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**INITIAL ANALYSIS FROM A GROUNDED METHODOLOGY STUDY
OF RISK TAKING AND AVOIDANCE
BY STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS DURING ART PROJECTS**

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ΤΗΣ ΘΕΜΕΛΙΩΜΕΝΗΣ ΘΕΩΡΙΑΣ**

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η παρούσα έρευνα σχεδιάστηκε με στόχο να διερευνήσει την επίδραση παραγόντων όπως η ηλικία και η επαφή με την τέχνη, στις αντιλήψεις και πεποιθήσεις μαθητών με αναπηρία όρασης σχετικά με την ικανότητά τους να μελετήσουν θέματα τέχνης. Η παρατήρηση των τυφλών εφήβων μαθητών πραγματοποιήθηκε κατά τη διάρκεια μαθημάτων εικαστικών τεχνών σε ειδικό σχολείο τυφλών μετά από επισκέψεις σε μουσεία. Η συλλογή των δεδομένων πραγματοποιήθηκε με τον συνδυασμό συνεντεύξεων, παρατηρήσεων, μηνιαίων εκθέσεων και φωτογραφιών από έργα των μαθητών κατά τη διάρκεια διαφορετικών φάσεων παραγωγής τους. Για την ανάλυση των δεδομένων αξιοποιήθηκε το θεωρητικό πλαίσιο του Doyle για την έννοια της ασάφειας και την ανάληψη ρίσκου. Στο άρθρο παρουσιάζονται δύο μελέτες περίπτωσης μαθητών. Η πρώτη αφορά μαθητή που είχε ιδιαίτερους περιορισμούς στην εκπαίδευσή

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του αναφορικά με τις εικαστικές τέχνες. Ο ίδιος είχε φόβο σε δραστηριότητες σχεδίου αλλά ανταποκρίθηκε καλά σε δραστηριότητες κεραμικής που δεν είχε προηγούμενες προσδοκίες ή εμπειρία. Στη δεύτερη περίπτωση, η μαθήτρια δεν είχε παρόμοιους φόβους και συμμετείχε σε όλες τις εικαστικές δραστηριότητες. Στο παρόν άρθρο μελετάται η υπόθεση ότι ο λόγος έλλειψης αυτού του φόβου στην περίπτωση της δεύτερης μαθήτριας είναι ότι η μαθήτρια, παρόλο που ήταν σε σχολείο τυφλών αφού πρώτα είχε φοιτήσει σε γενικό σχολείο, δεν είχε προηγούμενες αρνητικές εμπειρίες στην καλλιτεχνική της εκπαίδευση. Η μελέτη καταλήγει στο συμπέρασμα ότι μαθητές που έχουν μάθει να πιστεύουν ότι δεν μπορούν να τα καταφέρουν σε καλλιτεχνικές δραστηριότητες θα αποφεύγουν παρόμοιες μελλοντικές δραστηριότητες σε αντίθεση με εκείνους που δεν είχαν καθόλου ή είχαν περιορισμένες αρνητικές εμπειρίες. Έτσι, στο πλαίσιο αυτής της έρευνας, φαίνεται ότι η δημιουργικότητα βασίστηκε σε μεγάλο βαθμό στην αυτοπεποίθηση των μαθητών και στην προθυμία τους να αναλάβουν ρίσκα.

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ABSTRACT

Blind teenage students studying visual art courses after museum visits were observed in a school for the blind. The research was designed to examine the effects that factors such as age and quality of exposure to art have on students' belief in their ability to study art. Data was collected by a combination of interviews, observations, monthly reports and photographs of students' artifacts during different stages of production. Data is analysed using an adapted version of Doyle's framework of ambiguity and risk. Two case studies of students are presented. One student, Emile, had a restricted education when younger, with restrictions on his visual art education. He subsequently had a fear of drawing, but did well in ceramic tasks where he had no previous expectations or experience. The other student, Anna, appeared to have no such fears of drawing, and participated in all art activities. It is hypothesized that a reason for Anna's lack of fear was that, even though she also came to the school for the blind after attending a mainstream school, she did not have negative experiences of art education. The study concludes that when the student is taught to believe he/she cannot perform art tasks he/she will avoid all future activities with similar tasks, but will attempt individual tasks where they have no or limited negative experiences. Thus, in the context of this study, creativity and task performance was largely premised on previous self-belief and a current willingness to take risks.

Introduction / The theoretical background

In an early study of visual art and vision impairment, I conducted observations and interviews with blind adults studying on visual arts courses in continuing studies departments, monuments and museums. The observed courses specifically catered for the needs of disabled adults, and were administered by the universities of Leicester and Bristol (Hayhoe 2000, 2008). During the study, I discovered that adult students who were blind from a young age often appeared reluctant to be creative whilst making artifacts in sculpture classes. This reluctance was also apparent in the lack of willingness of the same students to view¹ or discuss artifacts again in museums and monuments. These findings were supported by other authors who studied students with various levels of vision impairment (see for example Raffray 1990).

