A Case Study of the “Who is NOBODY?” Project:

A Character Development Program for Children with Learning Disabilities

By

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Abstract
This research study explored a support system for children with learning disabilities. The Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR) recently expanded its Better Emotional and Social Times (B.E.S.T.) program to incorporate an innovative, character education initiative called the “Who is NOBODY?” program. The objective of this qualitative case study was two-fold. First, the study aimed to support the LDANR in assessing the efficacy of the “Who is NOBODY?” program, providing the LDANR with empirical support for their programs. Second, the study enabled a more in-depth understanding of how to best support children with LD in regards to their social and emotional well-being. The study explored the “Who is NOBODY?” program through three lenses: design, implementation, and experiences of participating children. Three primary themes emerged from these three data lenses: positive character traits, prosocial behaviour, and strong self-efficacy – leading to the promotion of strong character development and self-esteem. Taken together, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was shown to be a successful remediation program for supporting vulnerable children with LD.
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"The biggest mistake we make in life is to treat everyone equally when it comes to learning."

− Mel Levine.

A learning disability (LD) is traditionally defined as a neurological disorder that affects the brain's ability to receive, process, store, and respond to information (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada [LDAC], 2002). The most noticeable manifestations of learning disabilities occur within the classroom where children with LD have difficulties in acquiring basic academic skills that allow them to be successful in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and/or math (LDAC, 2002). As a result, many children with LD struggle to achieve well academically, often resulting in a discouraging and unpleasant experience within the classroom (Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). This has led stakeholders concerned about the general well-being of children with LD to focus on understanding the most effective practices and remediation aimed at supporting children’s academic skills (Lavoie, 2005). However, many children with LD not only struggle academically, but also experience social and emotional difficulties that may stem from their specific processing deficits, or may simply be secondary characteristics associated with their LD (Winzer, 2007). Recent research in this area has revealed that the majority of children with LD (approximately 75 percent) lack skills in social competence (Kavale & Forness, 1996). Children with LD, who demonstrate poor social skills, often have difficulties with communicating and listening, recognizing and interpreting facial expressions and body language, and regulating their feelings and
emotions (McIntyre, 2003). Given this, children with LD may interact awkwardly or inappropriately in social situations that may result in these children not having positive relationships with their teachers or peers (Lavoie, 2005). From here, children with LD who have poor social skills are less likely to be accepted by their peers and, as such, become victims of bullying. Such children may not know how to cope well with the teasing or rejection they are subjected to from their peers, thus causing many of them to isolate themselves from others (Milsom & Glanville, 2010). In addition, many children with LD, who have problems with social skills, can feel misunderstood by their teachers. For example, children with LD, who are rejected by their peers, often exhibit undesirable behaviour such as aggression. This aggressive behaviour in children with LD causes many teachers to respond negatively to such behaviour, which reinforces the children’s feelings of alienation (Milsom & Glanville, 2010). Therefore, children with LD, who do not have positive relationships with their peers and/or teachers, generally have less positive feelings toward school resulting in lower academic success (Milsom & Glanville, 2010).

The academic and social struggles faced by children with learning disabilities result in many of these children developing poor self-esteem since they tend to experience failure and negative feedback from others more regularly than children without LD (Tracey, 2006). Children with LD, who have poor self-esteem, have a negative view of themselves such as perceiving themselves to be unintelligent and socially incompetent (Tracey, 2006). This results in these children over-emphasizing their weaknesses while placing little value on their strengths. These specific feelings in children with LD often manifest into diminished motivation to perform well academically
and socially (Tracey, 2006). Therefore, poor self-esteem becomes a significant risk factor that can lead to other types of problems such as dropping out of school and/or developing a variety of health issues such as depression, high levels of anxiety, social and adjustment issues, substance abuse, and suicidal behaviour (DeRosier, Kupersmidt & Patterson, 1994). Therefore, it is important to provide children with LD with the social support they need in order to learn how to cope with the academic, social, and emotional struggles they experience on a daily basis.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR) is a non-profit organization that offers multiple programs to better support children and youth who struggle with a learning disability. The LDANR is consistently looking for new ways to improve its existing programs in order to help children with LD achieve more sustainable gains. Currently, the LDANR is in the process of re-designing its Better Emotional and Social Times (B.E.S.T.) program to better support the social and emotional development of children with LD. The original aim of the B.E.S.T. program was to strengthen the self-advocacy, social skills and self-esteem of children with LD. However, recently the LDANR has expanded its B.E.S.T. program to incorporate a character education initiative called the “Who is NOBODY?” program. “Who is NOBODY?” is a character education program created by Kelly Clark in 2002 to help children identify and develop their own unique strengths, abilities, and interests through taking action by helping others (Clark, 2012). With the integration of the “Who is NOBODY?” program into the B.E.S.T. program, the LDANR is interested in gaining an in-depth understanding of how the revised program can most effectively support children with learning disabilities, particularly with their character development and self-esteem. Therefore, my research
involves partnering with the LDANR to comprehensively explore the design and implementation process as well as the experiences of participating children of the "Who is NOBODY?" program.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Children and Learning Disabilities

Children with learning disabilities (LD) represent the largest category of students in need of special education (Wong, 2004). Specifically, 43.7 percent of children designated with a disability are formally diagnosed with learning disabilities (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario [LDAO], 2011). To put this in perspective, approximately five percent of Canadian children aged six to 15 are identified as having a LD (LDAO, 2011). Due to the continuing growth in numbers of children with LD, extensive research has been conducted in this area.

Definition of Learning Disabilities (LD)

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) (2002) defines learning disabilities as a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of neurological disorders that can alter the functioning of the brain in a manner that affects how an individual stores, organizes, understands or uses verbal and non-verbal information. These neurological disorders stem from a dysfunction in a person’s central nervous system resulting in impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning (National Center of Learning Disabilities [NCLD], 1999). For example, individuals with LD can experience deficits in their verbal or auditory processing which, in turn, hinders their ability to make sense of information (NCLD, 1999). Difficulties with visual and auditory processing affect how information is
recognized, interpreted and processed by the brain (NCLD, 1999). The most prevalent type of learning disabilities is reading disabilities or dyslexia (approximately 80 percent). Specific areas of difficulty for individuals with reading disabilities include: phonological awareness, auditory discrimination, auditory memory and sequencing (NCLD, 1999).

Phonological awareness is the ability to understand that language is composed of individual sounds (phonemes) which are blended together to form words (NCLD, 1999). Individuals who have difficulty with phonological awareness are often unable to identify or isolate the single sounds in a word, or sounds which are put together to form words (NCLD, 1999). For example, such a child would have a difficult time understanding that the word ‘cat’ has three phonemes, /c/ /a/ /t/, or that these three phonemes combined form the word ‘cat’ (NCLD, 1999). Individuals with auditory discrimination deficiencies are unable to recognize similarities and differences in sounds (NCLD, 1999). For example, a child may be able to hear the difference between the letters ‘m’ and ‘b’, but may not be able to distinguish between the letters ‘b’ and ‘d’ due to how similar the latter two letters sound to one another (NCLD, 1999). Individuals with auditory memory deficiencies often have difficulty storing and recalling verbal information (NCLD, 1999). For example, after a story is read aloud, such a child may have difficulty remembering a story he/she has been told, thereby affecting his/her comprehension of the story (NCLD, 1999). Individuals with auditory sequencing deficiencies are often unable to remember or reconstruct the order of items in a list, or the order of sounds in a word (NCLD, 1999). For example, after a story is read aloud, such a child may be able to summarize the story in general, but may have difficulty remembering the specific order of events, from beginning to end, that occurred in the story (NCLD, 1999). In general, impairments in the
basic psychological processes in the brain will interfere with the acquisition and use of oral language (listening, speaking and understanding), reading (phonetic knowledge, word recognition and comprehension), writing (spelling and written expression), mathematics (computation and problem solving), and/or one’s social skills (social perception and interaction) (LDAC, 2002). The majority of individuals with these LD may have average or above average intelligence (IQ), however, they often perform poorly in a specific subject area that is associated with their type of disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). For instance, an individual, whose academic achievement on standardized tests in reading, writing or mathematics is two standard deviations below their expected learning potential (IQ), would be diagnosed with a LD (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). There are other factors which could generate a discrepancy between intelligence and academic achievement such as impairments in vision, hearing or motor ability, mental retardation, behavioural and emotional disturbances, cultural or linguistic differences, socioeconomic status, or ineffective instruction (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). These factors are excluded from the diagnosis of a LD, however, they may co-exist with a LD and affect how one learns (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

**Learning Disabilities and Well-Being**

Learning Disabilities have traditionally been associated with academic problems. However, research into the social and emotional well-being of children with LD has shown that children and youth with LD often struggle, not only academically, but also socially and emotionally (Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). It is often considered that social and emotional difficulties are secondary characteristics associated with the academic
challenges resulting from primary processing problems (Winzer, 2007). The social and emotional struggles faced by children with LD often result in discouraging and unpleasant experiences for those children within the classroom (Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). For example, being unaware/uninformed in social situations or oblivious to others’ perspectives would make a poor impression and negatively impact a child’s social interactions with teachers and peers. This outcome may bring about feelings of low self-worth and a low academic concept (Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). Given these challenges, research has revealed that teaching social skills to children with LD will provide them with the additional tools they may need to deal with the socio-emotional challenges they can experience on a daily basis. The following sections review literature and research around three specific social skill challenges associated with learning disabilities that are relevant to this study: social competence, interpersonal relationships, and self-esteem.

**Social Competence.**

Many children with LD are at risk for challenges associated with social competence (Vaughn, Sinagub & Kim, 2004). Social competence is a broad term used to describe a child’s social effectiveness (Wight & Chapparo, 2008). Researchers have experienced great difficulty in forming a cohesive definition and, as a result, several models have been formulated to define social competence. For instance, Vaughn and Hogan (1990) introduced a four-component model to conceptualize social competence. The four components of social competence include: (a) social skills (e.g. the ability to initiate and respond appropriately to others), (b) relationships with others (e.g. friendships, peer acceptance), (c) age-appropriate social cognition (e.g. the ability to problem-solve and to recognize and monitor social situations), and (d) the absence of
behaviours associated with social maladjustment (e.g. absence of aggressive behaviour, attention problems, acting out, withdrawal) (Vaughn et al., 2004).

Another model conceptualizes social competence by differentiating it from social skills. In this model, social competence is understood to be a trait, whereas social skills represent behaviours. Social competence represents an evaluation based on judgments of whether or not a social task has been performed competently, while social skills are actions expressed in a specific situation requiring competent performance (Vaughn et al., 2004). In short, social skills are viewed as specific behaviours, while social competence is a judgment about those behaviours (Vaughn et al., 2004).

Finally, many researchers conceptualize social competence as a function of processing social cues (Vaughn et al., 2004). Given children with LD experience processing impairments, these children would demonstrate difficulties in processing (perceiving, decoding, and interpreting) social cues, selecting a response that is appropriate, and implementing the appropriate social response (Vaughn et al., 2004). For example, many children with LD exhibit paralinguistic (non-verbal) deficiencies, particularly with kinesics, proxemics, and vocalics (Lavoie, 2005).

Children experiencing problems with kinesics are often unable to read the body language of themselves or others (Lavoie, 2005). For instance, these children may exhibit or use gestures incorrectly, or may have difficulties interpreting and responding to facial expressions, feelings, and attitudes of others (Lavoie, 2005). Children experiencing problems with proxemics are often unable to understand how physical space communicates with others (Lavoie, 2005). For instance, these children may stand too close to others in social situations, stare, or avoid making eye contact (Lavoie, 2005).
Children experiencing problems with vocalics are often unable to understand how a volume pitch of voice communicates to others (Lavoie, 2005). For instance, these children may misinterpret sarcasm, may talk in monotones, and may speak too quickly, slowly, loudly, or softly (Lavoie, 2005).

As a result of difficulty in processing social cues such as with pragmatics (the rules for social language), children with LD tend to have inappropriate social skills, which, in turn, generate inappropriate social responses (Lavoie, 2005). Therefore, given there are several models to the conceptualization of social competence, most researchers have come to the agreement that social competence is a multi-dimensional concept, comprised of several interacting components, which consist of social-emotional (e.g. affect regulation), behavioural (e.g. social skills), and cognitive (e.g. processing/acquisition of information) skills that are required for successful social adaptation (Vaughn et al., 2004).

Researchers Kavale and Forness (1996) conducted a meta-analysis to explore the nature of social skill deficits among children with learning difficulties. Kavale and Forness (1996) examined 152 studies on social skills and their relationship to learning disabilities over the past 15 years. The findings of the meta-analysis indicated that, when compared to children without LD, approximately 75 percent of children with learning difficulties are reported to experience deficits in social competence (Kavale & Forness, 1996). Given this high percentage, there are three types of social skill deficits children with LD may experience. The first type is a skill deficit wherein the child may not have learned the required social or cognitive skill to use in a given situation (Kavale & Forness, 1996). For instance, a child may not have mastered the skill of cooperation and
fails to play by the rules of a game that he/she is playing with peers. The second type is a performance deficit wherein the child has mastered a particular skill, but fails to perform it in the appropriate situation (Kavale & Forness, 1996). For example, a child who has learned the importance of cooperation tries to work with his/her peers to complete an assignment in class, despite the teacher giving instructions for the task to be completed independently. As a result, the child has not learned that working and getting along with others may be imperative in one situation, but is considered to be inappropriate in another (Wight & Chapparo, 2008). The last type is a self-control deficit wherein the child’s lack of self-control results in a significant number of aversive behaviours which, in turn, interfere with the child’s acquisition and performance of appropriate social skills (Kavale & Forness, 1996). For example, a child with a LD, who is highly aggressive, may have difficulty cooperating with others because the child becomes frustrated or angry when his/her peers are not playing the game appropriately, causing the child to respond inappropriately.

The overall findings of the meta-analysis demonstrate that the majority of children with LD are likely to manifest social skill deficits that distinguish them from their non-LD peers (Kavale & Forness, 1996). However, the one major question left unanswered about social skills and LD surrounds the cause of this problem. Students with LD evidently experience social skill challenges. However, the reason why these challenges arise is not clear.

Gresham (1992) proposed three hypotheses as explanations of why children with LD manifest social skill deficits. The first is termed the causal hypothesis, wherein social skill problems are caused by a dysfunction in the central nervous system, the same
impairment that causes a child to struggle academically (Gresham, 1992). The second is termed the concomitant hypothesis, wherein there are three possible situations: (a) academic deficits lead to social skill deficits, (b) social skill deficits lead to academic deficits, and (c) academic and social skill deficits occur instantaneously in children with LD. Although the children with LD were found to manifest social skill deficits in this investigation, the findings do not support a particular causal relationship (Gresham, 1992). The final view is termed the correlational hypothesis, wherein social skills and academic skills are correlated, but there is no implication of the cause and effect (Gresham, 1992). For example, Kavale and Forness (1996) found approximately 75 percent of children with LD exhibit social skill deficits, whereas 25 percent do not. This implies there is only an association between LD and social skills in that not all children with LD experience social skill difficulties (Kavale & Forness, 1996). Although teachers and students with LD emphasized the lack of academic capability in their evaluation of social functioning, there is little evidence to support social skill deficits are caused by the academic difficulties (Kavale & Forness, 1996).

**Interpersonal Relationships.**

Related to the notion that children with LD may experience difficulties with social competencies such as sharing, cooperating, interacting, and understanding the perspectives of others is related to the idea that children with LD may also have challenges with their interpersonal relationships. In other words, children’s social competence difficulties may prevent them from establishing and maintaining relationships with the people around them such as their peers in school (Wight & Chapparo, 2008). Research has demonstrated a strong relationship between children’s
peer status and social competence, particularly obedience of social rules, friendliness, and prosocial interactions (Warden & MacKinnon, 2003). With this being said, children with LD who exhibit poor social behaviours tend to be less accepted by peers, interact awkwardly and appropriately in social situations, and are socially imperceptive (Lavoie, 2005). For example, Tur-Kaspa, Margalit and Most (1999) examined the social experiences of 94 students with LD in comparison to 119 students without LD in grades two through six for one academic year. The findings of the study indicated that the students with LD experienced, both at the beginning and end of the school year, higher levels of loneliness and lower levels of coherence than their peers without LD (Tur-Kaspa et al., 1999). In addition, the findings of the study reported peer relationship patterns to have changed over the course of the school year. At the end of the year, students with LD reported experiencing fewer reciprocal friendships and more reciprocal rejections than their peers without LD (Tur-Kaspa et al., 1999). This research demonstrates that children with LD, who possess poor social skills, have difficulties in establishing and maintaining friendships, and experience more rejection from their peers (Tur-Kaspa et al., 1999). With this being said, children with LD, who have poor social skills, often do not know how to cope well with rejection from their peers which results in them wanting to isolate themselves. As a result, poor relationships can influence the outlook students with LD have about school, causing many of them to develop a negative attitude and often wanting to avoid attending (Milsom & Glanville, 2010).

Self-Esteem.

The final factor related to this study is self-esteem. The nature of self-esteem has been approached from several different theoretical perspectives, causing a lack of
agreement on formulating a comprehensive definition (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003; Brown & Marshall, 2006). There are three main constructs of self-esteem. First, self-esteem has been conceptualized as a global trait, relatively stable across time and situations. Second, self-esteem has been understood as a fluctuating state of feelings of self-worth (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003; Brown & Marshall, 2006). This form of self-esteem refers to the self-evaluative emotional reactions (positive or negative feelings of worth) to events. Third, self-esteem has been understood as self-evaluations or domain-specific self-esteem. This form of self-esteem refers to how people evaluate their various abilities and attributes (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003; Brown & Marshall, 2006). Despite the controversy among the definitions and theories proposed, researchers have come to a general agreement that self-esteem consists of cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements (Mruk, 2006a). Given this, self-esteem is a complex construct that should be understood as both internal (cognitive, affective) and external (behavioural) to the self (Mruk, 2006a).

