MEDIATING CLASSROOM CULTURE BASED ON DEMOCRATIC VALUES: AN EXPLORATION OF A TEACHER’S FACILITATIVE ROLE.

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A thesis submitted to
The School of Education,
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Master of Education by Research
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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this work has not been submitted either in whole or part, to this university or any other educational institution for marking or assessment either previously or concurrently. I also certify that unless otherwise stated the material presented in this thesis is the result of original research.

Signed_________________

Dated__________________
ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to examine the teacher’s facilitative role to engage students in Values Education (Curriculum Council, 1998) based on a cooperative and collaborative learning pedagogy. The study was conducted in a primary school classroom with thirty-one year 4/5 students aged 9-10 years of age.

During the research process the core shared values underpinning the Western Australian Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998) provided the foundation to negotiate agreements for behaviour based on The Tribes process (Gibbs, 2001), which included mutual respect, in order to foster a safe, supportive and democratic classroom culture. The Tribes process was used to operationalise the teaching of values, social skills, cooperation and collaboration. Hart’s (1992) collaborative framework informed the organisation of the classroom to create the conditions that supported collaboration amongst peers and the teacher.

An action research approach was used to reflect on the classroom context and provide a focus for a range of qualitative research methods. Multiple data sources such as teacher observations, interviews, student and teacher reflection logs and sociograms were used to triangulate findings from parents, students and teachers. A sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) provided the conceptual framework for this study as the underlying assumption is that students learn from each other, mediated by the teacher or more capable peers. The focus on the action within the social context during the development of interpersonal
relationships is a key feature of peer mediated learning, which complemented the processes chosen by the teacher researcher to elucidate how a safe, supportive and democratic classroom was created. Class meetings, group work and reflective practices were used to scaffold students’ understandings of interpersonal relationships to promote a culture that was consistent with Australia’s democratic traditions. Reflective practices in the classroom provided opportunities for new perspectives to be developed, as new knowledge and experiences were integrated with existing personal practical knowledge.

The major findings reflected the foci of student and teacher conversations about students’ interpersonal skills and their ability to get along with each other. In the first phase of the study establishing positive ‘relationships’ based on trust, through teambuilding activities provided the impetus for the next phase of the study about ‘leadership’. This phase continued for most of the study, and provided authentic opportunities for students to develop leadership skills, which permeated the last phase of the study about ‘friendships’. Students established mutually beneficial relationships that broadened their views about discriminatory behaviours, friendship and leadership.

The major conclusions drawn from the study is that teachers play a significant role in mediating positive relationships amongst peers. Further, it was evident that the explicit teaching of core shared values (Curriculum Council, 1998) provided the foundations of productive and active citizenship during the process of creating the conditions for a safe, supportive and democratic classroom.
DEDICATION

To my family Peter, James and PJ
for your encouragement and love.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the following persons whose invaluable support was crucial to the completion of this study.

At a district and school level my gratitude is extended to the district director and the principal for allowing this research to proceed. At a classroom level my appreciation is extended to all the students in my class and their parents for willingly participating in the study, providing their oral and written feedback and accepting to be interviewed and observed. I would like to thank my colleagues for their support with a special mention to my ‘the critical friend’, Mrs. Alison Foster. The ongoing support and interest in the research, coupled with critical feedback, became an additional source of motivation.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to work with my supervisors, Dr. Judith MacCallum and Dr. Wendy Cumming-Potvin, who provided constructive and supportive feedback throughout the research. Thankyou for your dedication, sense of humour and most of all, for encouraging me to be the best I could be.
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INTRODUCTION

Culture pervades everything we do in society and is integral to the way individuals behave, what they believe and value. From this perspective, it can be argued that values are fundamental to the teaching of all curriculum areas. De Long and Fahey’s (2000) elements of culture have been adapted to this study to summarise the practices of the teacher and students, which are underpinned by the normative values of the classroom on which behaviour is based and knowledge is created and shared. These elements of culture will be explored throughout this study within the context of teaching values education, which has become a topical issue in the media and in the educational domain where questions are raised as to whose responsibility it is to teach children values (Jannu, 2004). Through an action research process that included class meetings, group work and reflective practices, the current research examined a teacher’s facilitative role in scaffolding students’ understandings of interpersonal relationships, based on the core shared values of the Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998). This study is based on the premise that the values espoused in the Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998) are worthwhile and can be used to create a safe, supportive and democratic classroom. The following two research questions were used as a guide to define a teacher’s facilitative role.