Doyle's (1986) framework of task analysis was chosen to analyse the data from these adult case studies. This framework focused on the reaction of inexperienced students to new and ambiguous classroom tasks, such as those that the students I observed faced. It also focused on students' behaviour as an indicator of their willingness to be creative or take risks in education, a skill I felt that was particularly applicable in art education. In this framework, Doyle observed that:

[the] concept of task has two components: (a) a goal state or an end product to be achieved; and (b) a problem space, that is, a set of instructions, conditions, and resources available to reach the goal state. From this perspective, the thoughts and actions of teachers are understood as attempts to assemble and use resources to accomplish the task of achieving educational ends in a complex social setting (Doyle 1986:394).

Subsequently, Doyle interpreted the composition of task performance through two constructs of the inherent ambiguity and risk in any given task, and its effect on students' self-esteem. A highly ambiguous task was as one that held no firm answer. For example, this could be an argument in a debate, or the sculptural interpretation of a figure in which the exact form of the goal was highly subjective. In Doyle's terms, the amount of risk posed to the students' self-esteem in the performance of the task depended on the amount of knowledge that the student was expected to possess. For example, if the task was high risk then students would be expected to have a broad understanding of a task, and produce a highly skilled sculpture or knowledgeable argument. This, Doyle (1986) argued, reflected students' understanding. On the other hand, if the student was not expected to perform 'well' then the task would pose a low risk, and students would only need to have an opinion about its performance. In an art class, this would merely demand an outcome such as a loose sculpture or a shallow argument in response to a question.

By contrast, a task with low ambiguity was seen by Doyle (1986) as one that had a very definite goal. In short, it produced an answer or product that was highly objective, such as copying an existing art work - i.e. a facsimile - or a technical drawing in an art class. According to Doyle, these low ambiguity tasks required the use of both memory and routine in their performance, with the higher the risk to the students, the more memory and routine being needed for the task.

For example, in mathematics the performance of $E=MC^2$ when given E, M and C, or the drawing of a shape to a set size, would pose little risk to a student. This was because the task would only require a small amount of memory and routine (Memory & Routine I). However, the performance of the complex Monte Carlo Method's formula, or the drawing of a circuit diagram of a computer mother-board to specific measurements, contained much higher risk. This was because it required very large amounts of memory and routine (Memory & Routine II).

In a study on the implementation of his analytical framework, Doyle (1983) observed that the amount of risk to the students' existing self-esteem and knowledge governed their social performance of a given task. In this case, he found that the greater the ambiguity in a task's performance to a less knowledgeable student, the more likely these students were to flounder. In turn, this floundering led inexperienced students to strategize performance of the task, or make the task less ambiguous in its future iterations. Doyle also made similar observations with inexperienced students when the amount of risk increased and a task's performance changed. This avoidance of risk was especially unfortunate to the inexperienced students' understanding, he felt. Doyle hypothesized that it was precisely tasks that produced a deeper understanding that were most appropriate to learning at an early stage of education. On this, he concluded:

Accountability for work drives the academic task system in classrooms. If answers are not required or if any [low risk task] is acceptable then the task system is suspended and little academic work will be accomplished. In turn, the nature of the answers a teacher accepts and the routes the teacher allows for getting answers define the tasks students are required to accomplish. Finally, students invent and use strategies for managing the ambiguity and risk associated with academic tasks when they are embedded in an accountability system, and these strategies also effect the nature and quality of academic work (Doyle 1983:189-90).

In his studies, Doyle (1983, 1986) also discussed teachers' responses to the avoidance strategies of their students. Unfortunately, in many cases he found that teachers would often play along with their students as soon as they showed signs of avoidance. He subsequently proposed that the purpose of many of these teachers' collaboration with their students was simply arranged to maintain order within the classroom. In contrast, he found that the most effective teachers were those who were most willing to

intervene during the performance of avoidance strategies with alternative classroom management strategies.

The need for management is most apparent when order is threatened. As a result, interventions to stop misbehavior (sic) are often the primary focus of theory and research in classroom management (Doyle 1986: 423).

As he observed inexperienced students, I felt that there were parallels between Doyle's students and the blind adults I observed. I observed that many blind adults were more likely to passively avoid situations that would lead to a deeper understanding of art works. I felt that this avoidance was at least due in part to the lack of accountability in their courses, and the voluntary nature of course attendance. I also felt that Doyle's theory was particularly relevant to the tasks of other blind students in art education and museum environments, as they were often excluded from "visual" subjects when younger (Hayhoe 2000, 2016).