For the purpose of the current study, self-esteem was defined as the experience of being capable of meeting life’s challenges and being worthy of happiness (Branden, 2006; National Association of Self-Esteem [NASE], 2010). This concept of self-esteem is based strongly on the dynamic relationship between competence and worthiness (Mruk, 2006a). In other words, self-esteem is formed on the basis of an individual’s actions (behavioural) and how one feels about him/herself (cognitive, affective) in relation to his/her experiences. For example, there are two types of experiences that directly influence self-esteem: success or failure, and acceptance or rejection (Mruk, 2006b). Experiences of success and failure often depend on one’s competence, while acceptance
or rejection by meaningful others can drastically impact one’s feelings of self-worth (Mruk, 2006b).

This concept of self-esteem is best used for the current qualitative study because it focuses on exploring real life experiences that influence self-esteem (Mruk, 2006b). When individuals describe their experiences pertaining to self-esteem, they refer to both competence and worthiness together, rather than separately (Mruk, 2006a). This is because self-esteem involves worthiness, but worthiness must be earned through behaving competently. However, in order for competent behaviour to produce feelings, attitudes, or beliefs of worthiness, such actions must be worthy to the individual and not meaningless successes (Mruk, 2006a). Given this, competence is tied to behaviour, which is readily observable, whereas feelings of self-worth are derived from feelings, attitudes or beliefs that are internal to the self (Mruk, 2006a). However, since feelings of worthiness are connected to competent, meaningful behaviour, this allows for a rich and substantial understanding of self-esteem to be examined from a qualitative perspective (Mruk, 2006a).

In terms of children with LD, the majority of them experience academic failure and interpersonal rejection, which causes many of them to evaluate themselves negatively in terms of their abilities and attributes. By doing so, these children often develop negative beliefs about themselves, particularly as academically and socially incompetent. Consequently, the appraisals from each domain then contribute to children believing they are unworthy (Byrne, 1996; Harter, 1999; Tevendale & Dubois, 2006). These low feelings of self-worth result in many children over-emphasizing the domains in which they are not successful, leading to a large discrepancy between high importance and low
perceived competence (Harter, 1999; Harter, 2006). This discrepancy takes a psychological toll, resulting in a devaluation of the self and ultimately low self-esteem (Harter, 1999; Harter, 2006; Mruk, 2006b). Therefore, children with LD who struggle with low self-esteem experience feeling incompetent and unworthy. Given this, it is important efforts are made to help improve children’s self-esteem, which underlies the significance of the current study (Mruk, 2006b).

Supporting Social and Emotional Well-Being of Children with Learning Disabilities

The research and literature reviewed here demonstrates clearly that children with LD are particularly at risk for social-emotional challenges associated with social competence, interpersonal relationships, and self-esteem. From here, it is critical that stakeholders think hard about effective interventions that can support children with LD, not only with their academic achievement, but also with their social and emotional well-being.

Better Emotional and Social Times (B.E.S.T.) Program.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR) was established as a non-profit organization to offer multiple programs to help those children with LD reach their full potential. Children with LD need to receive attention and support at an early age to give them the best chance at lessening the effects of having a LD. The LDANR strives to support children in their academic and social emotional well-being and, as such, offers a support program called “Better Emotional and Social Times (B.E.S.T.)” to promote healthy social and emotional development in children with LD.

B.E.S.T. is an eight-week, self-advocacy, social skills and self-esteem program offered in the fall, winter and spring months. This program is specifically designed to
support children aged six to 11 years who have a learning disability, although an official diagnosis is not required to participate in the program. Children enrolled in the program attend once each week for a 90-minute instructional session. With help from a highly qualified and trained facilitator, and support from volunteers, the program is aimed at helping children gain an understanding of their learning disability, strengths, and weaknesses, and how to become effective self-advocates. In addition, children are coached on how to effectively adapt to social situations by improving and learning new social skills, and understanding and interpreting body language and facial expressions. Children receive explicit instruction in learning a new social skill during each session such as coping with stress, communicating effectively, recognizing and expressing feelings, staying organized, resolving conflicts, asking for help, etc. This is accomplished through the use of multiple teaching strategies such as: direct instruction, story-telling, role-playing, games, hands-on activities, and small group discussions.

The LDANR is consistently working to improve its programming and, consequently, a new component called the “Who is NOBODY?” program has currently been integrated into the B.E.S.T. program with the objective to promote strong character and self-esteem in children. The “Who is NOBODY?” program is a character education initiative created by Kelly Clark in 2002. The “Who is NOBODY?” program helps teach children to be responsible, caring, respectful, and contributing members of their communities. Children are encouraged to put their own unique strengths and interests into action by helping other living things within their own community (Clark, 2012). As a result, children experience how fun and meaningful it is to help make a difference in the community in their own unique way.
Research Question

The general aim of this thesis was to engage in a multi-lens, qualitative research protocol to study how the “Who is NOBODY?” program can be used to support the social and emotional development of children with learning disabilities who experience challenges with social skills and self-esteem. More specifically, the objective of the current research study was to explore the “Who is NOBODY?” program through three lenses: design, implementation and experiences. This multi-lens approach to the study was to seek an answer to the following research question:

How does the “Who is NOBODY?” program foster strong character development and self-esteem in children with learning disabilities?

The findings of this thesis was to generate two important outcomes. First, this study was to support the Learning Disabilities Association of the Niagara Region (LDANR). As a non-profit agency that relies on operating funding from granting agencies, the LDANR strives to support each of its programs with empirical evidence around its efficacy. The results of this study was to support the LDANR with data supporting the efficacy of its “Who is NOBODY?” program. Second, this study was to add to the field of learning disabilities by enabling a more in-depth understanding of how to best support children with learning disabilities in regards to their social and emotional well-being. The specific methods employed within this thesis are described in the following chapter.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This research adopted a qualitative case study approach to comprehensively explore the “Who is NOBODY?” program and its impact on the character development and self-esteem of children with learning disabilities. As described previously, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was implemented by the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR) to complement its existing Better Emotional and Social Times (B.E.S.T.) program. To study the “Who is NOBODY?” program, I comprehensively explored the character education initiative through three levels: the development of the program through the lens of the program designer, the implementation of the program through the lens of the program facilitator, and experiences of the program through the lens of the children participating in the program. Before describing the specific research protocol for these three lenses, the following section describes the “Who is NOBODY?” program.

The “Who is NOBODY?” Program

As the “Who is NOBODY?” program begins within an environment such as a classroom, a mysterious cardboard suitcase that is addressed to EVERYBODY from NOBODY is simply placed on a table. The suitcase is used to arouse the children’s interests so they take the initiative to find out what is inside. Within the suitcase is a stuffed denim doll with no face, clothes, gender, age, characteristics, or history. It has no friends, peers, or identity; it is simply NOBODY (Chisholm, 2011; Clark, 2012). The “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed by Kelly Clark in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
in 2002. The goal of the program is to support character development, social skills, and self-esteem in children and, particularly, vulnerable children. The program is a self-contained instructional initiative that educators or program coordinators can employ within their classrooms or programs. The program is a long-term initiative aimed to engage children in their own social-emotional development. As children begin the program, the goal for the children is to turn NOBODY, a doll with no character, into SOMEBODY, a doll full of character (Clark, 2012). To do this, each child receives a turn in taking NOBODY home for one week and working on the five “Who is NOBODY?” steps. The five steps help guide children in planning and executing their individual NOBODY projects. The five steps include:

1. Choose a living thing (people, animals or the environment).
2. Use your interests and abilities to help living things.
3. Attach a 3D tangible object to NOBODY that represents your individual project.
4. Write a story and draw a picture to represent your NOBODY experience.
5. Bring NOBODY back to school and present your NOBODY experience to the class.

The child follows these simple steps to plan and execute a unique, meaningful project. The child is encouraged to incorporate his/her unique character strengths, talents and interests to experience his/her own way of helping living things in the community (Clark, 2012). After the child has completed his/her individual NOBODY project, the child attaches a tangible object to NOBODY to represent his/her experience. For example, a child’s project might be to create a “Get Well” card for his/her best friend who is sick at home. The child might deliver the card to his/her friend with the hope that it would cheer
up the friend and make the friend feel better. The child may attach a large red heart to
NOBODY to represent his/her care and love for the friend.

After completing the individual NOBODY project, the child is then encouraged to
reflect and document his/her experience by writing a story and/or drawing a picture. It is
important for the child to assemble his/her individual story, drawing, and photo into the
NOBODY scrapbook because it provides the opportunity to bring together and capture
the experiences of all of the children who participate in the program (Chisholm, 2011;
Clark, 2012). Following this step, the child then presents NOBODY and shares his/her
experience of helping another living thing in the community. In doing so, the child
exhibits his/her unique strengths and interests, as well as shares how s/he made a
contribution to help others in the community. By the end of the week, the child has made
a contribution towards giving NOBODY an identity. NOBODY then goes home with the
next child in the program (Chisholm, 2011; Clark, 2012).

At the end of the eight weeks of the B.E.S.T. program, the stuffed doll can no
longer be called “NOBODY” as it is covered from head to toe with 3D tangible objects.
All of the tangible objects represent the children’s contributions to their community
which, in turn, have created a personality for NOBODY (Chisholm, 2011; Clark, 2012).
With the help of EVERYBODY in the B.E.S.T. program, the children transformed
NOBODY into SOMEBODY (Chisholm, 2011; Clark, 2012).

The “Who is NOBODY?” program allows children to plan and execute individual
NOBODY projects that are meaningful to them and their families. These projects go
beyond the benefits of helping other people; they help these children explore and express
their own unique interests and abilities (Chisholm, 2011; Clark, 2012). The children’s
projects reinforce in them that they have the ability to make a difference in their own communities which, in turn, enhance the children’s overall self-worth. These children learn that although they might be young, they are not powerless or without a voice, and that they can have a positive impact on the lives of others (Chisholm, 2011; Clark, 2012). By these children participating in the “Who is NOBODY?” program and helping NOBODY become SOMEBODY, they are more apt to conclude that they are SOMEBODY too (Chisholm, 2011; Clark, 2012).

Case Study Design

The research protocol adopted in this thesis was a case study, operationally defined as a study of one or more cases within a bounded system over a period of time, through the use of multiple sources of information in data collection, in order to provide a detailed in-depth picture of the case (Creswell, 2013). The current study of the “Who is NOBODY?” program could be described as a single, intrinsic case study within a bounded system. In the current study, I am exploring one bounded case (the “Who is NOBODY?” program) in that the program was bounded by time (eight week program, 90 minute instructional sessions) and place (located at a single elementary school, Connaught Public School). Consistent with a case study approach, I used extensive multiple sources of information including: a first-level analysis of the program designer of the “Who is NOBODY?” program, Kelly Clark, a second level of analysis of my own experience as the program facilitator, and a third-level analysis of the participating children. This multi-lens approach to the study enabled a tri-level lens on how the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed, implemented, and experienced.
Participant Selection and Recruitment

The current case study was a convenience sample in which there were three participant groups in the study who were affiliated with the “Who is NOBODY?” program. Each participant group provided insight into a different aspect of the program. As a result of gathering multiple perspectives, a full, complex picture of the program was created.

The first participant group of the current study involved Kelly Clark, the creator of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. Kelly designed the “Who is NOBODY?” program in 2002. The LDANR incorporated the “Who is NOBODY?” program into the traditional B.E.S.T program with the hope of promoting character development and self-esteem of children with learning disabilities. Kelly was a key informant of the new program as she was able to provide insight into the design process of the “Who is NOBODY?” program and how it could help enhance the traditional B.E.S.T program from the perspective of the designer. I proceeded to send a brief, initial email providing Kelly with information regarding the study and asking if she would be interested in participating. Prior to the scheduled interview, I emailed Kelly the discussion guide in order to allow her time to reflect on how she might respond to the questions regarding the design process of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. This was ideal as Kelly was informed that the information provided would not be anonymous as she is the creator of the program and could be identified in written reports regardless of using a pseudonym.

The second participant group of the study involved myself as the facilitator of the program. As the program facilitator, I was hired by the LDANR to implement the newly designed program once a week for 90 instructional minutes. As a result of being the
researcher and a program participant, I was able to gain increased knowledge of how the program was delivered and its observed outcomes, which would thereby lead to a stronger conjecture. By becoming the program facilitator, I was able to immediately understand the specific avenues for inquiry, the context of the program, and establish rapport with the participating children in the program, which are all factors an outsider would have had to take time to learn and do.

The third participant group of this study involved the 10 children enrolled in the program. For the purpose of understanding how the program helps to enhance the social and emotional development of the participants, it was important to include individuals for whom the program was developed to support. The participating children of the program were aged six to 11, resided in the Niagara Region of Southwestern Ontario, Canada, and attended the same elementary public school. The B.E.S.T. program was designed to support children who have learning disabilities (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and non-verbal learning disorders). However, the participating children of the program were not required to have a formal diagnosis of a learning disability. In order to have been eligible to participate in the program, participating children had to demonstrate evidence of struggling academically (performing below average as compared to their classmates) and experiencing difficulties within their social life (non-verbal learning disorder and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)) due to an identified or non-identified learning disability. In addition, children were screened for other exceptionalities (developmental and intellectual disabilities, mental health issues, and emotional/behavioural issues) by the program coordinator of the LDANR prior to participating, as the program was strictly designed to support those with learning
disabilities, and no other exceptionalities. Parents of participating children and the children themselves were asked to participate in this study in the initial session of the program. Parents were provided with an information package regarding the study, letter of invitation, consent form and assent form for participation in the study. The parents and children were informed that the child’s participation in the study was strictly voluntary and their decision to participate in the study would not affect their membership for future programs offered by the LDANR. Parents and participating children were reminded during the second last session of the program that the arranged focus group would take place the following week during the final session of the B.E.S.T. program. Parents were reminded to return the completed consent and assent forms in order to participate in the study.

Methods of Data Collection

To achieve the objectives of the thesis, I adopted a triangulation approach to capture a deep understanding of the three levels of the program. I comprehensively explored the “Who is NOBODY” program through three levels: the development, implementation, and experiences of participating children. As such, three different data collection materials were used, with each data collection method providing insight into a different level of the new program. The data collection matrix below illustrates the research protocol adopted (Figure 1).
Level One: Design.

The preliminary level of analysis was to explore the design process of the program through the perspective of Kelly Clark, the creator of the program. This perspective allowed insight and familiarity into how the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to promote and support the social and emotional functioning of children with learning disabilities. Specifically, in this level of analysis, I aimed to understand the design principles of the “Who is NOBODY?” program from the perspective of the creator, Kelly. To do this, a one-on-one, semi-structured, open-ended interview was conducted with Kelly. A one-on-one interview has been defined as a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining information and an understanding on a topic of mutual interest; hence, the “Who is NOBODY?” program (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). An interview makes it possible for a researcher to gather information on what is “inside a person’s head”, particularly one’s point of view, values, preferences, attitudes, and beliefs (Cohen et al., 2000). Thus, the aim of the interview with Kelly was to understand how the “Who is NOBODY?”

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<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Field Notes</th>
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<td>One-On-One</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kelly Clark</td>
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<td>Program Facilitator</td>
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<td>Participating Children</td>
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Figure 1: Types of information collected from source
program was developed, the purpose of the program, and how it can help strengthen the social and emotional development of participating children in the B.E.S.T. program.

The one-on-one interview with Kelly was approximately one hour in length and was audio recorded to ensure that I captured Kelly’s perceptions and feelings accurately (Albright, Howard-Pitney, Roberts & Zicarelli, 1998). Afterwards, I transcribed the interview verbatim so that Kelly’s comments were accurately quoted (Albright et al., 1998). The interview began with a series of introductory, ice-breaker questions that provided me the opportunity to establish rapport with Kelly before asking her particular questions regarding the “Who is NOBODY?” program. These questions were followed by inquiries pertaining to the design principle of the “Who is NOBODY?” program and the motivation behind developing the program. Additionally, I asked questions regarding the characteristics of children she felt were enhanced after completing the program. Another essential question I posed was the challenges and barriers individuals may have experienced while implementing the program, as I was aware that I would be the program facilitator of the program, which would involve implementing this program. I ended the interview by asking Kelly about the flexibility and adaptability of the “Who is NOBODY?” program as it would be conducted with children with learning disabilities who require additional support. I ensured I had some prompts and probes prepared for the array of questions I posed, however, Kelly was able to discuss this without my need to probe. I framed all of the questions in an open-ended manner that provided the opportunity for Kelly to elaborate on her answers and share many details and experiences regarding the design process of the “Who is NOBODY?” program.
Level Two: Implementation.

The second level of analysis was aimed at understanding the implementation process of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. As such, this level of analysis focused on my perspective as the facilitator. The specific program studied was offered from February to April 2013, for a total of eight weeks, in the Niagara Region of Southwestern Ontario. As part of the program offering, I acted as the program facilitator of the B.E.S.T. program. Given my direct involvement in delivering the program and interacting with the participating children, it was important to keep a field journal in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of my experience implementing the program. This process involved recording information through various forms such as observational field notes and documents.