What is the role of the teacher in facilitating the process of establishing a collaborative, cooperative and safe classroom environment that encourages positive interpersonal relationships?

What are the major features of this dynamic process that elucidate how to create a classroom environment that is responsive to the social and emotional well-being of the students and the teacher?
The growing impact of multiculturalism in Australian society has necessitated government policies on social justice and equal opportunity in a commitment to meet the needs of students from diverse sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds (Cumming-Potvin, Renshaw and van Kraayenoord, 2003a). Although past Commonwealth policies relating to social justice and equal opportunity acknowledged the need to cater for student differences, the Australian Government now asserts that schools play a vital role in preparing students to become productive Australian citizens for the future, through explicitly teaching values (Professional Input, 2005).

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs-MCEETYA, 1999) was part of the impetus for all State and Territory governments to review their policies. The guiding principles in the Adelaide Declaration have been endorsed by all Education Ministers in Australia and underpin ‘The Values Education Programme’ which provides a basis for the implementation of values education in schools. The social and emotional targets in the Adelaide Declaration include developing self-confidence, optimism, a high self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence.

Australia’s future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. (http://www.mceetya.edu.au)

A National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools (Australian Government, 2004a) communicates a vision for improving values education, and acknowledges the policies and programs already in place in schools. The Framework
identifies nine values for Australian schooling, which support Australia’s democratic way of life, which are listed below.

- Care and compassion;
- Doing your best;
- Having a fair go;
- Freedom;
- Honesty and trustworthiness;
- Integrity;
- Respect;
- Responsibility; and
- Understanding, tolerance and inclusion. (Professional Input, 2005)

With the publication of ‘The Curriculum Framework, K-12’ (Curriculum Council, 1998) the State Government of Western Australia had already legislated that core shared values be explicitly taught in all schools. This legislation aimed to provide activities for all students to integrate these values across the curriculum to enhance learning. The support document ‘Pathways to Social and Emotional Development’ reaffirms that parents are a child’s first educator and that schools need to be an extension of the home in ‘providing a supportive and nurturing environment’ to enhance a child’s self worth, provide optimism and enthusiasm about the future (Department of Education and Training, 2003).

Commercial classroom programs such as the ‘You Can Do It!’ Program (Bernard, 1996, 2004), ‘Bounce back!’ (McGrath & Noble, 2003) and ‘The Friendly Schools Bullying Intervention Project’ (Erceg, Cross & Pitabona, 2001) address issues such as behaviour management and bullying. These programs reaffirm the right of students to learn in a safe and caring environment by explicitly promoting the values of caring and sharing. They are valuable as a whole school approach to offer a positive framework for poor behaviour and are a starting point to deal with social and emotional issues across a school. However, each classroom of students presents
social and emotional issues which are unique to that group and the current research examines how these issues may be addressed.

The terms ‘researcher’ and ‘teacher’ will be used respectively to describe this teacher’s alternating role of teacher/researcher throughout this study to create a model that supported the creation of a safe, supportive and democratic classroom environment. As suggested in the Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998) the current knowledge and experiences of both the students and teacher in a primary classroom, were used as the starting point to negotiate a cooperative and collaborative classroom culture, based on the core shared values. A sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) guided the research design and provided a framework for data analyses. This perspective emphasises action within a social context, and mediation during the process of constructing meaning. There is also the assumption that students learn from each other, mediated by the teacher or more capable peers. The focus on the social context and the development of interpersonal relationships are key features of peer mediated learning, which complemented the processes chosen by this researcher to elucidate how a safe, supportive and democratic classroom was created.