In addition to Doyle's theory, I also found parallels between my early findings and Deci & Chandler's (1986) observation of learned helplessness by students with learning disabilities. Deci & Chandler observed that students with severe learning difficulties would often perform well below what was felt to be their real abilities, knowing that their teachers would give them help above that which was needed. In turn, this process would allow students to become dependent on their teachers; i.e. students would rely on their teachers to perform their everyday tasks as well as their academic tasks.

Similarly, the adult education teachers and support staff in the Leicester studio gave very large amounts of instruction, and helped students with their tasks on many occasions. The teachers would also tend to praise and encourage their students no matter what their effort or outcome. The resulting relationship between teachers and students created a safe social order, and restricted the students' depth of understanding in their tasks. Equally, at Bristol University the sighted guides that were provided for the students during their courses developed an overly social as well as an academic relationship with their students. This allowed the sighted guides to take over many of the students' learning decisions as well as social tasks.

However, after reviewing my findings from the study of blind adults in art education, there were certain observations that were unexplained by Doyle's framework. For example, in common with the classroom tasks I had been a party to, there was differentiation between the abilities and willingness of students performing similar tasks. This could not be explained simply by supposed academic inexperience or classroom management, as some non-dependent students were also inexperienced. Furthermore, it was apparent that the effects of low self-confidence on these students' learning outcomes had a great deal *more* to do with the individual personalities of students. It could also be attributed to the *emotional-baggage* these students brought

with them to their classes. For instance, it appeared that students who were most likely to be bold and creative were those who became blind later in life. This observation was confirmed by other sources. Consequently, when I talked to the academics that ran the courses, they told me that differentiated avoidance appeared to be a normal trend.

At first, I speculated that the different levels of self-confidence and performance could be the result of students' lack of understanding, and their inability to perceive visual artefacts. However, this hypothesis was rejected. Subsequently, many of the tasks that students were asked to conduct were tactile modelling projects, and each of the students born blind learnt confidently through tactile media. These students had also performed simple, unambiguous craft tasks such as cane weaving in their early education in schools for the blind, and so had refined manual dexterity (Hayhoe 2016).

This observation tended to suggest that students who were born blind were not avoiding educational tasks for either perceptual reasons or lack of perceptual or dexterous experience.

After conjecturing other possible reasons that students were avoiding ambiguous, creative tasks, I concluded that their reticence had a social rather than an educational element. This hypothesis was confirmed when reviewing the students' interviews, where I discovered that they had had little or no creative or cultural education - such as visiting museums, monuments or galleries - whilst attending schools for the blind. In matter of fact, their only opportunities for artistic experiences at this age had been at home.

For example, one student I interviewed, a woman in her thirties, said that her only experiences of creativity during childhood were when she was on holiday with her parents. As a result, she admitted to being afraid of joining in creative educational activities that would expose her to public scrutiny when she was older - her previous holiday experiences were in her safe family unit. Another student, a man with brittle bone disease as well as being blind, said that he had little if any experience of the piano at a school for children with multiple disabilities. This, he felt, provided negative experiences when he tried to learn this instrument later in life. As he recalled of his early education:

I never got the opportunity to learn the piano as I would have liked. And, strange as it may seem, and strange as it may sound, I think initially, until relatively recently, and I mean within the last year, I've almost, in a way, been scared of the piano. It's something I wanted to do, and rather than treat the piano as a friend (and that's what you have to do) I almost thought of it as an enemy (Hayhoe 2008: 64).

Subsequently, I decided to re-interpret Doyle's theory, regarding it instead as a qualitative indicator of task avoidance measured against personal learning history

rather than classroom management; i.e. if a student avoided art tasks alone, I would use this as an indicator that the students' learning history had been inappropriate, and that it was this indicator that needed further research. In this way, I found that I could use observations of students' approaches as a baseline against which to observe the different approaches that each student would take.

This reinterpretation of Doyle's framework meant that students' approaches were subsequently more likely to qualitatively indicate their low self-esteem as well as their inexperience. During my new analysis, I thus also compared my observations of students' approaches to past experiences - through interviews - with their current approaches to learning. In this way, I felt I could draw parallels with previous studies to provide an insight into the evolving structure of blind students' approaches to creative tasks through life-course.

After completing my initial study of blind adults, I designed a further research project to examine the same subject area, but this time focusing on blind teenagers; I was particularly interested in students educated after educational inclusion of disabled students in England & Wales - this inclusion occurred from the late 1980s (Hayhoe 2015). The purpose of this research, amongst other things, was to identify aspects that led to success in the visual arts, and to examine if this success was due to a more positive experience of early art education.

The eventual study was based at RNIB New College, Worcester, a school specializing in the education of children with visual impairments, whose ages ranged from 7-19 (Hayhoe 2008, 2012). What follows is an outline of my data collection methodology of this study, my findings from this study in relation to those made in my initial study of adults, and the conclusions I drew.²

Methodology

The research for these case studies was conducted as part of a larger grounded methodology study examining the difference between the following: younger included students as compared to older excluded students; how belief affects the performance of visual art tasks; and an understanding of visual culture by people with visual impairment (Hayhoe 2008, 2012). After this strand of research, art teachers in schools for the blind and successful art students with visual impairment were interviewed.