Observational data collection involves observing people and events to learn about behaviour and interactions in a natural setting (Curry, Nembhard & Bradley, 2009). Observational field notes may include verbatim or paraphrased comments, observations of the environment, and the researcher’s reflections (Curry et al., 2009). As a result, while implementing the program, I gathered field notes by recording observations as a participant, as the program facilitator, as well as an observer of the participating children in the program. The data gathered consisted of extensive, detailed observational field notes that I collected unobtrusively (Curry et al., 2009). The observational protocol involved both descriptive (description of the program activities) and reflective (the process, reflections on activities and outcomes of the program) notes (Creswell, 2013). By recording observational field notes, it allowed for me to directly see and experience the context of the program rather than trying to learn about it through interviews.
(Albright et al., 1998). In addition, written materials are also a valuable source of data. These documents may include institutional documents (programming or organizational documents), and personal documents (letters, journals, artistic expressions) (Curry et al., 2009). I collected various forms of documents such as a description of the program and activities for each session, program feedback forms from parents and teachers of participating children, photographs, and artifacts children created within the program that provided me with useful information about the program. At the end of implementing the program, I interpreted my observational field notes and documents analytically - from the perspective of a researcher as well as the program facilitator. By studying my own interpretation of how the program was delivered to participating children, I was able to offer a “real-time” analysis of how the program unfolded to help improve the acquisition and manifestation of social skills and self-esteem of the participating children in the new program.

**Level Three: Children’s Experiences.**

The third level of analysis involved understanding the “Who is NOBODY?” program from the perspective of the children’s experiences while participating in the program. This was vitally important because there is no better way to comprehensively explore a program than asking the participants themselves. Children are the experts of their own lives, and conversing with them offered a significant way to acquire knowledge about the program (Mayall, 2000). Given this, I conducted a focus group with the 10 participating children during the final session of the program in order to gain insight into their shared experiences within the new program. Specifically I wanted to understand
how children benefitted from participating in this new program, particularly in terms of how the program strengthened their character development and self-esteem.

A focus group is a qualitative technique that has been used to listen for and gather information from a group of people consisting of approximately five to 10 individuals (Krueger & Casey, 2009). I chose to conduct a focus group with the participating children rather than individual interviews because the participating children shared common characteristics and experiences (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Conducting a focus group with the participating children allowed me, the researcher, to gain insight and a deeper understanding of how the group of children thought, felt and experienced the “Who is NOBODY?” program (Krueger & Casey, 2009). In addition, by serving as the program facilitator, and by the children spending eight weeks together during programming, rapport was established prior to the focus group being conducted. This allowed for a permissive environment to be created and made the children feel comfortable in sharing their perceptions and experiences; these are important factors when conducting a focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2009). This group interaction allowed for me to identify trends and patterns in the children’s perceptions and experiences which, in turn, provided insight into how the “Who is NOBODY?” program was perceived by the group (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

The focus group conducted with the participating children was approximately 45 minutes in length. The focus group was audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim to capture the children’s discussion accurately. Children were reminded that it was their choice to either participate in the focus group, if desired, or not participate if uncomfortable. As a result, I ensured consent was granted from each child. Children
were also informed that in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms would be utilized when transcribing the data and the audiotape would be safely secured in a locked drawer and destroyed upon completion of the study. The focus group began by explaining to the participating children that I would like to learn about their experiences, thoughts and feelings regarding the “Who is NOBODY?” program. This explanation was followed by approximately 10 open-ended questions designed to stimulate discussion about the “Who is NOBODY?” program. The first several questions pertained to the children’s individual NOBODY projects and their inspiration to carry out their specific individual projects. Additionally, I asked questions regarding the children’s character development and self-esteem after they completed their individual projects. Another essential question I posed pertained to the knowledge the children gained about themselves after undertaking their “Who is NOBODY” projects, particularly about their own feelings and the traits that they developed upon completing their individual projects. I ended the focus group by asking the participating children to suggest changes and/or improvements that could be implemented within the newly designed program in order to provide them with better support. In addition, I asked follow-up questions to help draw out the children’s responses to ensure that the group generated comprehensive information that reflected the full spectrum of the children’s opinions and experiences regarding the “Who is NOBODY?” program (Albright et al., 1998).

Data Processing and Analysis

The data was collected from the three lenses described above. The data collected from each lens: interview, observations and documents, and focus group, needed to be processed before being ready for analysis (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). As a
result, the data collected from the direct audio recordings of the interview and focus group was transcribed verbatim into written transcripts. The observational field notes were converted into expanded write-ups, as many of the field notes contained only a brief portion of the information observed. Once the data was processed, I then moved to the next stage, which involved analyzing the data using content analysis.

First, I thoroughly read the interview transcript once, from beginning to end, before beginning the coding process. Following this, as I read through the transcript a second time, I applied codes to the text segments. Although there are several different approaches to coding, I most frequently used a method called “descriptive coding”, which involves assigning labels to the data to summarize in a word or short phrase (Miles et al., 2014). Many of the text segments received more than one code. After coding the interview transcript, the codes derived from data of the first lens became priori codes for the other lenses; that is, the first lens explored the design principle of the “Who is NOBODY?” program, which prepared me for what I would expect to find in the other lenses. I perceive this method of priori coding as a strength and unique component of my research as I was able to gain an insider’s perspective; that is, I was able to obtain the view of Kelly Clark, the designer, on the purpose of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. As a result, I was able to compare Kelly’s perspective with my own, as the program facilitator, and the perspectives of the participating children.

Given this, the next step of the coding process involved me reading the write-ups of my field documents and observations, as well as the focus group transcript. Following this, I used the priori codes derived from the first data set (interview) to guide the analysis of the other sources (documents and observations, and focus group) (Creswell, 2013).
However, during the coding process, I was sure to be open to additional codes that emerged from the other two lenses. This required me to revise some of the codes to better suit the data sets (Creswell, 2013). At the end of the coding process, I extracted all of the text segments from the different sources of information with the same codes and composed an inventory of the different codes from each lens. This helped to categorize the coded segments into three main themes: positive character traits, prosocial behaviour, and strong self-efficacy. The findings derived from the triangulation of data provided an in-depth understanding of the “Who is NOBODY?” program, as well as established the validity of the current research study.
Description of Program Sessions

The following section describes in detail the components of the “Who is NOBODY?” program within the context of the B.E.S.T. program. The eight-week program was aimed at strengthening the social and emotional well-being of children with LD.

Session One: February 13, 2013

Topic Overview: Introduction: What is a LD?

The objective of this week’s session was to introduce the goals and expectations of the program, help children develop a basic understanding of a learning disability, and learn about their own strengths and weaknesses (areas of need).

The “Who is NOBODY?” Program

Before meeting the participating children of the B.E.S.T. program, I placed the “Who is NOBODY?” suitcase on a table in the classroom. Although the children were not going to learn about the “Who is NOBODY?” program until next week’s session, I wanted to arouse the children’s interest of discovering what was inside the mysterious case that was addressed, “To: EVERYBODY, From: NOBODY” (Figure 2). The purpose of this strategy was for the children to have an active role in beginning the program through their eagerness to open the case as opposed to me forcing the program upon them.
Introductory Icebreaker

The session began with an introductory icebreaker game, “Guess Whose Shoe”, to help the children become acquainted with one another and practise positive conversation methods (e.g. appropriate ways to introduce themselves and others).

Group Expectations

The children were instructed that, as members in a group, we have expectations of how we should behave and treat one another in the B.E.S.T. program. I posed to the children, “What are some promises we, as a group, should have to follow to ensure a safe, positive learning environment?” As a group, the children created a list of group promises that everyone was expected to meet. All the children signed their names to the list outlined on the poster board to indicate that they understood these expectations and would promise to abide by them (Figure 3).
Figure 3: Children’s list of group promises

**Responsibili-tree**

The children were introduced to the “Responsibili-tree”. The “Responsibili-tree” served as a behaviour management technique to promote positive behaviour in the program. The children were instructed by the program facilitator that when they demonstrated good behaviour (e.g. listening, sharing, cooperation, inclusiveness, responsibility, respect), they would be rewarded leaves that identified their names and acts of good behaviour. The children were then encouraged to paste the leaves upon the tree reinforcing the acceptable and appropriate behaviours performed by them. All the children were encouraged to earn as many leaves as possible to help make the tree full of beautiful, colourful leaves (Figure 4).
Coping Skill Beads

The children were introduced to the coping skill beads. They were informed they would be learning a new coping skill each week. The coping skills the children would be learning were categorized under five different beads: caring, feelings, communication, responsibility, respect and friendship. A poster board with a list of the five different coping skill beads was posted in the classroom to remind the children to practise using the skills they learned each week (Figure 5). If the children performed these skills effectively, they would earn a coping skill bead that was associated with the skills they performed. The children were then encouraged to attach the rewarded bead to their individual key chains (Figure 6). All the children were encouraged to earn the five coping skill beads by the end of the eight weeks of programming. In addition, the children earned a “star of excellence” bead that they could attach to their keychains after they successfully completed their individual NOBODY projects. The purpose of the coping skill keychain was to positively encourage the children to practise the skills they were learning and to complete their NOBODY projects. The children’s individual keychains served as a visual reminder of the appropriate skills they performed.
What is an LD?

The children completed an activity called “Bursting Misconceptions”. The activity began with me explaining to the group of children, in simple terms, what a learning disability is. Afterwards, each child was handed a word or phrase regarding misconceptions/stereotypes of having a learning disability. The children were asked to refute the stereotype which allowed them to gain an understanding of what a learning disability is and what it is not.
Strengths and Areas of Need

The children completed two different activities called “Knowing Myself” and “All About Me”. Both activities were aimed at teaching children that everyone has different abilities. The “Knowing Myself” activity involved posing several different questions to the group (e.g. who enjoys swimming, whose favourite subject is math) in which children had to respond. After completion of this activity, the children were then asked to complete an “All about Me” chart. The chart required them to draw pictures of tasks and skills they are good at, as well as those needing improvement. Both activities helped the children gain an understanding of their own strengths and areas of need while also learning about each other’s abilities.

Closing Circle

The session ended with the children playing a fun, cooperative game together called “Making Rhythm”. After the game, the children were rewarded with the leaves and coping skill beads they earned during the session.

Session Two: February 27, 2013

Topic Overview: Self-Awareness/Pink Shirt Day: Anti-Bullying

The objective of this week’s session was to introduce and explain the “Who is NOBODY?” program, review what a learning disability is, build on individual strengths, and learn effective ways to handle bullying, as it was pink shirt day (an anti-bullying initiative).

The “Who is NOBODY?” Program

The children were introduced to the “Who is NOBODY?” program. The mysterious case was placed on the table and children were asked what they thought was inside. After all
the children took a turn in guessing, I introduced the NOBODY doll to the children and read aloud the “Who is NOBODY?” storybook to explain the objective of the program. Since the program is centered on cultivating strong character development, I provided the children with direct instruction of 10 positive character traits that reflect core moral values emphasized in the program which included: perseverance, optimism, courage, integrity, fairness, honesty, initiative, respect, responsibility and empathy. The Children participated in a group activity that aimed at educating them on the 10 character trait words as well as helping them learn about their own personal character strengths. Following this activity, the children were taught the meaning of acting prosocially, steps to engage in this type of behaviour, and how one could use his/her personal character strengths to help other living things in the community. The goal of these character lessons was to help the children understand the meaning of good character and how to plan and execute a meaningful “Who is NOBODY?” project to help other living things in the community. After the children had a sound grasp of how to carry out their NOBODY projects, the children learned the date on when they would be taking NOBODY home. At the end of this session, the first child listed on the schedule was sent home with the NOBODY doll and support materials (Figure 7). The child was required to bring NOBODY back the following week and present his/her NOBODY project.
Figure 7: The NOBODY doll and support materials

**Introductory Icebreaker**

The session began with an introductory icebreaker game called “Two Truths and a Dream” to help the children become more acquainted with one another.

**Review of LD**

The children completed an activity called “We’re All Unique” in which they were shown various pictures of children with different physical traits and ethnic backgrounds and were asked to point out similarities and differences amongst the pictures. Afterwards, the group was then asked to explain what learning disabilities mean, as discussed during the previous week, and this was followed up with a discussion. The children were taught that everyone is unique in their own way in terms of how we look and learn.

**Individual Strengths**

The children completed two activities that focused on building their individual strengths. The first activity called “Chain of Strengths” involved the children creating a paper chain that represented their individual strengths, and the different abilities among the group. The second activity called “You’re a Star” required the children to write a positive trait about another person on a star-shaped cutout. The activity allowed for the children to
learn a positive trait they possess, see the positive characteristics of another person, and help to build feelings of worthiness.

**Pink Shirt Day: Anti-Bullying**

The activity began with a discussion about the importance of pink shirt day, how it came to exist, and that young people have the power to make change. Following this, the children were divided into groups to create an awareness poster about bullying.

**Closing Circle**

The session ended with the children playing a fun, cooperative game together called “Fruit Scramble”. After the game, the children were rewarded with the leaves and coping skill beads they earned during the session.

**Session Three: March 6, 2013**

**Topic Overview: Friendship, Cooperation, and Communication Skills**

The objective of this week’s session was for the children to learn effective ways to maintain friendships and develop appropriate communication skills (how to listen attentively, speak to others appropriately, and interpret facial/body language).

**The “Who is NOBODY?” Program**

The selected child for this week presented his/her NOBODY project to the group. (See appendix A for the description of the children’s NOBODY projects.)

**Introductory Icebreaker**

The session began with an introductory icebreaker game called “Face-to-Face” that reinforced the social skills of attentive listening and cooperation.
Learning to be a Good Listener

The children completed three activities that focused on mastering good listening skills. The first activity involved the children working in partners to role-play scenarios that involved poor listening skills. The children who were observing had to determine the problem in each scenario and identify steps of how one might be a good listener. The second activity was a group game called “Spider Web”. The children told an interesting fact about themselves to the group. They then passed a ball of string around the circle, having to repeat the name and interesting fact of the person receiving the ball of string. The game required the children to listen attentively in order to remember the interesting fact one another said. The third activity was called “How Well Do You Follow Instructions?” which involved giving the children specific instructions to follow that required them to record their answers on a piece of paper (e.g. write their names on the first line of the paper at the left hand margin). After the activity, we discussed the following questions: what is the difference between just listening and following instructions, what can you do if you are given instructions you do not understand, and what are some strategies that can help you follow instructions properly?

Closing Circle

The session ended with the children playing a fun, cooperative game together called “Telephone”. After the game, the children were rewarded with the leaves and coping skill beads they earned during the session.

Session Four: March 20, 2013

Topic Overview: Understanding Feelings
The objective of this week’s session was for the children to learn how to recognize and express feelings, as well as appropriate ways to handle situations that create negative feelings.

The “Who is NOBODY?” Program

The selected child for this week presented his/her NOBODY project to the group.

Introductory Icebreaker

The session began with an introductory icebreaker game called “Charades” that involved each child receiving a turn to act out a specific emotion which the rest of the group had to guess. The children were asked to pay attention to the child’s facial expressions and body language to help them determine the correct emotion being displayed.

Our Feelings

The children completed three different activities that focused on the importance of recognizing one’s own feelings, and the feelings of others. The first activity called “Identifying Feelings” began with a group discussion that required the children to brainstorm different emotions one might feel. The children were then provided various pictures of people displaying different emotions. The children were asked to answer three questions regarding the picture they received: how is the person feeling, what are some clues (facial expression, body language, colours associated with the specific emotion) that helped them recognize the person’s feelings, and what might cause the person to feel this way. The second activity called “Feelings Check-In Board” involved a board with various pictures of different emotions in which the children were asked to take the clothespin with their name on it and clip it onto the emotion they were currently feeling. Afterwards, the children were asked about the emotion they identified as feeling and the circumstance
that caused them to feel that way. In the last activity called “Feelings Mural”, the children were divided into two groups. A short story was read to the children and afterwards they had to design a mural that represented the plotline and different emotions of the characters in the story. The children were asked to use colours that are associated with specific emotions. Following this, each group discussed the illustrations the children drew representing the story.

Closing Circle
The session ended with the children playing a fun, cooperative game together called “Matching Feelings”. After the game, the children were rewarded with the leaves and coping skill beads they earned during the session.

Session Five: March 27, 2013

Topic Overview: Coping with Stress (Frustration/Anger)
The objective of this week’s session was for the children to recognize situations that make them feel frustrated and angry, understand that these feelings are acceptable, and the importance of using effective strategies to help them respond to stressful situations.

The “Who is NOBODY?” Program
The selected child for this week presented his/her NOBODY project to the group.

Introductory Icebreaker
The session began with an introductory icebreaker game called “Describe Your Feelings” that demonstrated the importance of using appropriate words to describe how one is feeling.
Dealing with Frustration and Anger

The children completed three different activities that focused on discussing situations that make them feel frustrated and/or angry and appropriate ways to deal with their feelings. The first activity involved the children completing an “Anger Map” worksheet which required them to draw pictures and answer various questions: what kind of face do you have when you’re angry, how do you behave when you’re angry, what are other ways of handling your anger, what things do you say when you’re angry, what happens to your body when you’re angry, what helps when you’re angry. The second activity was called “The M&M Anger Game”. The Children received six differently coloured M&M candies and were asked a question about feeling angry for each colour of candy. After a suitable answer was given, the children were given permission to eat the candy. The third activity involved me reading a story called “Tucker Turtle Takes Time to Tuck and Think” that focused on teaching the children an effective strategy to calm down when they are feeling angry and/or frustrated. Following the story, the children were asked to practise the steps of the strategy.

Closing Circle

The session ended with the children playing a fun, cooperative game together called “Simon Says”. After the game, the children were rewarded with the leaves and coping skill beads they earned during the session.