During this study, the Tribes process (Gibbs, 1995, 2001) was used to operationalise the mediation of values, social skills, cooperation and collaboration through group work. Classroom meetings became the catalyst for the teacher to strategically guide students and provide opportunities for peers to guide peers. Glasser (1969) was considered controversial in the sixties when he proposed that schools should change their practices so students were actively engaged in their learning and had the
opportunity to develop the social responsibility to solve their own problems. Glasser introduced the notion of class meetings because he believed the teacher, as opposed to an outside expert, was best placed to deal with classroom issues. This researcher adapted Glasser’s ‘class meetings’, the use of ‘Y charts’ (Bennett & Rolheiser, 1991) and the notion of Vygotsky’s (1978) ‘zone of proximal development’ to this study, which will be further elaborated in the methods chapter. The dynamic process was proactive and responsive to the social and emotional needs of the participants. Students were challenged to think beyond current understandings of interpersonal relationships, in the context of the co-construction of understanding between adults and peers, as illustrated in the following extract by Light & Littleton (1999).

> The child’s interactions with other people serve to mediate between the child and the world-to-be-learned-about and so understanding learning depends upon understanding particular types of interactions, which serve to foster it. (p.8)

There were layers to the research as the teacher’s role was primarily focused on improving student outcomes in the context of a safe, supportive and democratic classroom. The researcher’s role was defined during the action research process when the critical elements of this dynamic process were identified. The examination of the development of interpersonal relationships elucidated the process. It was difficult to step back from this interactive situation, so the perceptions from other sources became crucial to gain a better understanding of the position of all stakeholders. Students, parents and other teachers were asked to document their thoughts, which were triangulated with teacher observations to examine these multidimensional facets of the situation.
The action research process provided a systematic procedure by which the researcher continuously improved the teaching practice, integrating new knowledge into the practical everyday life of a classroom and collecting data that provided evidence of changes in behaviours (Grundy, 1995; Tripp, 1995). This researcher had used this process to build local knowledge but wanted to take the process a step further by constructing a Framework for teacher facilitation that promoted social and emotional well-being for all students, which could be applied beyond this researcher’s classroom. An inductive approach was used to inform both the teaching practice and the research outcomes.

This study was situated at Bushlands’ Primary school, which had been in operation since 1987, with 620 students in attendance (2% Aboriginal and 0.6% students with physical disabilities). A large portion of the student population used English as a Second Language (ESL), which qualified Bushlands to employ an additional two multicultural aides (Vietnamese and Macedonian), an ESL and an Aboriginal Islander Education Officer (AIEO). The profile of the student population had changed over the life of the school and there was an increase in the number of students with poor social, emotional and behavioural skills. As a result, pastoral care programs instigated by Bushland’s administration were implemented by personnel external to the school. The benefits to students were of a transitory nature as the expert personnel who ran the programs left the school when the programs finished.

A volunteer adult mentoring system was established at Bushlands Primary School (2000) prior to the current study in 2004. Vulnerable children, as identified by teachers, parents and other support staff, the school nurse and psychologist, were
brought together with a caring adult from the community, in an effort to encourage and guide these students. The adult mentors worked with each student on a one to one basis during school hours each week. The program met with much success and the volunteers were commended for their selfless persistence to make a difference in the lives of these students. Increasingly more students required such services and there were not sufficient volunteers to meet these demands. Situations also occurred where the support was withdrawn because the mentor could not continue due to personal reasons. As a result of the lack of availability of adult mentors, this researcher perceived the use of peers to be a more sustainable option in the longer term, as a complementary source of support.

This researcher implemented the ‘You Can Do It’ program (Bernard, 1998, 2004) in the classroom during 1999 and 2000 and anticipated its use for school wide implementation. This was realised in 2001 when Bushlands’ staff negotiated teaching values and social skills as a school planning priority1. This program provided the basis for teaching a common vocabulary across the school about the four key foundations to develop success and emotional resiliency: ‘getting along with others’, ‘being persistent’, ‘being organised’ and ‘being confident’ (Bernard, 1998, 2004). These concepts complemented the core shared values of the Curriculum Framework such as ‘respect and concern for others and their rights’ (Curriculum Council, 1998) and the values underpinning the Tribes process (Gibbs, 1998, 2001), which were being implemented simultaneously in the classroom.