This methodology is an adaptation of grounded theory, using its technique of analytical phases, whilst adapting a social-cultural interpretation of data (Berger & Luckman 1966; Hayhoe 2012). This methodology generated a highly interpretive, narrative grounded theory specifically aimed at examining a micro-culture, rather than trying to induce a hypothesis through coding (Glaser 1978; Glaser & Strauss 1967).

During the study, I used informed consent with all participants, which was gathered before the interviews. All data collection methods were conducted in line with the ethical strategy developed specifically for this and similar social studies of blind and visually impaired participants (Hayhoe 2012). Despite developing a highly interpretivist grounded theory, this iteration of grounded methodology placed less emphasis on formal coding strategies (Glaser & Strauss 1967). I also applied Glaser & Strauss' three phases of data collection and analysis, which were termed: a. open coding, b. axial coding, and c. selective coding. These three phases were setup as the three data collection strategies described below. These were: observations, interviews and diaries.

Participants

Before the open coding phase, students were sampled according to an adapted version of Lowenfeld's (1981) categories of blindness levels and visual memory - this choice was made as I previously found that those with different levels of vision and memory had significantly altered psychological and educational experiences (Hayhoe 2008, 2012). The logic behind this decision was that, if students had similar levels of vision and memory, it would be easier to judge whether behaviour was based on experience rather than vision.

The categories of blindness identified were: a. total blindness (no light perception), b. minimal light perception (some light perception but too little to be usable in lessons), and c. distorted vision (highly distorted light perception and registered blind). The students for this study were all registered blind at the time of the study, and had similarly minimal levels of light perception. The categories of memory identified were: a. no visual memory (totally blind from birth to two years), b. assimilated blindness (blind from early childhood but with some light perception, primarily low visual), and c. visual memory (blind or low vision after developing strong visual memories). Again, to test my re-analysis of Doyle's framework, sampled students had non-visual memory of several visual concepts, such as colour and perspective, as they had been born with severe impairments.

Instruments and data collection

Following these initial approaches, I worked in partnership with the head of art at New College, Gerard³. After an initial analysis of the organisation, the author also decided that Gerard would make a good "informer" (Hammersley 1984) during this section of the study - the concept of the "informer" in this study was defined as a go-between or intermediary, providing a point of contact for myself as researcher with the culture or institution I was studying.

Initially, I relied on interviewing students after observing them. Consequently, I used a model of oral and observational data collection used by Burgess (1987) in his study of the culture of a British secondary school. In this study, Burgess referred to an interview technique, which he likened to an open conversation with participants. This open conversation posed observationally based questions as conversational cues with little structure, leaving interviews to be conducted as a series of informal topics. The main advantage I found with this form of interview was that it was more relaxed, with the interviewee more likely to give information, as they took control of the interview from the interviewer. As I hypothesised, this democratised the research (Hayhoe 2012).

In parallel with the observations and interviews, I collected diaries describing the progress of the students' work. To record this data, I asked the students to record onto an audio cassette at intervals in the style of what Nachmias & Nachmias (1981) call an "Intimate Journal" of their lesson experiences. These "Intimate Journals" were a set of personal narratives of events in a subject's life. The "Intimate Journals" I had planned were personal qualitative reports of students' everyday tasks, and relied more on the subject's creative development, as opposed to a quantitative log-style diary. In addition, I photographed the development of the projects undertaken by the students. These photographs were initially taken with my 35mm camera, and then with a digital camera.

To take photographs, I would usually arrive before my meetings with the students, as this gave me an up to date image of their projects prior to their working week. These photographs did not form part of the formal analysis, but supported and illustrated the diaries and observations form a timeline of the progress of these projects. The results of this data collection are presented in the following section. The names of the students are deliberately changed to protect anonymity.

Research findings

I discovered the students' real physical ability was less important than a belief in their perceived physical ability to take part in and succeed in art tasks. The primary factor affecting this success was the quality of students' early art education, which either enhanced or destroyed their self-esteem: self-esteem was often destroyed as a result of exclusion or negative beliefs by art teachers, or enhanced by full inclusion and positive beliefs by art teachers.

Doyle's framework succeeded in explaining students' behaviour, as self-esteem was directly linked to students' risk taking, and risk taking resulted in educational success. However, as Doyle's framework is based on immediate classroom tasks and quantity of experience -with both my students having the same of each- it did not account for

quality of experience. This was a significant finding, as the students' behaviour during tasks varied according to whether they were excluded or not. Therefore, Doyle's model of classroom tasks and previous quantitative experience now needs amending to take account of quality of experience.