Session Six: April 3, 2013

Topic Overview: Respect/Manners

The objective of this week’s session was for the children to learn the importance of using
good manners as it teaches them to behave in a way that is kind, polite and respectful to others.

**The “Who is NOBODY?” Program**

The selected child for this week presented his/her NOBODY project to the group.

**Introductory Icebreaker**

The session began with an introductory icebreaker game called “Manners Bingo” that helped the children identify and recognize various manners that should be practised.

**Learning about Manners**

The children completed four different activities that focused on identifying good and bad manners, ways one can show good manners, and the importance of using good manners as a form of respect. The first activity involved the children role-playing various scenarios that demonstrated poor manners. The children who were observing had to explain how one might use good manners in the context of the scenario. The second activity involved me reading a story called “Dinner with Delia”. Afterwards, a discussion was carried out with the children about the character’s use of manners in the story. The children were then asked to indicate how they could practise using good manners at home and at school. The third activity called “Matching Manners” involved the children matching two cards together - one card with a written question and another card with the correct response. A correct match demonstrated the specific manner one should use in a given situation. The last activity involved the children creating thank-you notes to send to a special person in their lives. The children were taught the importance of showing gratitude for the kindness they receive and carrying out their own acts of kindness by sending a thank-you note.
Closing Circle

The session ended with the children playing a fun, cooperative game called “Secret Identity”. After the game, the children were rewarded with the leaves and coping skill beads they earned during the session.

Session Seven: April 10, 2013

Topic Overview: Organization

The objective of this week’s session was for the children to learn and develop organizational skills, why being organized is an important skill, and strategies they can implement in their own lives to help them stay organized.

The “Who is NOBODY?” Program

The selected child for this week presented his/her NOBODY project to the group.

Introductory Icebreaker

The session began with an introductory icebreaker game called “Sequential Simon Says”, an adaptation of the original game that required the children to use their sequencing skills by performing the sequence of instructions in the appropriate order.

Learning Organizational Skills

The children completed three different activities that helped them learn strategies to stay organized, and how the specific strategies could be helpful at home and in school. The first activity called “Keeping Organized” involved the children brainstorming ideas as to why being organized is an important skill to learn. The children were then provided various pictures of ways one might stay organized. The children were asked to answer three questions regarding the picture they received: how does this strategy represent organization, why is this a good strategy, and how could you use this organizational tool
in your own life. The second activity called “Creating Folders” involved the children constructing their own individual homework folders that they could use to organize assignments they needed to complete and homework they had finished. The children discussed the purpose of using the folder and how it could help them keep track of their assignments. The last activity called “Creating Dividers” provided the children with the opportunity to create their own personal dividers for their school binders. The children discussed the purpose of using dividers and how it could help them stay organized at school.

Closing Circle

The session ended with the children playing a fun, cooperative game called “Similarities”, that further enhanced their understanding of organization by sorting objects and determining why they fit together. After the game, the children were rewarded with the leaves and coping skill beads they earned during the session.

Session Eight: April 17, 2013

Topic Overview: Learning to Ask for Help/Celebratory Party

The objective of this week’s session was for the children to discuss the challenges they experience asking for help, while also learning how to seek and accept help from others. In addition, the last section of the session was dedicated to conducting the focus group with the participating children to discuss their experiences of the “Who is NOBODY?” program, and to celebrate their successes within the last eight weeks, as this marked the final session of the program.

The “Who is NOBODY?” Program

The selected child for this week presented his/her NOBODY project to the group.
**Introductory Icebreaker**

The session began with an introductory icebreaker game called “Face Your Fears” that helped the children face their fears of asking for help from others by practising how to ask for help in different situations. Afterwards, the children were asked how they felt when asking others for help and why it is important to do so.

**Asking for Help**

The children completed three different activities that helped them identify situations in which they may need to ask for help, and individuals they could seek help from. The first activity was called “Do You Ask for Help” in which situations were described where someone may have needed to ask for help. The children had to decide, “yes” or “no”, on whether they would ask for help. After the children made their decisions, I asked them why they would ask for help and who they might ask to help them. The second activity called “Personal Protection Plan” began with me asking the group questions: who are people you trust, how do you know you can trust them, and why is it important to ask for help from the supportive people you trust. The children were then instructed to trace their hand on a piece of blank paper. For each finger, the children were asked to draw the names and pictures of supportive people they could turn to for help within different contexts of their lives. In the last activity, the children were divided into two groups. The volunteer at each group read aloud three different scenarios. For each scenario, children were required to record on the conflict chart worksheet the following: the conflict, who you would ask for help, how would you ask for help, when would you ask for help, and why you chose that person to help you.
Focus Group
The children who returned their completed consent and assent forms participated in a 45-minute focus group to explore their perspectives and experiences of the “Who is NOBODY?” program.

Celebratory Party
The session ended with celebrating the children’s achievements over the last eight weeks of the program. All the children received certificates with their names on them representing their hard work throughout the program. The children were rewarded with the leaves and coping skill beads they earned during the session. As a group, we played a game called “Uplifting Circle” where the children formed a circle and passed a ball around to one another. The person passing the ball was required to say an uplifting comment about the person receiving the ball. The positive game allowed the children to develop self-awareness of their character strengths and the unique abilities they possess.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The general purpose of the multi-lens case study design was to identify dominant themes that emerged from the data. Three themes were identified: positive character traits, prosocial behaviour, and strong self-efficacy. Each of the themes was explored from the three lenses.

Theme One: Character Traits

The first theme to emerge from the data was defined as character traits. Character has been defined as “the complex set of psychological characteristics that enable an individual to act as a moral agent” (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004, pg. 73). Thus, good character is comprised of a set of positive traits that are manifested in one’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Park, 2009). These positive character traits are those aspects of personality that are morally valued (Park, 2009). Character traits exist in degrees, with some individuals having more or less of any given quality which describes individual differences. The character traits individuals most frequently possess and exercise are called personal strengths (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Kashdan & Hurling, 2011). Personal strengths are the characteristics that allow an individual to perform well and at their personal best (Wood et al., 2011). These positive character traits are the individual’s strongest traits and are often a strong reflection of one’s identity (Park, 2009).

Research has demonstrated that possessing some specific positive character traits may be more closely associated with desirable outcomes than others. For example: positive character traits of the “heart”, which are related to social connectedness such as: love, gratitude and kindness - have shown to be significantly associated with greater well-
being than strengths of the “head”, which are individual in nature such as creativity and critical thinking (Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Park, 2009). In addition, research has shown children’s academic achievement is not merely based on intelligence, but is strongly influenced by a set of positive character traits such as: perseverance, love, gratitude, honesty, hope, fairness and perspective. Children who strongly possessed those traits demonstrated higher academic success (Park et al., 2004; Park, 2009). Taken together, these research findings conclude certain positive character traits should be targeted for cultivation, particularly for children with learning disabilities, to help improve their social relationships, self-esteem and academic achievement.

Good character does not only include positive character traits with which we are born, these being psychological personality traits, but also positive traits which must be acquired, these being moral virtues (Frankena, 1973; Park, 2009; Sockett, 2005). Moral virtues are positive character traits that are dispositions deeply engrained, learned and have a cognitive core (Sockett, 2005). Virtues are objectively good human attributes such as: respect, honesty, kindness, responsibility, wisdom, etc. (Lickona, 1999). Virtues are not simply thoughts, but habits individuals develop by performing virtuous actions. The more virtues an individual possesses and exercises, the stronger one’s character (Lickona, 1999; Park, 2009), which explains why character education initiatives aim to instill moral virtues in students to promote the development of good character (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

The “Who is NOBODY?” program was a character education program that aimed to cultivate good character in participating children. This character education initiative helped develop positive character traits (psychological and moral virtues) in participating
children. The “Who is NOBODY?” program facilitated children’s understanding of what good character traits are by helping children learn and develop a core set of positive character traits such as: perseverance, optimism, courage, integrity, fairness, honesty, initiative, respect, responsibility, and empathy. The development of these positive character traits is particularly important as research has shown them to be associated with greater social connectedness, emotional well-being and academic achievement (Park, 2009; Park & Peterson, 2009). In addition, the “Who is NOBODY?” program encouraged children to take responsibility for constructing their own personal character by providing them with a platform to use and celebrate their strongest character traits through conducting their individual NOBODY projects. Thus, the “Who is NOBODY?” program helped children develop a strong sense of self, which was a crucial component in them developing strong character and self-esteem.

**Level One: Design.**

The first level of analysis focused on how the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to promote positive character traits in participating children which, in turn, strengthened their self-esteem. To do this, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed for children to focus on their personal character strengths. From the perspective of the designer, Kelly Clark, she explains:

> [Children] can start focusing on what they are good at. It is easy to focus on what you’re not good at and so if they can just have that chance to focus on their strengths. [...] It can be the tiniest things like they’re really good at drawing. It starts showing them their importance; they can start focusing on their strengths
because when you’re shy or have low self-esteem all the good things about you get buried down.

As Kelly explains, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to help children focus on the personal character strengths they possess and perform well. This is important because it is easy for children to concentrate on their weaknesses or negative attributes rather than on the positive traits they possess. However, the “Who is NOBODY?” program provides children with a platform that encourages them to focus on their unique positive traits. For example: a child who possesses the character strength of creativity may be very good at drawing. This child can incorporate his/her unique character strength into his/her NOBODY project. By encouraging children to focus on their specific strengths, they can start recognizing their self-worth. This is particularly important for children who are shy or have low self-esteem because all of the positive qualities they possess often go unrecognized due to them focusing too much on their weaknesses or areas of need.

In addition, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was also designed to develop children’s vocabulary of various positive character traits. More specifically, the “Who is NOBODY?” program focused on teaching the words of 10 key positive traits. The character trait vocabulary was in the form of stickers which included: perseverance, optimism, courage, integrity, fairness, honesty, initiative, respect, responsibility, and empathy. From the perspective of Kelly Clark, she explains:

The character education stickers like caring, initiative, I know some of those words are bigger language but if you take the time with them [...] then they
could explain why they felt they were being honest, or why they felt like they were being optimistic. It starts pushing them to use the language.

As Kelly explains, the “Who is NOBODY?” program included character education stickers to use as a strategy to teach students positive character trait vocabulary. Although some of the terminology may have been difficult for children to learn, Kelly suggests the program facilitator should take the time to teach children the different character trait words. By doing so, children could then begin using the proper language to describe their NOBODY experiences. In addition, by helping children learn positive character trait vocabulary, children would be able to use the language to define the unique character traits they used to help benefit the well-being of other living things. Thus, by children developing a character trait vocabulary, they are able to share their “Who is NOBODY?” experiences with others.

Furthermore, the design principle of the “Who is NOBODY?” program provided each child with the opportunity to take home the blue denim doll named NOBODY and the support materials that assisted each child in constructing his/her individual NOBODY projects. As a result, the design process of the program developed the positive trait of responsibility in children. As Kelly Clark, the creator of the “Who is NOBODY?” program, explains:

Kids have the experience of being in-charge of NOBODY, responsible for its well-being. They’re not the one’s receiving help but giving it.

As Kelly states, the “Who is NOBODY?” program provided children with the opportunity to take responsibility for the NOBODY doll. More specifically, when each child took a turn to conduct his/her individual NOBODY project, s/he was responsible for
bringing NOBODY home and remembering to return it the following week. In addition, children were also responsible for planning and executing individual projects that required them to help another living thing. Thus, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was directly enforcing children to develop the positive character trait of responsibility as they were responsible for NOBODY’s well-being as well as helping another living thing in the community. By participating in the “Who is NOBODY?” program, children were developing good character as they exercised the positive character trait of responsibility.

Finally, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to promote children’s respect for diversity. Children’s individual NOBODY projects brought awareness among the group of how everyone was unique based on the personal character strengths they possessed and used to help other living things within their community. Thus, children’s NOBODY experiences were a strong reflection of their unique identity. From the creator’s perspective, Kelly Clark states:

*Also, appreciation of diversity. So many of them are much more aware of their classmates. At the beginning, I would have 25 classes piloting it and I would have them answer a series of questions. […] A lot of the things the kids would say are like the people who were most giving they thought would have been the least. It was surprising how they sized other people up. So umm… awareness of themselves, awareness of others and the idea of what you can do together is a real representative of a community. You need every type of person in the community to make it right. I think the key is the classroom, look at what our classroom can teach.*
As Kelly explains, the “Who is NOBODY?” program helps participating children learn to appreciate and respect diversity. As the participating children present their individual NOBODY projects to the group, their prosocial acts serve as a strong reflection of their unique identity. By completing their NOBODY experiences and sharing their success with others, the children are able to become attuned to their personal character strengths, while gaining perspective of the character traits they have in common with others.

In addition, when the “Who is NOBODY?” program was first piloted in multiple classrooms, Kelly invited students to share their initial experiences of participating in the character education initiative. As Kelly describes, many children explained how they were surprised to see many of their classmates being so kind and giving to others, especially those individuals from whom it was least expected. As a result, the “Who is NOBODY?” program helped children develop their identities and encouraged them to accept and celebrate their uniqueness. By doing so, children were able to gain respect for diversity in that each child can help another living thing by using his/her unique character strengths. Thus, by children putting their character into action, they demonstrated how a community, a group of people, can work together to make a significant difference in the lives of others. It involves every individual using his/her unique character traits to bring about social change.

Level Two: Implementation.

The second level of analysis of the “Who is NOBODY?” program focused on how the program was implemented to promote positive character traits in participating children in order to enhance their self-esteem.
The first way I experienced the “Who is NOBODY?” program in promoting positive character traits was by teaching the children the vocabulary of 10 positive character traits which included: perseverance, optimism, courage, integrity, fairness, honesty, initiative, respect, responsibility, and empathy. These key character trait words were chosen to teach the children the meaning of good character because the “Who is NOBODY?” program starter kit provided these 10 character attributes in the form of stickers. The purpose of these stickers was to help the children acquire the proper language to describe their character in action. When the children completed their individual NOBODY projects, they were encouraged to write a story or draw a picture about their “Who is NOBODY?” experience. The children were instructed to choose the appropriate attribute stickers that best described the character traits they used to perform their act of helping. In order for the children to complete this task, children required a strong understanding of the 10 key terms. To help the children learn the terminology and meaning of the 10 positive character traits, I introduced one word at a time, providing a brief child-friendly definition. Following this, I generated a group discussion with the children by asking them to provide me with examples of specific actions that illustrated each trait. I encouraged the children to use real-life experiences to help them brainstorm examples. In addition, I asked them to provide me with synonyms for each key character trait. This task developed their understanding that different words can have similar meanings which, in turn, helped build their vocabulary. The 10 different character trait words, the child-friendly definition, examples, and synonyms were recorded on a large chart to help the children gain a strong understanding of the character trait vocabulary.
Afterwards, I prompted the children to share their responses of why these positive character traits are important in order for a person to have good character.

Once the children demonstrated a strong understanding of the meaning of each character trait word, I asked them to think of the two positive character traits they felt were their strongest attributes from the list of the 10 key terms. The children were then prompted to write their names under two of the trait columns on the chart that represented their strongest attributes. Following this, the children took turns identifying their two strongest traits and providing an explanation of how they used those specific character traits. This character lesson was implemented to help the children develop a general knowledge of the different types of traits that constitute good character, develop the ability to make inferences about a person’s character, and develop awareness of the specific character traits they possess. Thus, the children were able to apply the character trait knowledge they gained from this lesson when presenting their individual NOBODY projects to the class.

The second way I experienced the “Who is NOBODY?” program to foster positive character traits in children was by incorporating student presentations. The objective of the children presenting their NOBODY projects experience to the group was for them to celebrate and share the personal character strengths they possessed and used to help another living thing. It was important for the children to recognize their accomplishment as it was based on using their own character strengths, which helped them develop their self-awareness. In addition, the children’s presentations provided an opportunity for them to practise using the positive character trait vocabulary they learned by describing their acts of helping. By doing so, the children would observe one another
exercising the character trait vocabulary, which reinforced the other children to develop and use the proper language too. Furthermore, as the children witnessed one another describing their character in action, the children developed a strong respect for diversity. The children were able to make inferences about one another’s character, thus enhancing their awareness of others’ unique identities.

The final way I experienced the “Who is NOBODY?” program to promote positive character traits was by establishing a safe, caring and inclusive classroom environment, which was a prerequisite for helping the children’s learning flourish. As the program facilitator, I was able to help the children internalize important moral virtues that were being promoted within the classroom by modeling and continually reinforcing good behaviour. As a key role model for these children, it was important for my actions to align with my words. By modeling positive character traits such as honesty, respect, responsibility, etc., I helped the children learn that I do not only teach about moral virtues, but that I value these traits too, which can be demonstrated by my ethical actions. For example: to promote the development of respect, it was important for me to treat the children with respect in order to expect respect in return; or, to encourage the children to respect the program rules (group promises), it was important that I followed these rules too.

In addition, it was important to praise the children who displayed positive character traits in order to reinforce this good behaviour. By praising the children for their moral actions, they were able to learn the type of behaviour that was valued in the classroom. If a child was not acting in an ethical manner, I would ask him/her several questions that required him/her to practise moral reasoning such as: how would you like
to be treated, or how did your actions affect others, which was a positive strategy in teaching the children the importance of knowing right from wrong (McDaniel, 1998).

