict resolution for the following purposes:

We would like to conduct a focus group around the topic of friendships and conflict resolution. The aim of the focus group is to obtain a paper sample from the participant in the form of a mind map, drawing or list. This sample will depict positive and negative strategies that children can identify to resolve conflicts with their peers. We expect this focus group to take place within one 45-minute session.

The samples will be analyzed collectively. We are looking for any patterns or repetitions that may arise to demonstrate shared views that children have around friendships. This will help us to understand the ways that children collectively built their own meanings around how to interact with one another and navigate things such as sharing, participating in games, taking turns etc.

Information

Your personal data will be stored only on storage services approved by Linköping University, and no other persons than Katinka D'Souza and Emma Hevlund (the supervisor, and the examiner if needed) will access the data. The personal data will be kept until the thesis has received a grade, but never longer than until December 31 four years after the data was collected.

Personal data controller is Linköping University, 581 83 Linköping, corporate identification number 202100-3096.

Contact: *Katinka D'Souza (katds575@student.liu.se)*

Legal basis for the data processing: Consent.
If you want to withdraw your consent, please contact Katinka D'Souza via email.

You may withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. We will in that case stop using your personal data that we have collected based on your consent.

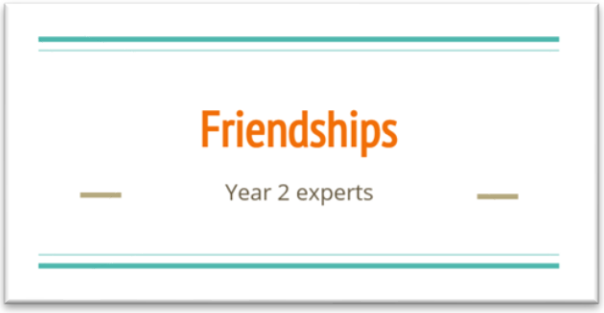
You may request to have your personal data erased, and if you do so, we will erase information about you wherever possible. You have the right to obtain information about your personal data that are processed by Linköping University. You may request this in writing by contacting the registrar's office at Linköping University, either by email or letter. You also have the right to request that the use of certain of your personal data be limited.

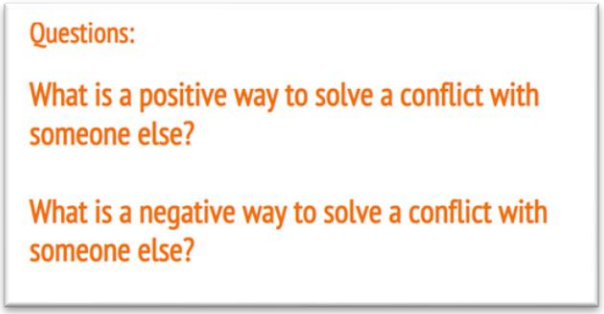
If you want to know how your personal data are used, or you believe that we have used your personal data in a way that violates the agreement or current legislation, please contact Linköping University's data protection officer at dataskyddsombud@liu.se. If you have complaints regarding the way in which Linköping University processes your personal data, you are always entitled to contact the relevant inspection authority, which in this case is the Swedish Data Protection Authority.

I hereby consent that Linköping University processes my personal data according to the information above

Place	Signature
Date	Name

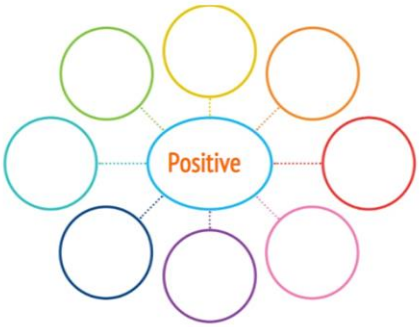
Appendix 3: Activity presentation of the study to the children

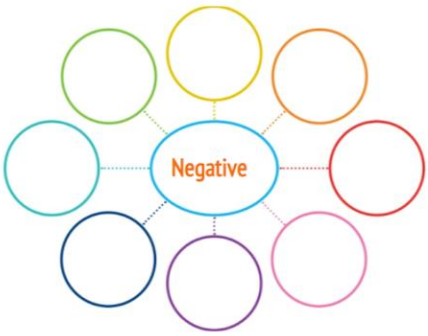




What are peers?