Case Study 1: Emile

Emile was eighteen years old when I first met him. He had congenital Optic Nerve Hyperplasia and had entered New College close to the beginning of his secondary career. This transfer, he told me, had been on the insistence of his mother and her strong representations to their local authority, after he had many negative experiences at his mainstream school. His negative experiences included those in art classes, during which he was singled out for special treatment. As a consequence of these experiences in art and similarly negative experiences in other subjects, Emile said that he had left this school hating art. He also cited this as a reason that he could hardly read and write when he entered New College. Consequently, he had to be put back a year in his studies, further effecting his self-confidence in many of his studies. As he recorded in his Intimate Journal:

I had very little art education before I came to Worcester. It mainly consisted of drawing pictures with large felt tip crayons because they thought that I couldn't cope with pencil and pens. I can remember painting and drawing at home whilst at [junior] school because my parents thought the school was not doing enough to stimulate my artistic side. Between the ages of eleven and fourteen I was at the school I am presently at now, and we did do art in lesson time. And for GCSEs we did do art. I did expressive arts, but that's near enough the same thing.

During his secondary school career in Worcester, Emile became more interested in art, and decided to take the subject at A Level after he finished his GCSEs. In addition, Emile also started A Levels in biology and chemistry, although he said he gave up chemistry shortly after beginning the course - mainly, he said, because it required a high level of literacy. Although Emile also said he had a passion for the study of biology, during the observations he decided to give up his biology A Level as well. When I asked him why he decided to do this, Emile said it was mainly due to his lack of writing skills and that he wanted to concentrate on his art A Level. This avoidance of writing was a recurring theme and, at one point when we were talking about his academic studies in general, Emile said that these were mainly due to the "*writing thing*".

Despite his decision to concentrate on art, it appeared the study of creatures, reptiles especially, was Emile's remaining passion. As a result, Emile continued to work in a reptile shop in his free time, and he planned to apply for a course in the study and care of reptiles when he left school. During investigation, Emile undertook several modelling

projects with clay based on his visits to public exhibitions, and literature searches of art. The first of these projects was the glazing of a clay cider jar and flower head he had sculpted earlier in his A Level course. Although these pieces were made before the fieldwork began, they figured highly in many of my discussions with Emile. The two other larger observed projects were both A Level coursework.

The first of Emile's projects was the development and modelling of a clay sculpture of a cliff face with small water reservoirs and a lizard climbing its rough face. Emile initially approached this project inspired by a photograph he found in a reptile magazine, and by making maquettes of this sculpture in clay. In addition, and at the insistence of Gerard, Emile also made a couple of simple technical drawings of the sculpture's making process with measurements and technical aspects of the engineering of the piece.

After detailed planning in three dimensions, Emile made the final cliff face in three discrete pieces, each made of clay slabs. The middle section had a small reservoir with a hole in the bottom that was to represent a lake. Inside the eventual sculpture was to be a further reservoir of water in the large bottom section and a pump that would carry water up through the model to its top section and then trickle down its front and into the outer reservoir. This was unfinished at the time I finished my fieldwork.

Emile's project was carried out individually during lessons and Emile's individual study time, both during and after normal school hours. He appeared to have relatively little didactic teaching help whilst he was carrying out this project. His help was mainly practical with, for example, assistance with lifting and choosing his clay. Emile had limited help from Gerard with his aesthetic choices, too. For example, during this project Emile found it hard to make the clay lizard that was to be placed on the face of the cliff, after photographing a real lizard, whose form he admired. Gerard made a sample of this lizard to show Emile, who then tried to make his own. Emile was not pleased with the result, as he felt it was not up to A Level standard, and so Gerard suggested that they buy a toy model of a lizard from which they could make a mould. The aesthetic choices in this process, however, were mainly Emile's.

Emile's second project was an individual study of Raku pottery. This form of pottery was one of the original forms used in Japan, which dated back thousands of years. It was made by beating clay with flat tools rather than hand forming the clay. During the fieldwork, however, Emile appeared to do noticeably less work on this project than he did on his clay sculpture, largely because it contained elements of didactic research. Emile also made plans to continue this work, but rarely followed through on these plans. For example, Emile told me during my observations he planned to dig his own clay as he had done for a similar project and build a proper Raku kiln outside. This clay was near a nature area he had worked on during his biology course. However, by the end of this course none of these came to fruition.

Emile eventually made some Racu pots on the classroom's manual pottery wheel, and beat the outsides of his pots in the traditional style. In addition, Emile conducted internet research, and contacted a local Racu potter, who was to help him research this technique. However, although he made contacts with the Racu potter, he consulted her rarely during this project.

Like his clay cliff project, his Racu project was carried out only partially during lesson times, and mostly during individual study periods during the day and in the evening; although Gerard again provided technical help by showing Emile how to use the modelling wheel and demonstrating the Racu creating technique during class. Nevertheless, there appeared to be little didactic teaching, as the project assessment emphasized individual study and research.