**Level Three: Children’s Experiences.**

The third level of analysis focused on the experiences of the children who participated in the “Who is NOBODY?” program to demonstrate how it was successful in cultivating positive character traits and self-esteem. From the perspective of the participating children, several of the children described the positive character traits they developed after participating in the program. More specifically, many children identified the specific positive character traits they possessed and used to complete their individual NOBODY projects. For example, Gary [pseudonym] explained:

*Gary: My project was awesome! What I learned about myself was respect and learned to be nice to my babysitter.*

*Facilitator: That’s great! What did you learn about being respectful?*

*Gary: I learned that being respectful is to not hurt people, to not be rude to people, and to be nice to everyone.*

As Gary explains, the positive character traits he developed from his NOBODY project experience were respect and kindness. Gary learned the meaning of respect by explaining the importance of being kind and caring towards other people while being considerate of their feelings.

In addition, Lu [pseudonym] described the positive character traits he developed from conducting his individual NOBODY project experience.

*Facilitator: What did you learn from your NOBODY experience?*

*Lu: Responsibility and helpfulness.*
Facilitator: What did you learn about those two character traits?

Lu: Well, I helped my mom and was responsible by picking up the garbage and taking it out.

As Lu describes, his NOBODY project experience developed the positive character traits of responsibility and helpfulness. Lu described how he exercised these positive character traits by being helpful to his mom in collecting the garbage and taking it out to the curb for pick-up. This task also required Lu to be responsible as he was expected to follow through with completing the chore. As a result, Lu’s NOBODY project experience fostered the positive character traits of helpfulness and responsibility.

Another participating child, Holly [pseudonym], described the positive character trait she developed from conducting her NOBODY project.

Holly: With Nobody, I learned you get to share your feelings and you can share your animal’s feelings too.

Although Holly does not use the proper language to identify the character trait she learned from her NOBODY project experience, her explanation demonstrates that the program fostered the positive character trait of empathy. Holly explains the importance of expressing one’s own feelings as well as understanding the feelings of others.

Furthermore, the participating child, Damian [pseudonym], explained two positive character traits he developed from carrying out his NOBODY project.

Damian: When I was doing my project, it taught me discipline, to be responsible, and it made me strong.

Facilitator: Strong?
Damian: Yeah, because I had to pick-up all the laundry and people’s underwear.

Facilitator: Oh. [Laughing]. Very good! How did your project teach you discipline and responsibility?

Damian: Because I had to do it.

Facilitator: Do you mean because it was a chore? Damian: Yes. Mhmmm!

As Damian explains, his NOBODY project promoted the positive character traits of responsibility and discipline. These positive character traits were instilled in Damian as he was responsible for picking-up the household laundry and he demonstrated discipline by completing the chore he was assigned.

In the final example, a child named Derek [pseudonym] described positive traits he developed from participating in the “Who is NOBODY?” program.

Derek: I would like to do NOBODY again because it’s a lot of fun and you get to do whatever you want, like I could add a smiley-face to NOBODY.

Facilitator: Do you mean you liked being able to add a 3D object to NOBODY to represent your project? Being creative?

Derek: Yeah. I love being creative!

From Derek’s statement, the “Who is NOBODY?” program fostered the positive character traits of autonomy and creativity. As Derek explains, he enjoyed having a sense of control over his own learning. More specifically, Derek enjoyed being able to plan and execute his own NOBODY project which meant that he could be creative in choosing the tangible object he wanted to attach to the NOBODY doll to represent his individual project.
Taken together, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was shown to cultivate good character by developing positive character traits in children. This theme of positive character traits was explored through the triangulation of data gathered from the three levels of the “Who is NOBODY?” program: design, implementation and experiences of the children. The “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to help children identify and recognize their personal character traits and the accomplishments that can stem from using one’s strengths. In addition, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to teach children character trait vocabulary as well as instill specific character traits such as responsibility and respect for diversity in students. The “Who is NOBODY?” program was implemented to promote the understanding and development of positive character traits through direct instruction, peer modeling, and positive classroom ethos. Lastly, children’s experiences of partaking in the “Who is NOBODY?” program demonstrated the children to have successfully acquired positive character traits. Therefore, the “Who is NOBODY?” program enhanced children’s self-esteem by fostering positive character traits in children which, in turn, helped them develop a strong sense of self.

**Theme Two: Prosocial Behaviour**

The second theme that clearly emerged from the analyses of the three perspectives centered on the notion of prosocial behaviour. Prosocial behaviour refers to acts undertaken to enhance the welfare of others (Weinsten & Ryan, 2010). Consequently, research has shown that individuals who engage in prosocial acts will yield well-being benefits from helping others (Weinsten & Ryan, 2010). However, the motive for engaging in prosocial behaviour has shown to impact the quality of helping as well as the positive outcomes that derive from acting prosocially (Weinsten & Ryan, 2010). For
example: most prosocial acts are motivated by altruism, the unselfish concern to help others without expecting to benefit in return, or by feelings of empathy (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). In contrast, engagement in prosocial acts for egoistic, self-centered concerns involves helping others with the expectation of receiving benefits, rewards or reciprocity (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). As a result, altruistic motives for helping are often more autonomous than egoistic motives, which allow for both the helper and the recipient to experience greater well-being benefits (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010).

The “Who is NOBODY?” program prompted the children to engage in prosocial behaviours autonomously in order to support their community by helping another living thing such as the environment, people or animals. The children were not expected to receive external benefits from participating in the “Who is NOBODY?” program as they were not rewarded by the program facilitator for completing their projects, nor were their projects evaluated or assigned an academic grade. It was important that the children not be rewarded externally so that they did not act prosocially for the sake of receiving external benefits (McDaniel, 1998). In addition, by not providing children with external rewards, they would not be able to attribute their prosocial behaviour to the reward. Rather, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was for the children to engage in prosocial behaviour so that they could think of themselves as caring and helpful (McDaniel, 1998). Thus, the goal of the “Who is NOBODY?” program was for the children’s prosocial behaviours to be reinforced by the good feelings they instilled in others which, in turn, would allow them to feel worthy of their actions (McDaniel, 1998). With this being said, by not using extrinsic rewards, the children were more likely to engage in prosocial acts and would subsequently experience greater satisfaction from their acts of helping, which
would ultimately lead to the children experiencing intrinsic benefits and, particularly, enhanced self-esteem (Weinsten & Ryan, 2010).

In addition, research has shown individuals who autonomously engage in prosocial acts will specifically experience greater self-esteem benefits after helping, as opposed to individuals who perform involuntary prosocial acts (Weinsten & Ryan, 2010). An autonomous helper, whose action is self-initiated, will express a greater sense of volition. The individual who is autonomous in his/her helping feels s/he “owns” the act and is responsible for what has been achieved from helping others (Weinsten & Ryan, 2010). As a result, the autonomous helper is more effective and effortful in his/her actions and feels a greater sense of closeness to the person receiving help, which thereby causes the helper to develop greater self-esteem (Weinsten & Ryan, 2010). With this being said, the children who participated in the “Who is NOBODY?” program engaged in autonomous prosocial acts which helped build their self-esteem. Given this, the present study used a triangulation of data to demonstrate how each of the three levels of the “Who Is NOBODY?” program of design, implementation and experiences of participating children promoted prosocial behaviour in the children.

**Level One: Design.**

The first level of analysis was centered on how the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to facilitate the children’s engagement in prosocial behaviour which, in turn, strengthened their self-esteem. The primary objective of the “Who is NOBODY?” program was to provide the children with a platform that required them to put their character into action which, in turn, led to the children behaving in a prosocial manner. From the perspective of the designer, Kelly Clark, she explained:
Character is the number one focus of the program. I think it is always about identity. It is not based on anything superficial but based completely on what you did. It gives kids a chance to realize what they can accomplish. It’s a vehicle, like kids want to help, you know? If you give them a vehicle, it really gives them a chance to build their self-esteem.

As Kelly explains, the central focus of the “Who is NOBODY?” program was to cultivate good character in participating children. The children were encouraged to conduct an individual NOBODY project that required them to use their unique positive character traits to help other living things in the community. The children’s prosocial acts fostered a positive identity. As the children recognized their ability to help benefit the well-being of others in their own unique way, they ultimately felt good about their prosocial acts. Thus, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was a vehicle for children to engage in prosocial behaviour to help benefit others, but also functioned to promote positive feelings of self-worth in children to ultimately build their self-esteem.

In addition, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to provide children with the opportunity to engage in prosocial acts autonomously, which helped build their self-confidence. From the perspective of the creator, Kelly, she explained the “Who is NOBODY?” program as:

A natural way for [children] to pick-up on something happening in their life. [...] Every single kid is worried about something, confused about something, interested in something. The NOBODY program gives them an outlet to do something about it [...] It’s about finding something [they] love and have such a
strong interest for that will make [children] feel much more confident because it is something [they] know and care so much about.

As Kelly explains, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to function as an outlet for children to act autonomously. The children experience personal choice in how they carry out their individual NOBODY projects to help others. The children’s decision to act prosocially derives from their own personal experiences. The children’s prosocial engagements may reflect their concerns, values and/or unique interests, which allows them to act in a meaningful way. By allowing the children to act autonomously, they develop confidence in themselves as their prosocial engagements elicit a sense of competence and personal meaning.

**Level Two: Implementation.**

The second level of analysis focused on how the “Who is NOBODY?” program was implemented to foster prosocial behaviour in the participating children in order to enhance their self-esteem.

As the facilitator, the first way I experienced the “Who is NOBODY?” program fostering prosocial behaviour was through providing children with direct instruction of how the “Who is NOBODY?” program works. It was important to ensure the children had an in-depth understanding of how to carry out their individual NOBODY projects as it is based primarily on giving children the opportunity to practise engaging in prosocial behaviours within the context of their own community. Given this, I began by opening the mysterious case and introduced to the group the blue denim doll named NOBODY. I explained to the children that it was our goal to help turn NOBODY, a doll with no character, into SOMEBODY, a doll full of character. To achieve this goal, I explained to
the children that NOBODY needed to learn something positive from EVERYBODY in
the program, which would require them to act in a prosocial manner. To facilitate the
children’s understanding of this concept, I read aloud a storybook called “The
SOMEBODY Project” that was provided to me within the “Who is NOBODY?” program
kit. The story encouraged children to help make a positive difference in their own social
world by helping other living things in their own personally, meaningful way.

Following the story, I generated a group discussion and created a visual list with
the children about the meaning of acting prosocially. However, in order to help the
children understand this concept, I referred to language that often identifies with
behaving in a prosocial manner that I knew the children would be familiar with such as
performing a “good deed” or an “act of kindness” for others. Once the children
demonstrated a strong understanding of the concept of prosocial behavior, it was
important for them to learn the necessary steps that are required to behave in a prosocial
manner. Given this, as a group, we brainstormed and created another visual list for the
following three steps: how to recognize when a living thing needs help, how to decide
whether to help or not, and how to select and perform an appropriate behaviour for the
specific situation. By providing the children with direct instruction and facilitating a
group discussion, the children were taught the meaning of acting prosocially as well as
specific steps to engaging in this type of behaviour, which is necessary in order for
children to be able to successfully and competently complete their individual NOBODY
projects.

I also experienced the “Who is NOBODY?” program fostering prosocial
behaviour through including student presentations. This teaching strategy involved each
child sharing with the rest of the group his/her NOBODY project experience of helping another living thing. By doing so, the child served as a peer role model of how to competently engage in prosocial behaviour. As a result, the children’s projects functioned as a form of social learning in that their children’s projects served as practical examples of how one could behave in a prosocial manner. In addition, as each child presented his/her individual project, I asked the child several questions relating to the steps he/she carried out that had ultimately led to him/her behaving in a prosocial manner. Some questions posed included: what living thing did you choose to help, why did you help that living thing, how did you help that living thing, what sorts of prosocial skills did you use to help that living thing, etc. I posed these questions to facilitate the child’s understanding of the steps he/she conducted to behave in a positive manner, and the skills he/she utilized to competently perform the prosocial task. In addition, by having the child present his/her experience while answering the posed questions, the child served as a model to the other children of how to competently act in a prosocial manner. Given this, the children empowered each other by demonstrating how each and every person can help make a positive difference by helping other living things in their own unique way. Therefore, not only did the whole group benefit from listening to one another’s individual NOBODY project experiences, but each child was provided the opportunity to share and celebrate his/her success, thereby allowing each child to feel worthy of his/her positive behaviour.

The final way I experienced the program fostering children’s development of prosocial behaviour was through establishing a positive class ethos in order to provide a safe, caring and prosocial learning environment. To do this, the children were instructed
to create a list of “group promises” that consisted of the appropriate behaviours they would all be expected to follow while participating in the program (see figure 3). The goal for creating the “group promises” list was not for it to be dictated by me, the teacher, but rather for the children to work cooperatively together to form a list of positive behaviours they would agree to follow. By doing so, the children participated in generating the behavioural expectations of the classroom, which thereby provided the children with the opportunity to act autonomously in establishing their learning environment. As a result, by being involved in creating the list of appropriate behaviours expected within the classroom, the children were able to learn to accept responsibility for their actions.

In line with the children creating their own classroom expectations, I also provided the children with positive feedback upon witnessing them engaging in prosocial, productive behaviour such as: when completing their individual NOBODY projects, or when spontaneously conducting themselves this way throughout their activities. The purpose of providing the children with positive feedback when behaving in an appropriate manner was to provide them with recognition of their positive behaviour as well encourage the other children to act in a similar manner. Thus, the positive feedback allowed them to feel a sense of worthiness, and would ultimately lead to them engaging in similar appropriate behaviours.

**Level Three: Children’s Experiences.**

The third level of analysis focused on the experiences of the children who participated in the “Who is NOBODY?” program in order to demonstrate how their engagement in prosocial behaviour led to an enhancement in their self-esteem. Within the
program, the children were provided a sense of autonomy over their individual NOBODY projects in that they were responsible for making the decisions of how they wanted to plan and execute their prosocial acts. From the perspective of the participating children, many of them enjoyed having a sense of control over their own learning. For example, as Holly [pseudonym] explained:

*My favourite part was when I got to bring NOBODY home and I got to um, think about what project I was going to do.*

Because the children were provided a sense of autonomy, their individual NOBODY projects became meaningful, which led to many of them experiencing a personal sense of accomplishment after completing their prosocial act.

From the perspective of the participating children, many of them felt worthy after competently helping others, while also feeling appreciated for their positive actions. For example, Gary [pseudonym], a participating child in the program, described his experience of conducting the NOBODY project.

*Gary: My project was about feeding my baby sister.*

*Facilitator: Feeding your baby sister? So, whom did you help?*

*Gary: My mom.*

*Facilitator: Your mom? Good!*

*Gary: Yeah and my sister whose a baby.*

*Facilitator: Good! What did you do to help your mom and baby sister?*

*Gary: I saw my mom struggling when I got home from school.*

*Facilitator: How was your mom struggling?*
Gary: My mom was having struggles with holding the baby, she had to cook, change and feed my baby sister so I thought I should help my mom by feeding my sister. She said thank-you and I said you’re welcome. She was very happy!

Facilitator: That’s excellent! How did it make you feel to help your mom?

Gary: Awesome!

Facilitator: How come?

Gary: Because I helped my baby sister by feeding her and helped my mom because she didn’t’ have to struggle anymore.

Gary’s prosocial act was motivated by his feelings of empathy for his mother by caring that she was struggling to complete multiple tasks, which compelled him to help her. As a result, Gary described his autonomous prosocial act as helping his mother in providing care to his baby sister by feeding her an afternoon snack. Gary’s prosocial engagement allowed him to feel very competent as he was able to successfully perform the task. Gary’s actions were shown to be successful when Gary explained that his mother thanked him for his assistance. In addition, Gary described that his mother expressed happiness after he fed his sister, which was evident when Gary said, “she was very happy!” The mother’s expression of appreciation and gratitude demonstrates Gary’s competence in providing care to his sister. Consequently, Gary’s competent prosocial actions led to him feeling very worthy, which was evident when he explained to have felt “awesome” for providing his help to both his baby sister and his mother. As a result, Gary’s self-esteem was enhanced as he experienced a sense of worthiness and competence after behaving in a prosocial manner to help benefit his family.
Furthermore, another participating child, Derek [pseudonym], described that he learned the importance of behaving prosocially from conducting his NOBODY project.

Facilitator: What do you learn from your NOBODY project?

Derek: It’s important to help the environment and friends because it’s really nice to do and feels good to help others.

From Derek’s statement, the “Who is NOBODY?” program taught him the importance of engaging in prosocial behaviour. As Derek explains, he learned it was important to help other living things because it’s a kind gesture and, by doing so, it produces feelings of worthiness.

Taken together, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was shown to develop strong character in students by promoting prosocial behaviour. This theme of prosocial behaviour was explored through the triangulation of data gathered from the three levels: design, implementation and experiences of the children. The “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed as a vehicle for children to autonomously perform prosocial behaviours. The “Who is NOBODY?” program was implemented to promote children’s understanding of and engagement in prosocial behaviour through direct instruction, peer modeling, and a positive classroom ethos. Finally, the children’s experiences of participating in the “Who is NOBODY?” program demonstrated the children to have benefitted from their autonomous prosocial acts. As the children competently performed their prosocial acts, they felt worthy of their actions. Therefore, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was shown to strengthen children’s self-esteem by providing them with the opportunity to engage in autonomous prosocial acts, which led to the children feeling...
competent and worthy. As so succinctly stated by Derek, a participating child, “You can make yourself feel good and others by helping others!”

**Theme Three: Self-Efficacy**

The third theme emerging from the tri-lens data was the idea that the “Who is NOBODY?” program fostered children’s development of strong self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has been defined as a person’s beliefs about their ability to carry out a desired course of action (Bandura, 1997; Klassen & Lynch, 2007). It is the belief of whether a person thinks “I can do it” or “I can’t do it” (Margolis, 2005). Thus, self-efficacy reflects an individual’s confidence in his/her abilities to perform specific tasks or manage particular situations which, in turn, influences his/her feelings of self-worth (Brown & Marshall, 2006).