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1 Each year the school staff reviews current programs and policies to establish new priorities in the draft Curriculum Improvement Plan (CIP) for the following year, which addresses the identified social, emotional and academic needs of the students. A draft plan is presented to the school council, for discussion and later their endorsement. Following this process, the CIP becomes the operating school plan and policy. In 2001 all staff agreed that the increase in behavioural problems across the school necessitated a coordinated approach on a school wide basis to address these issues.
The current study was conducted in a composite year four/five class of 31 students (ages nine-ten years old) which consisted of 17 students from the year five cohort of sixty students who were distributed across four similar composite classes in 2004 to cope with the volume of antisocial behaviour, as effective behaviour management was viewed as critical to establishing a positive learning environment.

The social and emotional development of students over the longer term is more likely to be enhanced through effective curriculum practices, positive teacher-students relationships, optimal learning environments and whole school strategies. (The Department of Education and Training, 2003, p. 3)

Educators are interested in identifying ways to influence student motivation by creating environments where cooperative and collaborative values are explicitly taught. A sociocultural perspective acknowledges that interactions occur within a social and cultural context (Light & Littleton, 1999), which is complex and multidimensional. The students in the current study experienced a variety of teaching styles in the past, which influenced their current and subsequent understandings of their interactions and role within the school context. The classroom programs in the current study assumed students would be willing to adapt to a role that required participative decision making with the teacher and their peers, to establish a caring and sharing classroom. Hill & Hill (1993) state over-responsible teachers encourage children to be dependent and this reduces their intrinsic motivation to learn. If the teacher is too controlling, some children become negative attention seekers to meet their needs for power, fun and belonging. To work effectively together as a team, teachers need to find tools and structures to provide the stepping-stones for students to make their own judgements about their behaviour (Millett, 2002a).
In the context of this study the terms ‘collaborative’ and ‘cooperative’ are used to describe how a task is completed by a group of students and these terms will be explored further in the next chapter. A cooperative task may be broken into smaller parts for individual group members to work on before it is collated into the final product. In contrast a collaborative task is competed ‘as a whole’ by all group members (Friend & Cook, 1992).

The literature is reviewed regarding sociocultural theory, group work, the teacher’s facilitative role and values education that supported a cooperative and collaborative learning pedagogy in Chapter 1. The methods chosen and how the questions of validity and reliability were addressed have been discussed in Chapter 2. The themes that emerged from the classroom context, using an inductive approach, which made it necessary to expand the literature review to critically interpret the data, are presented in Chapter 3. Pseudonyms have been used for the school and the students to provide anonymity and confidentiality. The limitations of this research and the conclusions that can be drawn, to engage students in a process of self-reflection in the context of understanding and respecting the values of others are discussed in Chapter 4. Suggestions are also made for further research.
Chapter 1  
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE  
VALUES EDUCATION  

Introduction

The Australian Government and the media have urged Australian citizens to examine what measures need to be taken to protect Australia’s democratic way of life, within the global context of the perceived threat of terrorism on Australian soil. This research is situated within this political and social context.

There has been renewed interest and emphasis on the place of educating for values education in Australian education settings, with calls for new forms of civics, citizenship and values education at the school level… (Lovat, 2002)