Emile's behaviour interpreted through the adapted Doyle framework

In terms of his previous history, Emile appeared to re-negotiate his tasks to develop a concentration on many elements of his projects that used task performance that he felt most confident in and happy about. He also openly avoided task performance that he felt least happy with, mainly because they included written research. This appeared to reflect positive and negative experiences in his previous education. For example, because of his earlier negative experiences of drawing at junior school, Emile openly avoided freehand drawing, even to the detriment of his overall success. Instead, during his clay cliff project he preferred making many clay maquettes, even though he knew this would affect his grades.

Emile only created technical drawings with rulers and protractors when he was pushed by Gerard, who reminded him that it was expected at A Level. Furthermore, despite making these compromises, Emile still had a low opinion of his own graphic abilities. I recorded this in my research notes:

I asked Emile whether he had done any more drawing this month. He replied no free hand drawing. However, he had done some more engineering drawings to show how that water will flow from the reservoir within the sculpture and out over the moulded front surface of the piece. I then asked whether he regarded this as an example of an engineering drawing, to which he replies that it was an Emile drawing. It won't resemble anything.

In a similar way, Emile openly avoided many activities involving significant reading or writing. During the observations, for example, it was noticeable that Emile did little research on his individual study of Racu project. Despite his initial contacts with the local Racu potter, Emile avoided visiting her, and often mentioned that he disliked the Internet research he was asked to carry out. As a result, Gerard became noticeably frustrated, as he was behind in the project and compromising its quality, with only a short time available before it was meant to be submitted. This I recorded as follows:

I then ask Emile if he has been working on any other projects this month. Emile replies that he has not managed to get any done. As a result, he has not touched his Racu pottery project. His main priority, he tells me, is to finish his sculpture and his other pots. In addition, though, Emile also tells me that he has not worked further on his Racu project because he is reluctant to write things down. On this point, I asked him why he is reluctant and he replies, "because I'm no good at it - grammar, spelling, everything". As a result, Emile also says that, "I have a real rush to get things done now".

Alternative avoidance was also observed in Emile's performance in the only life-like copying project that he had to conduct. As he had few drawings and therefore copying practice when he was in mainstream education, he appeared to concentrate on elements of his projects that had non-conventional outcomes. He would then work his way around the problem of creating the lizard by buying a toy lizard and making a mould from which a clay lizard could be made:

I ask him whether he has considered moulding a model of a lizard of his own. In response Emile shows me a lizard that he attempted to make earlier on. It has to be admitted that it does not look very life like - the effect that Emile was hoping to achieve. But as he explains, "it's not my thing." Emile also says that making a mould [of the toy lizard] is also another skill. I gather that this is a sarcastic comment, because he laughs as he says it.

This technique contrasts to task performance of the highly un-conventional form of the cliff face and the engineering of clay sculptures and pots. These allowed Emile the chance to make an aesthetic form without having to be judged on its 'reality' or having it compared to an already existing form. For instance, below is one of the many descriptions he gave of making the individual sections of the sculpture. As I recorded of this performance in my research notes:

Because it is hollow in the middle, he explains, it has been constructed out of two basic flat slabs of clay. To build a more natural finishing effect to the sculpture, like a rock face, he is also cutting smaller pieces of clay and then sticking them on randomly in different places. To enhance the appearance of a natural surface on this section of the sculpture, Jon is also getting slip (an almost liquid form of clay usually used for binding or making dry clay more malleable) and throwing it at the clay's surface. After applying the slip in this way, and to again emulate a random and naturalistic rock shape to the outer surface, Jon then moulds its surface or cuts it with a knife.

This description of task performance was paralleled in Emile's description he made of an earlier project, recorded in his interview. I recorded his answer as follows:

Emile then tells me that after these initial attempts at mask making, he had made a further mask based on an African tribal sculpture. However, he felt that the copy of this mask was not too realistic. He tells me that he cannot

copy very well. For this reason, the form of the sculpture resulting from the tribal mask and other following sculptures were decided during their making process. Emile says that he has also used the same technique for the same reasons whilst creating his clay pots. As an example, Emile explains that when he was first making several clay pots they were supposed to be of a fairly conventional design. However, as he began throwing them, he felt that they formed themselves into an unorthodox shape.

Case Study 2: Anna

Anna was sixteen when I first negotiated my coursework at New College. She had Cone-Dystrophy, Photophobia and Eye Stigmas. These impairments reduced her usable sight dramatically, made it difficult for her to focus on images and caused total colour-blindness - she only saw monochrome images. Like Emile, Anna had also been to mainstream schools when she was younger. However, she said she had positive learning experiences whilst she was there. Consequently, she only moved schools when her sight deteriorated substantially and her mainstream school could no longer support her in class.