Research has shown individuals who have strong self-efficacy often have higher self-esteem (Margolis, 2005; Brown & Marshall, 2006). Although, these individuals may not always be successful at every task, they are more likely to attempt a task they perceive as difficult, and put forth a greater effort to achieve the goal due to having more confidence in their abilities to succeed (Margolis, 2005; Brown & Marshall, 2006). In contrast, individuals who have weak self-efficacy often have low self-esteem as a result of believing they lack the ability to succeed. Given this, these individuals will often avoid or resist the particular task, put forth little effort, and ultimately not achieve at a level that is commensurate with their abilities (Margolis, 2005).

From this perspective, self-efficacy is domain-specific in that high self-efficacy in one area may not coincide in another area. For example: a child with a LD may feel very confident in his/her artistic ability to draw, but may not feel very confident in his/her
academic ability to read. However, it is important to understand that not all self-efficacy influences a person’s self-esteem. A person’s self-efficacy in domains of high personal importance will exert a stronger influence on self-esteem, in contrast to domains of low personal importance (Brown & Marshall, 2006). Thus, self-efficacy is specific to the task that is being attempted, which thereby causes individuals to have different levels of self-esteem in different areas (Brown & Marshall, 2006).

Within the context of the current study, research has shown students who struggle with learning often have weak or low self-efficacy as a result of experiencing academic difficulties and/or interpersonal rejection on a regular basis (Margolis, 2005; Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). The daily negative experiences cause many of these children to lose their resilience, which often results in many of them avoiding academic and/or social activities they perceive as being difficult due to their fear of failing. As a result, the children’s beliefs of being academically and/or socially incompetent undermine their confidence and feelings of self-worth (Margolis, 2005; Mather & Ofiesh, 2005).

The “Who is NOBODY?” program was aimed at enhancing participating children’s self-efficacy by providing them with the opportunity to be successful. The children were provided control over their own learning in order for their individual NOBODY projects to become unique and meaningful to them. By encouraging the children to act autonomously, the character education task became personally important to them. The children were able to plan and execute their own NOBODY projects, which meant they could use their unique character traits, talents and interests to help other living things. The children’s self-initiated behaviour would likely lead to realistic accomplishments as they felt confident in their ability to achieve the task as result of
being able to use their unique strengths. Thus, the “Who is NOBODY?” program strived to foster favourable self-efficacy in children by providing them with the opportunity to experience success by using their unique strength which, in turn, strengthened their self-esteem (Brown & Marshall, 2006). With this being said, the present study used a triangulation of data to explore how each of the three levels of the “Who is NOBODY?” program of design, implementation and experiences of participating children fostered strong self-efficacy in the children.

**Level One: Design.**

The first level of analysis focused on how the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to promote positive self-efficacy in order to strengthen the children’s self-esteem. The design principle of the “Who is NOBODY?” program helps children feel empowered by their own actions as they recognize their capabilities to accomplish their goal of helping others. The children’s personal accomplishments increase their confidence in their ability to succeed which, in turn, strongly influences their self-efficacy. From the perspective of the designer of the “Who is NOBODY?” program, Kelly Clark explains the biggest change she has witnessed in the children who have participated in the program:

*You see the kids believing in themselves because they actually have a tangible experience. It’s on paper, it’s on NOBODY. If they did their project in September they still see it in June.*

As Kelly explains, the participating children begin believing in their capacity to succeed as they are constantly reminded of their personal accomplishments through the tangible objects they have attached to the NOBODY doll. The tangible objects represent the
children’s contribution to the community and their ability to successfully perform their prosocial act. Although the “Who is NOBODY?” program is most often implemented within the school boards, in which the program usually runs from September to June, Kelly emphasizes that it does not matter at what time the children conduct their individual NOBODY projects. If the children carry out their projects at the beginning of the year in September, or at the end of the year in June, they will not lose sight of their accomplishments, despite how much time has passed. This is because the children will still be reminded of their positive experience of helping others as a result of attaching a tangible object to the NOBODY doll. This tangible experience visually reminds children of their capability to make a difference in the lives of others which, in turn, enhances their self-efficacy and ultimately produces positive feelings of self-worth.

In addition, the “Who is NOBODY?” program provided the children with a sense of personal control over their own learning. The “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to encourage the children to utilize their unique talents when performing their prosocial act in order to increase their self-confidence. From the perspective of the designer, Kelly Clark, she explains the design of the “Who is NOBODY?” program:

*Children can start focusing on their strengths because when [they] have low self-esteem all the good things about [them] get buried down. It’s about giving them an outlet to actually run with something they love to do.*

As Kelly explains, the “Who is NOBODY?” program functions as an outlet for participating children to focus on their strengths because children with poor self-esteem have a tendency to concentrate on their weaknesses rather than on the positive qualities they possess. The “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to encourage children to
incorporate their unique strengths and/or interests when conducting their prosocial acts. By doing so, the prosocial act becomes a personally important goal they want to achieve which, in turn, positively influences their self-efficacy. Children are able to feel confident when conducting their prosocial acts as they are able to rely on their strengths to help them perform the acts competently which, in turn, produce positive feelings of self-worth.

**Level Two: Implementation.**

The second level of analysis focused on how the “Who is NOBODY?” program was implemented to help strengthen participating children’s self-efficacy in order to enhance their self-esteem.

As the facilitator, the first way I experienced the “Who is NOBODY?” program strengthening children’s self-efficacy was by providing them with a sense of control over their own learning. To do this, I provided the children with direct instruction of how to choose and plan their individual NOBODY projects, as this would encourage the children to act autonomously. Given this, I explained to the children that they would be given the opportunity to create their own NOBODY projects that would involve helping other living things in the community in their own unique, meaningful way. The children were instructed that they would be able to make all of the decisions in planning and conducting their personal NOBODY projects. For example: the children had the choice in deciding whom they wanted to help (people, animals, or the environment), how they wanted to help that living thing in a way they felt would make a significant difference, as well as the type of tangible object they would attach to the NOBODY doll to represent their prosocial acts.
In addition, I emphasized to the children that they should make their individual NOBODY projects fun and meaningful to them by incorporating their interests and/or strengths. To help enhance the children’s conceptual understanding of how to create a meaningful NOBODY project, I generated a group discussion with the children by asking them to describe their individual interests (things they love) as well as their strengths (abilities they perform well). As the children responded, we created two visual lists on the whiteboard. The first list was of the children’s interests, and the second list was of their strengths. Following this, I asked the children to provide me with suggestions of how they could use their interests and/or strengths to help another living thing in their community. I included these activities to help the children discover their own unique interests and capabilities, how they can utilize these unique talents to help others, while helping them recognize that everyone can make a difference in the community in their own unique way.

As the facilitator, using a child-centered approach to teaching was an effective strategy to enhance the children’s self-efficacy. By allowing the children to make meaningful choices in conducting their NOBODY projects, the children’s prosocial acts became a personally important goal they wanted to achieve. By helping the children construct these goals, they were far more motivated and committed to complete a task that was self-initiated, enjoyable and purposeful to them. Given this, as the children achieved their personal goal of helping others, many of them experienced a personal sense of accomplishment as they were able to attribute their success to their own actions and efforts.
Another way I experienced the “Who is NOBODY?” program to promote children’s self-efficacy was by incorporating student presentations. After each child took NOBODY home, he/she was required to present to the group his/her NOBODY experience to the rest of the group. By incorporating student presentations, the children acted as peer models for one another, which was useful in strengthening their self-efficacy. As children observed a successful peer whom they perceived was similar to themselves (unique learning needs, age, gender, grade level, friend, sibling, etc.), the children were more likely to believe they, too, were capable of being successful at helping other livings things. As a result, I organized the NOBODY take-home schedule so that the first several students conducting their individual NOBODY projects were older students who could act as leaders for the rest of the children. By using this strategy, I observed several children structuring their individual NOBODY projects based on another peer’s project, but then modifying their projects to incorporate their own interests and/or strengths. For example: Derek and Holly were two siblings in the program. Derek, being older than Holly, carried out his individual NOBODY project first. Derek’s NOBODY project involved helping his best friend find his beloved lost dog, whereas Holly’s project alleviated work for the other members of her family by taking on the full responsibility of caring for their pet cat. Derek’s and Holly’s NOBODY project experiences were the only two projects that involved caring for animals. Holly modeled the prosocial act of her brother’s project, which involved caring for animals, but then adapted it to incorporate her own interests, which was her love for her pet cat. As a result, by having Derek present his NOBODY project experience first, it helped demonstrate to Holly that someone she sees similar to herself was able to successfully complete the task
that she was soon going to attempt. Thus, I incorporated weekly student presentations so the children could observe one another experiencing success. By doing so, the children who had not yet completed their NOBODY projects were able to feel more confident about their ability to accomplish the task too.

In addition, by the children sharing their individual NOBODY projects to the group, it increased the children’s self-efficacy by teaching them to identify and recognize their ability to succeed. As the facilitator, I posed a series of questions to the child presenting his/her NOBODY project regarding his/her contribution to the community such as: who did you help, how did you help that living thing, what sort of skills or strategies were required to help this living thing. By asking the children these sorts of questions regarding their NOBODY project experience, it helped them recognize their contributions, as well as how they came to achieve this positive outcome, which, in turn, helped foster the children’s self-awareness.

The final way I experienced the program enhancing children’s self-efficacy was through establishing a positive class ethos in order to provide a supportive and comfortable environment where all students could succeed. To do this, the children were provided with positive feedback about their individual NOBODY projects. More specifically, I ensured I complimented the children’s efforts and strategies used to carry out their prosocial acts, as these are the variables they could control when trying to achieve success. By doing so, the children were able to recognize what specific skills, traits, or talents helped them succeed. In addition, I also ensured I praised the children for their personal accomplishments of helping other living things in the community, so the
children could feel proud and worthy of their contribution. Thus, celebrating the children’s success, in turn, can help them develop a positive attitude about themselves. Furthermore, I implemented a learning environment that helped the children’s learning flourish. Multiple teaching strategies (e.g. direct instruction, group work, peer modeling, etc.) were used when implementing the curriculum to accommodate the participating children’s unique learning needs and individual strengths. In addition, the children were provided autonomy and control over their learning, particularly in terms of planning and conducting their individual NOBODY projects. By allowing the children to take initiative over their own learning, they were more motivated and engaged in completing the tasks, and were able to use their unique character strengths, abilities and talents to achieve success.

Level Three: Children’s Experiences.

From the perspective of the participating children’s experiences, many of them expressed feelings of worthiness after they put in the effort to achieve their personal goal and succeeded. For example, this was evident when Derek [pseudonym] presented his NOBODY project to the rest of the group:

Facilitator: Derek can you tell me about your NOBODY project?

Derek: Yes! My best friend lost his dog so I helped him find it.

Facilitator: Oh wow! How did he lose his dog?

Derek: Um... It ran out the front door because it likes to try and get outside.

Facilitator: Oh. How long did it take to find the dog?

Derek: Three days.
Facilitator: Wow! That’s a long time. How did your best friend feel when you helped him find his dog?

Facilitator: That’s great! How did it make you feel knowing you helped him find his dog?

Derek: Great! It was a lot of hard work! Three days of hard work!

As Derek explained his individual NOBODY project to the group, he emphasized that helping his best friend find his missing dog required a lot of hard work, but by putting in the effort, it made him feel “great” about himself. Derek’s determination and commitment allowed him to achieve his goal of helping his friend find his missing dog, which not only made Derek’s friend happy, but him too. Derek was able to equate his success on a challenging task to controllable, internal factors (e.g. effort, persistence) which, in turn, strengthened his self-efficacy as he was responsible for his own success. Thus, Derek’s ability to perceive himself as competent and to take credit for his success, in turn, strengthened his self-efficacy and allowed him to experience positive feelings of self-worth.

Taken together, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was shown to cultivate good character in students by promoting the development of strong self-efficacy. This theme of strong self-efficacy was explored through the triangulation of data gathered from the three levels of the “Who is NOBODY?” program: design, implementation and experiences of children. The program was designed to provide children with a tangible experience, which helps remind them of their personal accomplishments of helping other living things. In addition, the “Who is NOBODY?” program provides children with autonomy over their own learning, which allows children to use their unique character
strengths and talents to help them succeed in their prosocial acts. The “Who is NOBODY?” program was implemented to help children identify their personal strengths, develop autonomy by learning to set personal goals, and provide opportunities to experience success. The children’s development of strong self-efficacy was fostered using multiple teaching strategies such as: direct instruction, group work, peer modeling, and a positive classroom environment. Finally, the children’s experiences of participating in the “Who is NOBODY?” program demonstrated the children to have acquired strong self-efficacy. As the children were able to rely on their personal character strengths to successfully accomplish their prosocial goals, they were responsible for their own success. Therefore, the “Who is NOBODY?” program fostered strong self-efficacy in the children as they accomplished goals that were meaningful to them which, in turn, enhanced their feelings of self-worth and ultimately, their self-esteem.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

For children with LD, school environments often hold risk-factors that increase the likelihood of children having negative experiences (Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). Children with LD struggle academically, resulting in an abundance of school failure experiences which often causes them to feel frustrated and incompetent (Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). In addition to academic difficulties, many students with LD struggle with social competence in that they have social skill deficits that often prevent them from establishing and maintaining relationships (Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). These children tend to experience problems with peer acceptance as a result of feeling neglected and rejected by their peers at school (Kuhne & Wiener, 2000). Consequently, a “low status” reputation follows them throughout their academic career which often leads to them developing a negative attitude towards school and a lack of enjoyment in attending (Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). The repeated failures that children with LD experience make many of them feel confused, discouraged, and hopeless, as their academic and social efforts do not create positive outcomes (Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). As a result of these academic and social problems, it is not surprising that many of these children experience emotional difficulties too, particularly poor self-esteem (Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). The academic, social and emotional difficulties experienced by children with LD often result in mental health issues as these children grow into adolescents (Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). Given this, it is important that support programs are offered to help reduce the negative impacts associated with having a learning disability, which emphasizes the significance of this current study.
The purpose of this thesis was to study a support system for children with LD. More specifically, a qualitative case study was conducted to explore the “Who is NOBODY?” program and its impact on the character development and self-esteem of children with learning disabilities. To study the program, I adopted a qualitative case study design that triangulated data from three perspectives: development, implementation, and experiences of participating children. Three primary themes emerged from these three data lenses: positive character traits, prosocial behaviour, and strong self-efficacy - leading to the promotion of strong character development and self-esteem. I will discuss the study’s findings in terms of the three levels of analysis focused on in the study.

Level One: Design

The first research-based implication centered on the design process of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. In terms of how Kelly Clark designed the “Who is NOBODY?” program, the findings of the current study revealed the program to be successful in promoting strong character development and self-esteem in participating children. There were several aspects of the design process that can be attributed to this success.

First, the “Who is NOBODY?” began with a mysterious cardboard suitcase addressed: “To EVERYBODY, From NOBODY”. The mysterious suitcase was designed to arouse the children’s interest by encouraging them to discover what was inside the case. This was a particularly useful strategy as the children had a pivotal role in initiating the program on their own, which encouraged their participation.

Second, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to provide children with a tangible experience. Children were introduced to NOBODY, a doll with no character.
The objective of the program was for NOBODY to become SOMEBODY by the help of EVERYBODY (Clark, 2012). The children were required to put their character into action by helping other living things (people, animals or the environment). Each child was provided the opportunity to take NOBODY and the support materials home for one week to plan and execute his/her individual project. The NOBODY doll reinforced good character in participating children as they were responsible for bringing NOBODY home and remembering to return NOBODY to the classroom the following week. As the children completed their individual projects, they were encouraged to reflect on their individual NOBODY project experience by attaching a 3D object to NOBODY and writing a story or drawing a picture about it. This tangible experience helped the children recognize their contributions to the community which, in turn, developed their confidence in their own abilities as they were reminded of their personal accomplishments.

Third, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed to promote a meaningful learning experience. The “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed for children to focus on the unique character strengths they possess and perform well. As the children learned to identify their positive attributes, they were provided a platform in which to use their unique character strengths to help other living things in the community. As the children used their personal strengths and followed their interests, they were more likely to remain inspired and determined to complete their NOBODY projects. Thus, the children would feel more confident in themselves to competently perform the prosocial act when they could rely on their strongest abilities.

In addition, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was designed for children to experience a sense of autonomy. The children were responsible for making the decisions
of how they wanted to plan and execute their prosocial acts. By the children experiencing personal control over their learning, their individual NOBODY projects were often derived from their own personal experiences (e.g. strengths, interests, concerns). Because the children’s prosocial acts were made meaningful, the children experienced a personal sense of accomplishment as a result of feeling responsible for the positive outcomes achieved from helping others. As the children recognized their abilities to help benefit others in their own unique way, they felt competent and worthy of their actions.

**Level Two: Implementation**

The second research-based implication centered on the quality of implementation of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. Research has shown character education to be good education when implemented successfully (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Prior to implementing the “Who is NOBODY?” program, it was important for me, as facilitator, to fully understand the initiative and its objectives. This was a critical step in the implementation process because in order to promote positive character development in students, the program needs to be implemented accurately and with fidelity to be effective (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Fortunately, the “Who is NOBODY?” program included a substantive amount of support materials, and, in particular, an implementation DVD and manual to provide me with ample training so that I could understand the design and delivery of the character education initiative. Both resources provided step-by-step lessons of how to introduce the “Who is NOBODY?” program to participating children and teach them the necessary steps to conduct their individual NOBODY projects. In addition, the resources comprehensively
described the program objectives to help foster positive character development in students.