- Other children
- Members of sports teams
- Groups of children in the same place
- Siblings
- Classmates



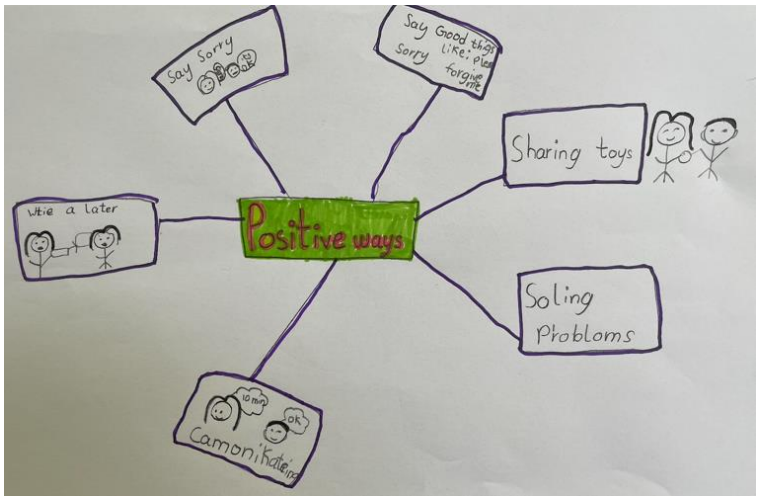


Positive ways	Negative ways
	

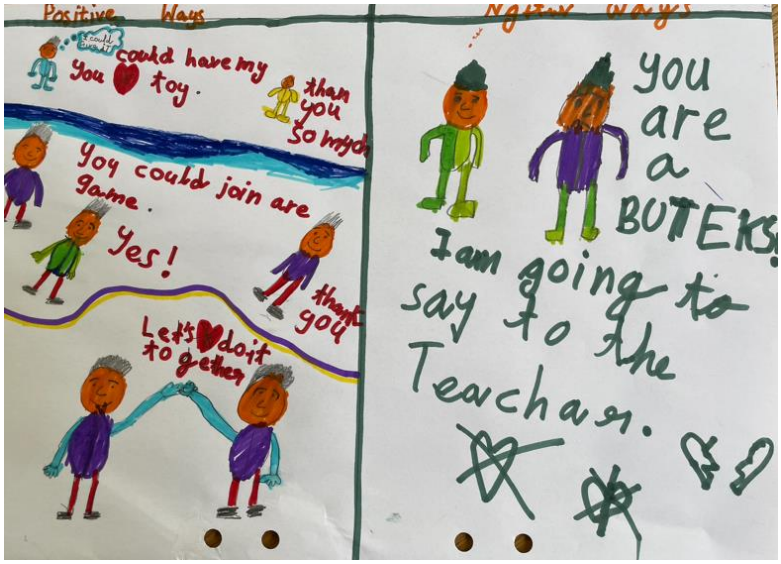
Appendix 4 Visual data materials produced in the data collection activity

Where a child has signed their name to their work contribution, this has been redacted by means of a blue box to protect the personal information of the child. Pseudonyms have been ascribed to each participant and does therefore not represent the participant's real name.