At mainstream school, Anna took part in many art activities, and appeared to have little problem fitting in. She also appeared to be treated relatively normally in art and other forms of education, with techniques such as colour labelling of pens and pencils being used to teach her the properties of colour. Anna also said that she always remembered drawing and painting when she was at home before she went to school. Because of this relatively normal treatment during her initial education, when Anna first attended New College she was not behind her classmates.

At New College, Anna first took design and art GCSEs and then decided that, as she enjoyed these subjects, she would study art A Level - she was also heavily involved in theatrical activities, and participated in many public-facing events, such as school plays. Anna continued with two other A Levels, and was applying to study on a foundation art and design courses during the fieldwork - this is a higher education course that is largely compulsory before art and design degree study. Anna described this in her Intimate Journal as follows:

My art education? Well from a very early age, I've loved drawing. I loved drawing in primary school and secondary school. I did art GCSE for which I got an A. And I've always enjoyed doing art outside of school as well. I am a very imaginative person. And I find that I can express myself quite easily with art. I've still got some of my pieces from when I was younger, and looking at them now they seem quite funny, but at the time they were very good. Yeah, I love art very much. I used to be the proud owner of plasteline and all that sort of all of those modelling materials. And I used to go around to my friends' house and we'd make great big cardboard shields and then have play fights in the

garden and I used to draw dragons and all sorts of strange things on the shields.
I used to love it.

As the fieldwork began, Anna was just finishing life drawing and ceramic tile projects. The ceramic tiles were colourful glazed designs, featuring dolphins leaping out of water. By contrast, her life drawings were an outline series of a naked woman, presented in different colours referring to different shades. During Anna's drawing project, each colour contrasted and was presented on black sugar paper.

Like Emile, during observations Anna also began her main A Level coursework. The first of these projects was a piece based on an adaptation of a sculpture by Canova, entitled *Cupid & Psyche*. The original sculpture featured a Greek god and goddess staring into each other's eyes, and was sculpted in marble. Although Anna had not seen the original, she had taken a photocopy from a textbook she found in the library, after having been enchanted with the story behind it. Anna planned the making of the sculpture by first drawing the figures out in her sketchbook. She then abstracted the figures and attempted to make them into a single flowing shape. After this, Anna planned the material she would use for her sculpture. She first made a maquette of the model in clay, and then tried to make the whole model in a similar way.

Unfortunately, the full-sized clay sculpture proved impractical because the wings of the god and goddess were too heavy and fell off. Anna then changed the material to mud rock on newspaper, as suggested by Gerard. After further trial and error and disappointing experimentation with real feathers, Anna also decided to make wings from card, and halos from stiff card and broken CDs. Anna was also happy to be highly creative. For example, as Anna was making the main bodies of the sculpture, she noticed they resembled tree trunks, and so decided to abstract the figures into a single form. This allowed her to model her own arms, forming the branch-like connections between the two bodies. This new form was then sprayed with gold spray paint.

Anna's second project was her individual study. For this project, she decided to study black and white photographs of people's body parts. She began by taking her camera with her on holiday and taking photographs of people's faces. She then became fascinated by photographing people's hands by themselves, and comparing their wrinkles to tree bark. Anna also approached this project socially. She first persuaded her friend to have her hands photographed, and then her mother's. She seemed particularly pleased with her mother's hands, as they were older and therefore more wrinkled. After taking these photographs, Anna learnt to develop her own negatives and prints in the school darkrooms as a sub-project. For this sub-project, she managed to get outside help from a professional photographer, who also took Anna out of school to learn landscape photography.

During her projects, and in a similar way to Emile in the previous case study, Anna appeared to receive little didactic teaching from Gerard. Instead, and in common with the purpose of the coursework, Anna worked through many of her own problems and conducted her own creative experiments. The only help that Anna appeared to receive was practical, with support in the practical engineering of materials she was using. For example, Anna asked Gerard for help when she could not find a way of sticking the wings to her sculpture. In addition, during her individual study she solicited her own didactic and practical help with aesthetic and technical aspects of photography from a professional photographer. Although Anna then experimented with her own creative ideas on her own.

Anna's behaviour interpreted through the adapted Doyle's theory

Anna's development of self-esteem from early learning experiences appeared to be significantly different from Emile's in several respects. For example, despite their similar visual impairment -with respect to visual concepts they had no experience of- Anna seemed to gain much more from earlier educational experiences in mainstream education and at home.

Despite having what is commonly regarded as no colour perception, she was unafraid of working with colour. For example, as I previously stated, Anna's junior school teacher had marked up her normal drawing pencils. This had allowed her to experiment with colour, and eventually through creative activity draw analogies with tone that allowed her to understand how she was using it. In this way, Anna described her comprehension of colours as an extension of tones: using dark tones in a similar way to rich colours, and light tones in a similar way to weaker colours.