In addition, character education initiatives that explicitly incorporate parent involvement as a necessary component has shown to be beneficial in cultivating good character in children (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). The “Who is NOBODY?” program encourages caregivers’ participation in their children’s learning. Parent involvement was an important component for successfully implementing the character education initiative. Given the children’s individual NOBODY projects were conducted outside of the program, where they were encouraged to use their unique strengths and interests to help other living things in the community, it was important for caregivers to be educated on the design and delivery of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. As a result, I provided caregivers with an information package which included resources explaining the character education initiative, a handbook describing the five steps the children should use to guide their individual NOBODY projects, as well as examples of completed projects. It was important to provide caregivers with these resources in order to encourage them to support their children with the NOBODY projects. This was critical in successfully implementing the program considering the children only attended program once a week for a 90 minute instructional session. If the child whose turn it was to take NOBODY home required support in conducting his/her individual NOBODY project, I would not have been able to provide him/her with help, which demonstrates the importance of parents having a basic understanding of the character education activity. The following week, when the child returned to programming after having taken NOBODY home, I would follow up on the character education activity by having each
child present to the group his/her NOBODY project experience. As a result, the character education activity was implemented in the program, but conducted within the children’s home or community which fostered the children’s character development within different contexts of their lives. Thus, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was a character education activity that strengthened the connection between the program and the home to further promote the development of the children’s character.

Character education initiatives that incorporate multiple teaching strategies has shown to be beneficial for practice (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). In implementing the “Who is NOBODY?” program, multiple teaching strategies (e.g. direct instruction, group discussion, and peer role modeling) were incorporated to teach the children the character education lessons.

Direct instruction was used to teach the children about character traits and moral values. The vocabulary of 10 key character traits which included: perseverance, optimism, courage, integrity, fairness, honesty, initiative, respect, responsibility, and empathy, were taught to participating children so they could acquire the proper language to describe the attributes they used to perform their prosocial acts. Children were read a storybook to teach them the meaning of prosocial behaviour, as characters in the story helped make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. Following this, the children were instructed that they would be given the opportunity to create their own NOBODY projects that would involve helping others in their community in their own unique way.

Group discussion was used with participating children to help further their understanding of positive character traits. As a group, we constructed a large chart to record the 10 terms, child-friendly definitions, examples, and synonyms for each key trait.
to promote character trait vocabulary. In addition, we created a visual list of the necessary steps required to behave in a prosocial manner, along with practical examples. Following this, we discussed the difference between interests and strengths and recorded our answers on the board. Children were then asked to share how they might use their unique interests and strengths to help other living things within their community.

Peer role modeling was used for children to share their individual NOBODY projects with the class. As each child presented, he/she practised using the positive character trait vocabulary s/he learned by describing his/her prosocial act. This was particularly useful to reinforce proper language in the classroom. In addition, each child was asked several questions relating to his/her prosocial act. These questions were asked to help facilitate the child’s knowledge about the steps s/he conducted to behave in a prosocial manner. As the children described their prosocial acts, each child’s project served as a practical example for the other children of how to competently engage in prosocial behaviour. In addition, as the children observed their peers whom they may perceive as similar to themselves (e.g. learning disability, age, gender, grade level, friend, sibling, etc.), they would develop self-confidence. This was particularly useful for the children who had not yet completed their individual NOBODY projects because they were more likely to believe they could accomplish the task too, given that someone similar to themselves was successful. Furthermore, as the children presented their individual NOBODY projects, they were provided the opportunity to share and celebrate their success, thereby allowing each child to feel worthy of his/her contribution to the community. The children developed a strong respect for diversity as they were able to recognize everyone’s ability to make a difference in their own unique way.
Therefore, using multiple teaching strategies was beneficial in promoting strong character and self-esteem in the participating children. Some teaching strategies work better for some learners than others, which is why it is crucial to use multiple teaching methods to promote positive learning experiences for all the children.

Character education depends largely on the degree to which children feel connected to or feel part of their classroom environment (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Previous research has shown students’ perceptions of their classroom environment as a caring community to be critical for successfully implementing a character education initiative (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). With this being said, I established a positive classroom environment to promote a safe, inclusive and caring atmosphere for the children to learn. As the facilitator, it was important that I acted as a role model for the children by displaying appropriate behaviour (e.g. respecting others, accepting and fulfilling responsibilities, earning and returning trust) to encourage the children to act in a similar ethical manner.

Also, the children participated in generating the behavioural expectations for the classroom, which provided them with the opportunity to act autonomously in establishing their learning environment. Thus, the children were responsible for their actions as they had a pivotal role in choosing the appropriate behaviours to be expected within the classroom.

When the children displayed positive behaviours, I ensured I immediately praised them for their actions. This was shown to be a particularly useful strategy as praise encouraged the children to repeat those behaviours. However, rather than criticize children if they did not act in an appropriate manner, I would ask children questions that
required them to practise moral reasoning (e.g. how would you feel if this happened to you, what would be the appropriate action). This approach was a positive strategy to use for the children as it helped them understand behaviours that were considered desirable, and those that were not. In addition, by encouraging the children to practise moral reasoning, they were developing their social perspective skills, in that they were learning to recognize how someone else might be thinking or feeling in a given situation (McDaniel, 1998). This behavioural teaching strategy was beneficial in cultivating good character in the participating children.

**Level Three: Children’s Experiences**

The third research-based implication centered on the experiences of the children and the benefits they received from participating in the “Who is NOBODY?” program. The “Who is NOBODY?” program cultivated strong character and self-esteem in participating children through the development of positive character traits (psychological and moral virtues). Previous research has shown that helping children identify their unique character strengths is crucial for developing a strong sense of self. This is particularly important for children with LD as many of them experience difficulties in identifying the good qualities they possess (Park, 2009). Children with LD often focus too much on their areas of need (weaknesses), or judge themselves by the character traits they think they ought to have, which hinders their self-confidence (Park, 2009). This research emphasizes the importance of this current study as the participating children learned to recognize and embrace the unique positive traits they possess and most frequently exercise from participating in the “Who is NOBODY?” program. This was particularly important as the children’s personal strengths are the characteristics that
Research has emphasized the critical importance of providing children with a platform to use their personal strengths as this has shown to yield greater self-esteem benefits (Wood et al., 2011). More specifically, children who are able use their personal strengths to complete tasks are more likely to find the experience easier and enjoyable, which often leads to desirable outcomes (Park, 2009). The “Who is NOBODY?” program functioned as a vehicle for children to put their character into action. This character education initiative provided the children with the opportunity to use their personal character strengths, talents and interests to design and execute their individual NOBODY projects. The children’s individual NOBODY projects involved helping other living things within their own community, which required the development of positive character traits such as: respect, responsibility, and empathy, in order to successfully engage in prosocial behaviour.

The children’s prosocial acts became meaningful as they experienced control over their own learning. This was particularly true in the case of a participating child, named Holly, who explained: “My favourite part was when I got to bring NOBODY home and I got to um, think about what program I was going to do”. Children become motivated to complete their prosocial acts when it is self-initiated, because children believe they will succeed as a result of being able to rely on their strongest abilities. Given this, the children are more effortful in their actions, which promote the likelihood of them being successful. When the children successfully complete their NOBODY projects, they are
able to attribute their success to personal factors (e.g. character strengths, motivation, effort, persistence) which, in turn, strengthens their self-efficacy.

Clearly then, children are more likely to subsequently rely on their positive character strengths in their learning process, as it leads them to experience a personal sense of accomplishment. Thus, the “Who is NOBODY?” program provided a positive learning experience for children with LD as it helped them overcome a learned helplessness attitude which many of them have frequently developed from the abundance of difficulties they experience on a daily basis (Richardson, Tolson, Huang & Lee, 2009). The “Who is NOBODY?” program fosters positive self-esteem in participating children because the children use their positive character traits to engage in prosocial behaviour. As children competently complete their prosocial acts, they instill good feelings in others which, in turn, reinforce positive feelings in themselves. As so succinctly stated by a participating child named Derek: “It is important to help the environment and friends because it’s really nice to do and it feels good to help others”. With this being said, the “Who is NOBODY?” program promotes social connectedness between the children and their community. Children discover their unique ability to help make a difference in the lives of others which, in turn, cultivates feelings of competency and worthiness and, thus, enhanced self-esteem.

However, it is important to note that research has shown the benefit of character education is dependent upon children’s exposure and participation within the character education initiative (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). It seems fair to assume that children with greater exposure will benefit more from the character education initiative than students with low exposure (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004) For example: the children who attended all
program sessions and, most importantly, conducted their individual NOBODY projects would have experienced the positive outcomes of the program. In contrast, the children who missed sessions of the program and did not complete their NOBODY projects would not have benefitted as much from the character education initiative.

The children’s individual NOBODY projects were a critical aspect in cultivating strong character and self-esteem in students. Their individual NOBODY projects served as a mediated learning experience for them as they used their positive character traits to act prosocially. The children’s meaningful experience of helping other living things provided them with a personal sense of accomplishment which, in turn, strengthened their self-efficacy and, ultimately, their self-esteem. Although there were other teaching methods implemented within the program to promote these outcomes, the children who did not complete their individual NOBODY projects would not have benefitted as much from the character education initiative as those children who did. Specifically, within the program, there were two children who did not complete their individual NOBODY projects. Due to ethical concerns, I did not follow up by asking these two children why they did not complete their NOBODY projects as it could have made them susceptible to harm such as feeling embarrassed and/or unworthy. With my role being the facilitator and researcher, I did not want the children developing low feelings of self-worth or being perceived negatively by the other children for not completing their projects, especially since this program was intended to help strengthen children’s self-esteem. With this being said, a number of speculations could be made as to why these two children did not complete their projects. For example: the program was offered once a week for a 90-minute instructional session. Given this, each child was expected to return to the program
the following week having completed his/her individual NOBODY project. However, if the child had a lack of understanding of how to plan and execute his/her individual NOBODY project, the child may not have completed the project at all. As the facilitator, there was no way of monitoring the child’s progress while working on his/her project due to the program only running once a week. In addition, given that the children’s projects were conducted outside of the program and within the context of their own home or community, it was important, as the facilitator, to encourage the caregivers’ involvement in supporting the program and their children. However, if a child received little support from his/her caregiver, the child may not have been motivated and/or committed to completing his/her individual NOBODY project. Nonetheless, the relationship between the children’s levels of exposure and positive outcomes from participating in the “Who is NOBODY?” program may not be straightforward, but are important factors to consider when exploring the benefits of character education initiatives.

Taken together, the “Who is NOBODY?” program has shown to be successful in cultivating strong character and self-esteem in participating children. The character education initiative has shown to shape the development of the whole child in that it promotes positive cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004).

An essential practical implication of the current research study was the significant contribution it has made to the LDANR. The LDANR is a non-profit organization that relies on community agencies for funding support. Hence, it was important to conduct research on its existing programs, such as the B.E.S.T. program, to ensure it is producing beneficial outcomes for children with LD. More importantly, since the LDANR has
recently modified its existing program to include the “Who is NOBODY?” program, it was important to provide feedback on whether this character education initiative enhanced the traditional B.E.S.T. program. The findings from this research demonstrated the “Who is NOBODY?” program to be a successful remedial program in supporting the social and emotional development of children with LD. More specifically, the findings from this study verified the “Who is NOBODY?” program to promote strong character development and self-esteem in participating children. Given this, the research study emphasizes the importance of continuing programs such as the newly designed B.E.S.T. program at the LDANR to help children cope with the difficulties they experience with having a learning disability.

**Limitations and Future Research**

There are several limitations that are important to consider within the current research study. First, the current study conducted was a holistic analysis of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. This approach was undertaken given that the objective of the research was to gain an in-depth understanding of the “Who is NOBODY?” program and how it enhanced the traditional B.E.S.T. program. Although the research findings from this study provided valuable knowledge and implications for implementing character education initiatives, the findings derived from this case have limited generalizability (Creswell, 2013). Despite the possibility of being able to incorporate the character education initiative into the education system or additional support programs, the findings from the current study are not generalizable to the general public, but are specific to the experiences of the creator, facilitator and the participating children of this particular case.
However, there is a possibility for thematic generalizability (Creswell, 2013), given the themes derived from the current study are considered to be critical aspects of character development. Given this, a suggestion for future research may be to conduct a collective or multiple case study. The LDANR offers the newly designed B.E.S.T. program in several different sites. The researcher might explore multiple cases of the “Who is NOBODY?” program from several different program sites. The goal of this approach would be to draw comparisons between the cases. By doing so, the researcher would be able to study whether similar findings were replicated across cases. The thematic analysis produced from the multiple case studies becomes reliable and robust (Creswell, 2013), which may be generalizable to the extent that the findings would be useful to consider when designing curriculum for character education initiatives.

Second, the present study used a qualitative methodology that provided the opportunity to gain insight into the program stakeholder’s perspectives and experiences of the program outcomes. More specifically, the feedback from three lenses of the “Who is NOBODY?” program (the designer, facilitator and participating children) demonstrated the program to cultivate strong character and self-esteem. In addition, conducting a focus group was a particularly valuable strategy to use with children who have disabilities, as it did not require them to read or write, which are difficult skills for these children. This qualitative data collection method allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the children’s experiences of the program and, thus, the program outcomes.

However, a drawback of using a qualitative approach is that meaning cannot be measured (Mruk, 2006b). Given this limitation, I was not able to determine the level of
change the “Who is NOBODY?” program had in strengthening the children’s character development and self-esteem. Ideally, these attributes should have been measured (assessed and evaluated) before and after participating in the “Who is NOBODY?” program to determine how much change occurred. However, due to the scope of my research, I did not include quantitative methods to achieve this valuable knowledge. With this being said, future research should adopt a mixed method case study approach to further understand the effectiveness of this character education initiative.

In addition, since the LDANR recently revised its traditional B.E.S.T. program to incorporate the “Who is NOBODY?” program, future research should explore the newly designed program in its entirety. Thus, research would provide insight on the positive impact both programs as a whole have on the social and emotional development of children with LD.

Finally, the “Who is NOBODY?” program focuses on enhancing the social and emotional development of children with LD, however, previous research has shown character education to greatly influence academic motivation and achievement too (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Thus, future research should explore how the “Who is NOBODY?” program supports the academic achievement of children with LD. This would be particularly important for research given that children’s social and emotional engagement and academic success are intertwined (Berkowitz & Bier 2004; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).
Conclusion

In the field of LD, most professionals have devoted their time and concentration on the remediation and improvement of academic skills. However, previous research has demonstrated that children with LD not only struggle academically, but also experience social and emotional difficulties (Mather & Ofiesh, 2005). As a result, the purpose of this research was to explore a support system offered for children with learning disabilities. Specifically, a qualitative case study was conducted on the newly designed B.E.S.T. program offered by the LDANR. The current study focused on developing a detailed analysis of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. To support this research endeavour, I comprehensively explored the “Who is NOBODY?” program from three levels: the design, implementation, and experiences of the participating children. The findings of the current study revealed the “Who is NOBODY?” program to promote strong character development and self-esteem. The stakeholders of this character education initiative (the designer, facilitator and participating children) identified the program to promote positive character traits, prosocial behaviour, and strong self-efficacy which, ultimately, contributed to the enhancement of children’s self-esteem. Taken together, the “Who is NOBODY?” program was shown to be a successful remediation program in that the beneficial outcomes shaped the development of the whole child. It is important to note that not only did the “Who is NOBODY?” project cultivate strong character and self-esteem, but the children also acknowledged that they had fun and would do the program again. As so succinctly stated by Holly, a participating child in the program: “I would do it again because I like NOBODY. I like how people take care of NOBODY and I would like to see NOBODY again!”
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix A: Description of Children’s “Who is NOBODY?” Program

Below are the descriptions of each child’s contribution to the “Who is NOBODY?” program, which complements the photo below.

**Iven** helped his mother by taking out the garbage to the front of the house on garbage day. As a result of showing his responsibility to help alleviate work for his mother, the child received two-dollar coins for his act of kindness. Iven chose to attach to NOBODY two black circles of construction paper to construct NOBODY’s eyes, which represented the two dollars he received. In addition, Iven added a piece of red construction in the shape of a smile to NOBODY’s face to represent the joy he brought to his mother for helping her with household chores.

**Gary’s** positive experience involved providing care to his baby sister. Gary fed his baby sister an afternoon snack that consisted of mini Ritz crackers, which allowed his mother to perform household tasks that she wanted to complete. The object Gary chose to attach to NOBODY was the package of mini Ritz crackers he to his baby sister to represent his role of being a responsible and caring big brother and assisting his mother.

**Holly’s** contribution involved taking on the responsibility of providing proper care for the family cat, which required her to ensure the cat had fresh water, food, litter box clean-up, and affection on a daily basis. Holly attached a hand-drawn picture of her cat and a little cut out heart to represent her responsibilities of being a conscientious pet owner and her love for her pet cat.

**Lu** made a difference by helping to clean up the environment. Lu cleaned his local park by picking up litter. Lu attached a garbage bag to NOBODY’s hand to depict his contribution to the community and the environment.

**Derek’s** contribution involved helping his best friend find his beloved lost dog. Derek helped his friend by spreading the word that the dog was missing and searching the neighbourhood until they found the dog. Derek attached to NOBODY a missing dog poster to represent his hard work and dedication in helping his best friend get his pet home safely.