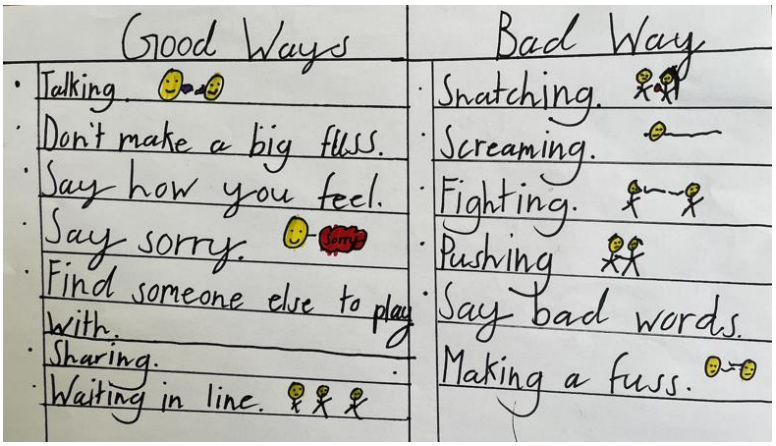
Ali



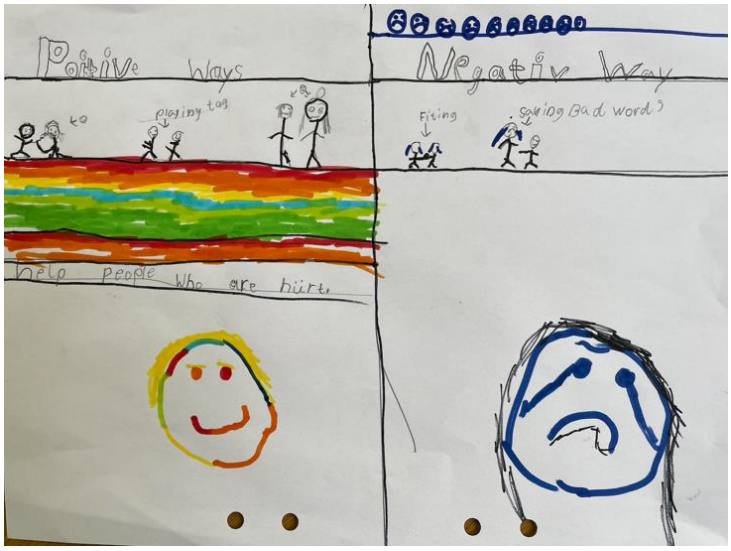
George



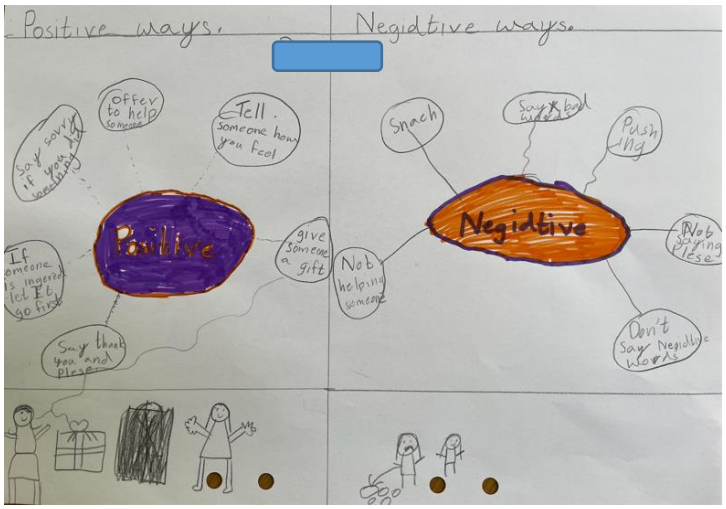
Danielle



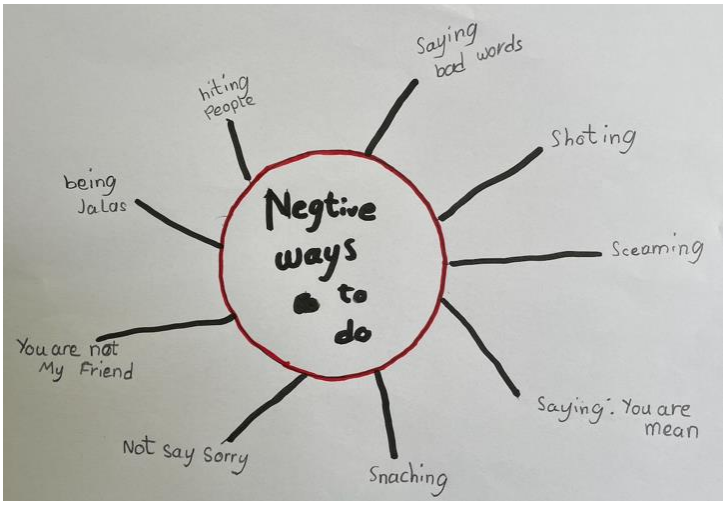
Thomas