The Australian Government has published ‘The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools’ (2005). It provides a context, a vision and nine values for Australian schooling, guiding principles and key elements and approaches to values education. Table 1.1, on the next page, summarises the four areas of the literature reviewed, which informed the classroom framework and the ongoing development of the action research process for this study. Sociocultural theory is used as the interpretative framework to describe and analyse data related to identifying the teacher’s facilitative role to promote collaborative and cooperative group work. The notion of values education is explored within the context of the core shared values of the Western Australian Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998), which underpin this study.
Table 1.1
*A summary of the literature reviewed and its relevance to the study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LITERATURE REVIEWED</th>
<th>RELEVANCE TO RESEARCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theoretical framework</strong></td>
<td>• Learning and values are socially constructed through mediated action, which is situated within a cultural and historical context (Vygotsky, 1978).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociocultural view of learning</strong></td>
<td>• The concept of community and adults and peers mediating the process is consistent with this research (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A sociocultural view of learning provides a broad theoretical approach to inform group processes (Light &amp; Littleton, 1999, p.11; Vygotsky, 1978).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group work</strong></td>
<td>• Group processes can facilitate teaching cooperative structures. Learning seldom occurs in isolation from others (Bennett &amp; Rolheiser, 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cooperation and collaboration</strong></td>
<td>• Group work broadens the opportunity for multi-tiered scaffolding as a temporary support to allow peers to learn from each other (Cumming-Potvin, Renshaw &amp; van Kraayenoord, 2003a). The concept of multiple zones of proximal development (ZPD) conceived by Vygotsky (1978) can be extended during teacher scaffolding (Bruner, 1986) so peers learn from peers (Tudge, 1990). ZPDs are created between students during the dynamic process of discussion, implementation and reflection of ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The timing of the teaching of social skills is critical to promoting cooperation and collaboration (Gillies &amp; Ashman, 1996; Friend &amp; Cook, 1992; Gibbs, 1995, 2001; Bernard, 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The teacher’s role as facilitator</strong></td>
<td>• The teacher is ultimately responsible for the classroom climate (Gibbs, 1995, 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Taking the time to be thoughtful about group work will have long-term benefits for students who will then become a support structure for each other (Bennett &amp; Rolheiser, 2001).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflective practices in the classroom provide opportunities for new perspectives to be developed, as new knowledge and experiences are integrated with existing personal practical knowledge (PPK) (Edwards, 2004; Rogoff, 1990).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Values education</strong></td>
<td>• This research assumes the shared core values (Curriculum Council, 1998) are worthwhile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The classroom and school culture need to reflect consistency between the values espoused and the behaviour of students and staff (Millett, 2004a).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Difficulties may arise in sustaining positive relationships based on trust, caring and sharing, if students do not have the ability to deal constructively with competition. The value of ‘mutual respect’ underpins Covey’s (1998) notion of ‘me to we’ paradigm shift in thinking from winning, which implies someone will lose; the opportunity is opened up for a creative and synergistic interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The notion of ‘Personal best’ provides opportunities for students to experience a sense of achievement (Bernard, 2004).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.1 Theoretical framework: A sociocultural view of learning

Daniels (2001) argues that there is an assumption of a fundamental connection existing between human mental functioning and the social, historical and cultural contexts in which it occurs. Sociocultural theory is historically linked to the work of Vygotsky (1978) and provides an account of learning and development as culturally mediated processes. Vygotsky’s (1978) work has impacted on cognitive theory and educational practice with the contention that education should scaffold the child’s cognitive development to provide challenges rather than provide experiences at the individual’s current level of cognitive maturity (Ashman & Gillies, 2003). The term mediated learning is based on the work of Vygotsky (1978) who believed an adult or peer (someone other than the learner) could mediate or ‘translate knowledge about the society and culture so that it can be internalised by the learner’ (Ashman & Gillies, 2003, p. 199). Vygotsky used the concept of zone of proximinal development (ZPD) to theorise the kind of pedagogy that is likely to promote significant learning. Vygotsky (1978) recognised the relevance of interpersonal interactions between the learner and more capable others and defined this zone of proximal distance (ZPD) as the distance between the actual developmental level of an individual without adult assistance compared to the level of potential development that could be achieved with adult assistance or more capable peers.