**Damian’s** positive experience involved tidying his bedroom without being asked. Damian gathered the dirty clothes that were strewn all over his bedroom floor and placed them into the proper laundry hampers. Damian attached to NOBODY a hand-drawn picture of himself cleaning his bedroom to represent his decision and actions of tidying his personal space and belongings without his mom having to ask him to do so.
Amy made a difference in the life of her best friend, Beth, by creating a “Get Well” card for Beth, who was sick at home with the flu. Amy delivered the card to Beth with the hope that it would cheer her up and make her feel better. Amy attached a large red heart to NOBODY to represent her care and love for her best friend.

Emily made a difference by creating awareness about cancer and how to assist in restoring a patient's pride in his/her appearance. Emily explained to the class that many cancer patients experience hair loss from cancer treatments. Emily taught the class that we can make a difference in the lives of those suffering from cancer by donating out hair to make wigs for them.
Appendix B: Letter of Invitation for Kelly Clark

Project Title
A Case Study of the “Who is NOBODY?” Project:
A Character Development Program for Children with Learning Disabilities

Student Principal Investigator (SPI)
Ashley Miller
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Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)
Ashley Short
Executive Director
Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region
905-641-1021
ldaniagara@cogeco.net

Dear Kelly Clark,

I am a Master of Arts student in the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. Specifically, I am working with Dr. John McNamara and the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR) to build and implement a support program for children and youth with learning disabilities. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study.

My graduate research focuses on exploring a newly designed program called Better Emotional and Social Times (B.E.S.T.), which is aimed at enhancing self-advocacy, social skills and self-esteem of children with learning disabilities. However, recently the LDANR has expanded its program to incorporate an innovative character education initiative called the “Who is NOBODY?” program. The objective of this specific study is to explore the “Who is NOBODY?” program and its impact on the character development and self-esteem of children with learning disabilities. The study will explore the program through three lenses of program design, implementation, and experience. The first level of analysis will be to gain insight and an understanding of the “Who is NOBODY?” from the perspective of the designer, Kelly Clark. The second level of my study involves interpreting my own experiences analytically, specifically from my role as a researcher.
and facilitator of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. The last level of analysis involves understanding experiences of the program from the perspective of the participating children. This multi-lens approach to the study will enable a complex understanding of the “Who is NOBODY?” program.

If you choose to participate in the research, I would like to conduct an interview with you in order to gain insight and a better understanding of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. The expected duration of the interview would be approximately one hour in length. The location of the interview can be conducted at a time and place of your convenience. If you are interested in participating in the research study, please contact the student principal investigator (Ashley Miller) using the information provided above.

This research is beneficial to you as a participant it can help you as the designer of the “Who is NOBODY?” program to share with organizations, particularly the LDANR, reflect on your experiences in developing the “Who is NOBODY?” program and how your program has effectively enhanced the social and emotional development of children. In addition, your participation will help make a significant contribution to the LDANR as this research will contribute to the improvement of the LDANR’s programs in how to best support the social and emotional development of children and youth who struggle with learning disabilities.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Office (905-688-5550.Ext. 3035 or reb@brocku.ca).

If you have any questions regarding this research study please feel free to contact me. This study has been reviewed and received ethical clearance through Brock University Research Ethics Board (file #12-239).

Thank you for reading this letter and contributing to the improvement of the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region’s effective programming.

Thank you,
Ashley Miller
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form for Kelly Clark

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INVITATION
Dear Kelly Clark,

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research.

I am a Master of Arts student in the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. Specifically, I am working with Dr. John McNamara and the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR) to build and implement a support program for children and youth with learning disabilities. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study. My graduate research focuses on exploring a newly designed program called Better Emotional and Social Times (B.E.S.T.) which is aimed at enhancing self-advocacy, social skills and self-esteem of children with learning disabilities. However, recently the LDANR has expanded its program to incorporate an innovative character education initiative called the “Who is NOBODY?” program.

The objective of this specific study is to explore the “Who is NOBODY?” program and its impact on the character development and self-esteem of children with learning disabilities. The study will explore the program through three lenses of program design, implementation, and experience. The first level of analysis will be to gain insight and an
understanding of the “Who is NOBODY?” program from the perspective of the designer, Kelly Clark. The second level of my study involves interpreting my own experiences analytically, specifically from my role as a researcher and facilitator of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. The last level of analysis involves understanding experiences of the program from the perspective of the participating children. This multi-lens approach to the study will enable a complex understanding of the “Who is NOBODY?” program.

WHAT’S INVOLVED
As a participant, you will be interviewed for approximately one hour. The interview will be conducted at a time and place of your convenience. I will provide an agenda of questions or issues to be explored that will allow me as the investigator to gain an in-depth understanding of the design process of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed for research purposes.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS
Possible benefits of participation include helping you to reflect on your experiences in developing the “Who is NOBODY?” program and how it has positively enhanced the development of children. In addition, I anticipate that the findings of this research will hold important implications for the LDANR and the field of learning disabilities in general.

There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participation in this study. Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary and may decline to answer any questions or discontinue at any point during the interview.

CONFIDENTIALITY
With your permission, I would like to include your name in the data collected in the study and written reports of this research as a result of being the creator of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. However, if you wish, I can send you a copy of the transcript from the interview to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points. In addition, you may decline to answer any questions the researcher poses within the interview and may decline to participate in any component of the study. The data collected during this study will be securely stored at Brock University with the principal investigator. Data pertaining to this research will be kept until the conclusion of this research study after which time the information will be destroyed. Access to this research data will be restricted only to the principal investigator, Dr. John McNamara and student investigator, being myself.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from the study at any time.
PUBLICATION OF RESULTS
Results of this study may be published in professional journals and/or presented at conferences. Feedback about this study will be available by contacting the student principal investigator, using the contact information presented above.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE
If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please feel free to contact student principal investigator using the contact information above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (file # 12-239).

Thank you for your assistance with this project.
Please sign the attached consent form and keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM
I agree to participate in this study described above and for the researcher (Ashley Miller) to use my name in the data collected and written reports of this research study. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I am aware that my comments will be tape-recorded for future use in the study. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Print Name

_________________________

Signature

_________________________

Date

_________________________
Appendix D: Interview Questions for Kelly Clark

1. Please describe the “Who is NOBODY?” program?

2. What is the purpose of the “Who is NOBODY?” program?

3. How did you come to create the “Who is NOBODY?” program?

4. What do you hope children gain from participating in the program?

5. What are key elements of the program that you find beneficial or enhance children’s social and emotional development?

6. Have you implemented the program yourself?

7. What are some challenges/barriers you or someone may experience while implementing the “Who is NOBODY?” program?

8. Who utilizes/implements this program?

9. From previous experiences of those who have used your program, how have they described your program to help/benefit participating children?

10. How has the “Who is NOBODY?” program been successful in the past?

11. For those children who have participated in the program, how did the children feel about the program? What did they like/dislike? Were they excited/motivated?

12. Is the program flexible/adaptable for all children (ages, grade levels, different intellectual abilities)?

13. How has the program been changed to accommodate different children’s needs?

14. Would you recommend this program to families with children with LD? If so, why?
Appendix E: Letter of Invitation for Children

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A Case Study of the “Who is NOBODY?” Project:
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905- 688-5550 Ext. 3835
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Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)
Ashley Short
Executive Director
Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region
905-641-1021
ldaniagara@cogeco.net

Dear Parent/Guardian of Participating Child

I would like to invite your child to participate in a research study.

I am a Master of Arts student in the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. Specifically, I am working with Dr. John McNamara and the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR) to build and implement a support program for children and youth with learning disabilities.

My graduate research focuses on exploring a newly designed program called Better Emotional and Social Times (B.E.S.T.) which is aimed at enhancing self-advocacy, social skills and self-esteem of children with learning disabilities. However, recently the LDANR has expanded its program to incorporate an innovative character education initiative called the “Who is NOBODY?” program. The objective of this specific study is to explore the “Who is NOBODY?” program and its impact on the character development and self-esteem of children with learning disabilities. The study will explore the program through three lenses of program design, implementation, and experience. The first level of analysis will be to gain insight and an understanding of the “Who is NOBODY?” program from the perspective of the designer, Kelly Clark. The second level of my study
involves interpreting my own experiences analytically, specifically from my role as a researcher and facilitator of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. The last level of analysis involves understanding the experiences of the program from the perspective of the participating children. This multi-lens approach to the study will enable a complex understanding of the “Who is NOBODY?” program.

If you consent to your child participating in this study, I would like to conduct a focus group with your child in order to gain insight and a better understanding of his/her experiences within the newly designed program, specifically concerning the “Who is NOBODY” program. Overall, I am interested in how well the revised program has helped strengthen your child’s character development and self-esteem upon completing the program. The expected duration of the focus group would be approximately one hour in length. The location of the focus group will be conducted during the final session of the program. Your child’s participation in this study is strictly voluntary and if you refuse to consent or withdraw from your child from this study it will have no effect on your child’s participation in the B.E.S.T. program or future programs offered by the LDANR. If you are interested in having your child participate in the research study, please contact the student principal investigator (Ashley Miller) using the information provided above.

There are no direct benefits for the children participating in this study; however, there are benefits that exist for the scientific community, specifically the LDANR. Findings of this study will help make a significant contribution to the LDANR as this research will contribute to the improvement of the LDANR’s programs in how to best support the social and emotional development of children who struggle with learning disabilities. The findings will lend support to the general field of learning disabilities pertaining to the social and emotional development of children and the importance of continual and ongoing programming for vulnerable children, specifically for those with learning disabilities.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Office (905-688-5550.Ext. 3035 or reb@brocku.ca).

If you have any questions regarding this research study please feel free to contact me. This study has been reviewed and received ethical clearance through Brock University Research Ethics Board (file #12-239).

Thank you for reading this letter and contributing to the improvement of the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region’s effective programming.

Thank you,
Ashley Miller
Appendix F: Informed Consent Form for Children’s Parents

Project Title
A Case Study of the “Who is NOBODY?” Project:
A Character Development Program for Children with Learning Disabilities

Student Principal Investigator (SPI)
Ashley Miller
Department of Child and Youth Studies
Brock University
am08ti@brocku.ca

Principal Investigator (PI) and Faculty Supervisor (FS)
Dr. John McNamara
Department of Child and Youth Studies
Brock University
905-688-5550 Ext. 3835
jmcnamara@brocku.ca

Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)
Ashley Short
Executive Director
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Dear Participant,

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My graduate research focuses on exploring a newly designed program called Better Emotional and Social Times (B.E.S.T.) which is aimed at enhancing self-advocacy, social skills and self-esteem of children with learning disabilities. However, recently the LDANR has expanded its program to incorporate an innovative character education initiative called the “Who is NOBODY?” program. The objective of this specific study is to explore the “Who is NOBODY?” program and its impact on the character development and self-esteem of children with learning disabilities. The study will explore the program through three lenses of program design, implementation, and experience. The first level of analysis will be to gain insight and an understanding of the “Who is NOBODY?”
program from the perspective of the designer, Kelly Clark. The second level of my study involves interpreting my own experiences analytically, specifically from my role as a researcher and facilitator of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. The last level of analysis involves understanding the experiences of the program from the perspective of the participating children. This multi-lens approach to the study will enable a complex understanding of the “Who is NOBODY?” program.

WHAT’S INVOLVED
Your child will be asked to participate in a one 45 to 60 minute focus group that will take place during the final session of the program. Participating children will be asked a series of questions by the program facilitator/researcher regarding their experiences of the “Who is NOBODY?” program. For example: Some questions that will be posed during the focus group include: what did you learn about your experience with NOBODY, how did your experience make you feel, what did you learn about yourself by completing the NOBODY program, and what do you wish you could change or have done differently in the NOBODY program?

With your permission, the focus group will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. More specifically, I will analyze the data find common themes among the responses provided by the participating children of the program. The audiotape and transcription will be kept anonymous and only the researcher (Ashley Miller) will be aware of who participated in the focus group. The LDANR will have no knowledge of your participation and will not have copies of the data collected. However, Ashley Short, executive director of the LDANR, will have access to the final thesis (with no identifying features).

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS
Possible benefits of your child’s participation in this study include having the opportunity to reflect on the experiences s/he has encountered as a result of participating in the program. Additionally, findings of this study will make a significant contribution to the LDANR as this research will contribute to the improvement of the LDANR’s programs in how to best support the social and emotional development of children and youth struggling with learning disabilities, particularly in terms of character development and self-esteem. There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participation in this study. I acknowledge that this research deals with learning disabilities, and may have the potential to be a personal and sensitive topic. Should this research provoke discomfort or emotional distress, you may contact me by email.

In addition, as a parent/guardian of participating children, you may feel obligated for your child to partake in this study as a result of being members of the LDANR. However, it is important to understand that your child’s participation in the focus group is voluntary and will have no effect on your membership for future programming. As for sharing of information, pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of your child’s responses. Your child’s name or any identifying features will not be shared with Ashley Short, the executive director of the LDANR, or employees of the LDANR.
The facilitator will effectively supervise the study and children will be reminded to be respectful and open to different opinions provided by one another in the focus group. However, if the potential effects of participating in a focus group should arise (e.g. a child teases another child for a particular response to a question posed by the researcher) parents will be informed and provided with a list of registered psychologists and services.

If you consent to your child participating in this study, any withdrawing from this study will have no effect on your child’s participation in the program or future programming offered by the LDANR (as I will be the only person who is aware of your child participating in this study and have no direct position within the LDANR that could harm their participation for future programs).

CONFIDENTIALITY
All information provided in this study is considered completely confidential; your child’s name will not be associated with the data collected in this study and will not be identified in any written reports of this research. The data collected during this study will be securely stored at Brock University with the principal investigator. Data pertaining to this research will be kept until the conclusion of this research study after which time the information will be destroyed. Access to this research data will be restricted only to the principal investigator, Dr. John McNamara and student investigator, being myself. In case of participant withdrawal, it will not be possible to remove any participant data from the audiotape at the time of withdrawing. However, the participant data will not be used in the data analysis process or final written thesis.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Your child’s participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your child may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw your child from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you and your child are entitled. Participation or withdrawal at any time of this study will have no bearing on your child’s participation in programs offered by the LDANR.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS
Results of this study may be published in professional journals and/or presented at conferences. Feedback about this study will be available by contacting the student principal investigator, at the information presented above.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE
If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please feel free to contact student principal investigator using the contact information above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (file # 12-239).

Thank you for your assistance with this project.
Please sign the attached consent form and keep a copy of this form for your records.
CONSENT FORM
I agree to allow my child to participate in this study described above. I have made this
decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have
had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and
understand that I may ask questions in the future. I know that my child/dependent’s
comments will be tape-recorded for future use in the study. I understand that I may
withdraw this consent at any time.

Print Name
_________________________

Signature
_________________________

Date
_________________________
Appendix G: Informed Assent Form for Children

Project Title
A Case Study of the “Who is NOBODY?” Project:
A Character Development Program for Children with Learning Disabilities

Student Principal Investigator (SPI)
Ashley Miller
Department of Child and Youth Studies
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INVITATION
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WHAT’S INVOLVED
As a participant, you will be asked to participate in a focus group (a group discussion with the children in the program) for approximately one hour. The group discussion will take place during the final session of the program. You will be asked a series of questions by the program facilitator/researcher regarding your experiences within the newly designed program, specifically concerning the “Who is NOBODY” program. For example, some questions that will be posed during the focus group include: what did you learn about your experience with NOBODY, how did your experience make you feel, what did you learn about yourself by completing your NOBODY project and what do you wish you could change about the program? Overall, we are interested in how well the revised program has helped you feel better about yourself after completion of this program. With your permission, the focus group will be audio-recorded to help me collect information to study this program.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS
Participating in this study will help you think about your experiences in carrying out the “Who is NOBODY?” program. There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. Your decision to participate in this study is up to you and you do not have to participate in the study if you do not want to. I know this research deals with talking about learning disabilities and may be personal or a sensitive topic. If this research makes you feel sad, embarrassed or angry, you can tell me and I will help you with these problems.

CONFIDENTIALITY
All information you tell me in our group discussion is considered completely private which, means your name or other information about you will not appear in any written reports resulting from this study. The data collected during this study will be stored at Brock University in a locked drawer so no one can listen to the audiotape except for me and another researcher, John McNamara. After, the study is completed I will erase the audiotape and will destroy any notes I have written about this study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Participation in the study is your decision. You do not have to participate in the group discussion and do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. Further, you can stop participating in the study at any time.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS
Results of this study may be published in professional journals and/or presented at conferences. If you want to know what I learned about the study you can contact me at the information presented above.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE
If you have any questions about this study please feel free to contact me using the contact information above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (file # 12-239).
Thank you for helping me with this research study. 
Please sign below if you agree to participate in the study.

**CONSENT FORM**

All information you provide is considered private. Your name will not be used in any written reports of this research. The data collected during this study will be safe at Brock University. The information you tell me will be kept until I have finished this research study, which it will then be destroyed. Access to this research data will be restricted only to the principal investigator, Dr. John McNamara and student investigator, being myself.

Print Name

____________________________________

Signature

____________________________________

Date

____________________________________
Appendix H: Focus Group Questions for Children

1. Please tell me about your “NOBODY” project.
2. What living thing did you help (animal, people, environment)?
3. Why did you choose that living thing to help?
4. How did you help that living thing?
5. What 3D object did you attach to NOBODY to represent your project?
6. Why did you attach that specific object?
7. What did you learn about your experience with NOBODY?
8. How did your experience make you feel?
9. How did helping another living thing make you feel?
10. What did you learn about yourself by completing your NOBODY project?
11. What was your favourite component of the “Who is NOBODY?” program?
12. What do you wish you could change or have done differently in the program?
13. How did we make “NOBODY” into a “SOMEBODY”?
14. Would you participate in the “Who is NOBODY?” program again? Why?