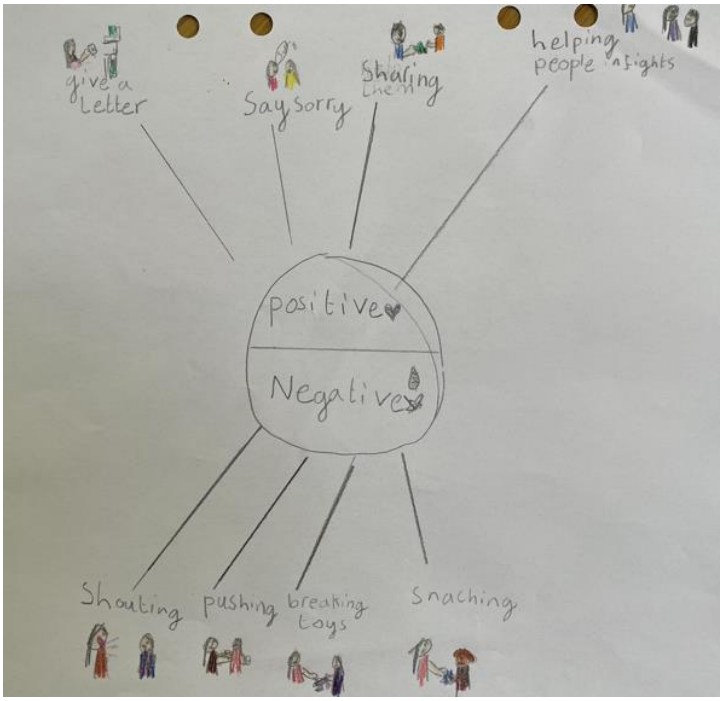
Jessica



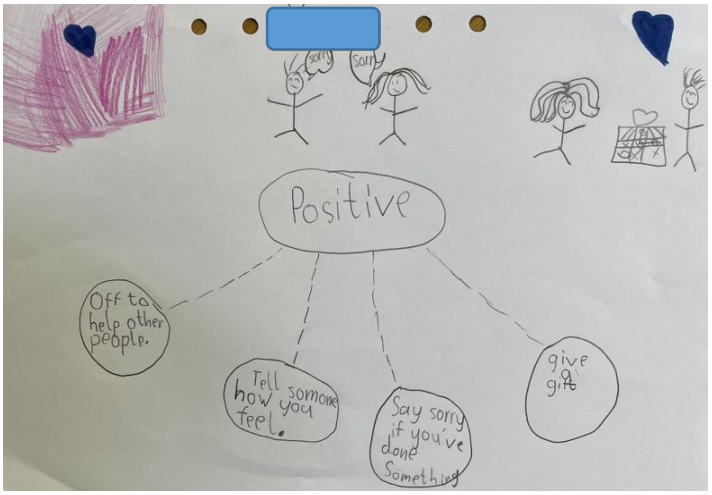
Joshua



Yasmin

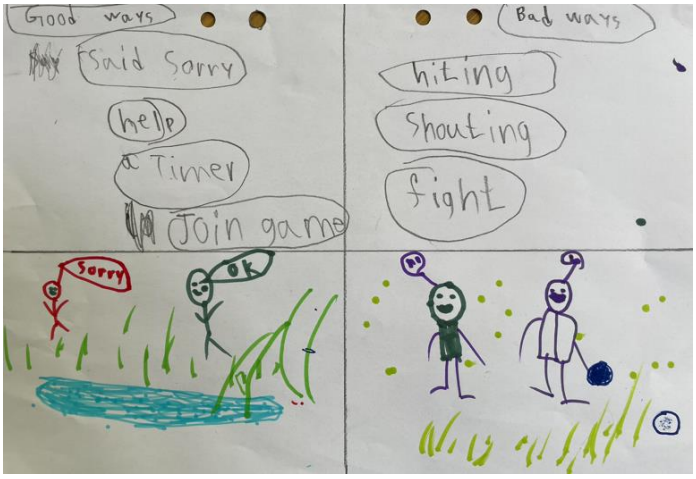


Monique

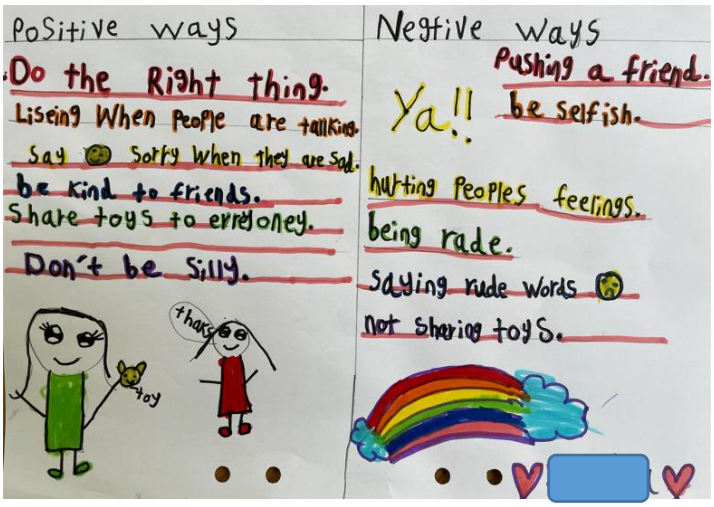


Lily

Samuel



Laksmi



William