In terms of the development of Doyle's constructs, Anna was more willing to take high risks in her tasks. In terms of her use of colour and drawing technique, for instance, she was willing to risk sketching out her ideas, even though she knew she risked being judged more severely by doing so. Similarly, Anna had no fear of taking risks with colour in her art work, even though she had a different experience of the subject to those that were to mark her work. I recorded this in my research notes as follows:

Anna then... describe[s] how she has planned the shape and structure of the wings by drawing them out first. She then tells me how she intends to make these wings using a mix of media, not mudrock like the rest of the body of the sculpture. With this use of a mixture of material, Anna thinks that the wings will be able to incorporate a range of colour and texture. She feels that this is important. To this end, Anna thinks that she may eventually use real feathers as part of the wings to provide the effect she is looking for. I asked Anna at this point about her colour perception, as I remembered that from her earlier reports that she said that she is completely colour blind. Anna gives me

an example of how she overcame this problem whilst she was working on a previous project that involved the designing and making of various glazed tiles representing the sea with leaping dolphins as a motif. Anna states that she sees the differences in colour as she also sees different textures. For example, in the case of the tile project she saw the difference between the matt surface of an unglazed or even pre-glazed surface of a tile, and the difference to the tile after it has glazed.

I asked Anna to expand upon this point, and she gave a more detailed instance of the reflection of white. She said that this particular reflection gives the impression of lines on the surface of a glazed design - this appears to be synonymous with lighter colours. In addition, she can also tell the difference between shinier materials and lighter textures through their touch. It was for this reason that when Anna was creating the sea colour in her tile project she deliberately glazed the project, making it shinier, whilst the tiles surrounding it were deliberately left matt. (As Anna says, "I think in colour even if I don't see it.").

In addition, despite never having studied the subject before, Anna also appeared to be willing to risk her self-esteem in other areas of study, even when she had no previous experience of it. This would appear to challenge Doyle's framework, suggesting that quantity of experience of new learning itself can develop self-esteem in new task performance. For example, during the ambiguous study of black and white photography on her own Anna seemed comfortable taking many risks, even though she had never encountered the subject before. For instance, in my research notes I recorded Anna describing the beginning of this project as follows:

During her Christmas holiday, Anna plans to take more black & white pictures. She says, "I really, really enjoy it". She also says that she would spend three hours after school in the dark room in New College if she had to, as the project is that important to her. Anna also said that it gives her real senses of achievement when she gets an image right the way she wants it. Anna shows me a series of black & white photographs that she took during her previous half term holiday. This series is of what she considers interesting faces of people she either knows or found in London. She says that she particularly enjoys the images of old men with teeth missing that she took.

Conclusion and further questions

Taken in its original context of classroom management, Doyle's theory does not cover all circumstances of avoidance in both ambiguous and risky situations. As I showed in this article, present classroom experiences of individual students are based on their past experiences. In other words, it appears that students bring a great deal of their *emotional-baggage* with them into class.

In the case studies above, for example, Emile and Anna were given similar interventions from Gerard during their coursework. However, because of his previously negative learning experiences when younger, Emile would go to great lengths to avoid tasks that involved drawing or writing. This led him to avoid important coursework deadlines that put his art A Level grade in danger. In contrast, Anna seemed much more willing to take risks in her activities. She had no compunction in drawing out her ideas, even using colour.

However, taken out of its original context Doyle's theory can act as an indicator of the previously negative and positive learning experiences of students' current task performance. In the instances represented in both my previous study and this present one, for instance, the students' levels of self-esteem accurately indicated their avoidance of risk. Therefore, this indicative factor correlated with either their exposure or lack of it to a form of education. This indication was also reflected in the humiliation Emile felt by excluding teaching techniques, which destroyed his interest in many tasks.

What both case studies also demonstrate is this risk avoidance was present in both child learners and adult learners. It was also not determined by inherently ambiguous assessment or curriculum - as in the courses at the universities of Leicester or Bristol in previous research, or the unambiguous assessment of a formal art A Level.

Therefore, in the instances shown above, influences throughout life-course were at least as powerful as classroom management strategies in the individual task performances.

Finally, as I feel that this study raises more questions than it answers, I would like to finish this conclusion with the following questions for debate and future research:

- Can we learn something about risk taking in the creative learning processes of all students, from the observation of task avoidance by students with visual impairments in art education?
- Are there any other distinct social groups that have suffered from a similar lack of self-esteem because they have not been expected to perform particularly well in a subject? And how are these expectations epistemologically developed?
- How can the avoidance of activities by students with low self-esteem be overcome? Are there any suggestions for innovative inclusive teaching strategies that take account of life-course?

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Σημειώσεις

¹ This term is meant to refer to any form of active perception not just visual.

² The analysis of the full study with the refined tool of analysis is presented in Hayhoe (2008), and the full discussion of the grounded methodology used is presented in Hayhoe (2012).

³ An assumed name, as are all participants this study.