Bruner (1986) extended Vygotsky’s notion of ZPD with the use of the metaphor of scaffolding to further develop the description of how adults support children’s learning through graduated, strategic steps that create ZPDs (Cumming-Potvin, Renshaw & van Kraayenoord, 2003a, p. 56). Scaffolding has often been considered as a linear process but recent research describes a more dynamic, interactive process
where the concept of ZPD is extended during guided participation. “It varies as a function of the interpersonal relationship and interaction between participants rather than as a fixed attribute of the learner” (Cumming-Potvin et al., 2003a, p. 57). In the regular classroom, multiple ZPDs are operating, which are facilitated with the interactions of equal ability peers at a horizontal level and with the teacher/expert at a vertical level.

In the context of the current study in which ZPDs were operating, they provided a feedback mechanism about the quality of peer relationships. This facilitated students’ PPK about how to be part of a community and the core shared values that were important to this community. Peers and the researcher guided the process, where the individual took responsibility for their words and actions and gave justifications for their choices. However, the researcher’s role was to progressively encourage students’ social and emotional development by challenging their current ideas. Vygotsky (1978) would agree that all “good learning is that which is in advance of development” (p.89) and the researcher’s role was to maximise student learning by presenting activities that allowed this process to occur, with assistance.

At the classroom level one means of celebrating Australia’s multicultural society is to provide opportunities for the phenomenon of multi-tiered scaffolding to facilitate student learning to develop respect for differing views. Using open-ended questions and affirmative strategies in their research with students who spoke French as a second language, Cumming-Potvin, Renshaw and van Kraayenoord (2003b) concluded that opportunities for non-traditional spaces were created as teachers
negotiated with students to build on their background knowledge. Classroom meetings provided these opportunities in the current study.

Because teachers are not perceived to be the single source of authoritative knowledge and social control is dispersed, non-traditional spaces also blur the boundaries between teachers and students. (Cumming-Potvin, Renshaw & van Kraayenoord, 2003b, p. 400)

In the early to middle childhood phase of schooling (5-12 years of age), students deepen their understanding of friendships through their peer relationships and their ability to empathise when someone else is hurt, upset or angry. Examining changing patterns of friendship is particularly pertinent for children of this age group due to the increasing importance of peer friendships in the classrooms, children exhibit a range of cognitive development at levels related to understanding social situations; teachers need to appreciate that emotions for children may vary in the same situation, depending on their perspective or values. Also different children may experience different emotions under the same circumstances, and teachers themselves may experience a different reaction at different times (The Department of Education and Training, 2003, p.11).

In the current study, there was the opportunity for multi-tiered scaffolding during classroom meetings in the areas of social and ethical issues, as well as intellectual development. The researcher modelled ethical behaviour based on democratic values that were promoted in the classroom to engage students in thoughtful dialogue about their behaviour. The development of an environment where children openly discussed their opinions was encouraged in the context of the normal operations of a supportive and participatory classroom. Teachers are encouraged to closely monitor and guide student interactions, “intervening when there are opportunities for
enhancing students’ understanding and interpersonal relations” helping students acquire the necessary skills in the development of humane values applicable to everyday situations (Department of Education and Training, 2003, p.13).

Research has illustrated that values education is best promoted where there is a differential understanding and viewpoints and the opportunity for dialogue (Aspen & Hill, 1996; Styles, 2004). Group work broadens the opportunity for multi-tiered scaffolding as a temporary support to allow peers to learn from each other. ZPDs are created between students during the dynamic process of discussion, implementation and reflection of ideas (Cumming-Potvin, Renshaw & van Kraayenoord, 2003a).

1.2 Group processes: Links to sociocultural theory

Rogoff (1990) argues from a sociocultural perspective that learning and development involve an apprenticeship process, whereby the learner is immersed in the social and cultural context, which is integral to the process it shapes.

I develop the concept of guided participation to suggest that both guidance and participation in culturally valued activities are essential to children’s apprenticeships in thinking. Guidance may be tacit or explicit, and participation may vary in the extent to which children or caregivers are responsible for its arrangement. (Rogoff, 1990, p. 8)

In the current study the apprenticeship perspective explicates how a classroom culture was negotiated within the social and cultural setting of a school. The students used the resources of the teacher/s and peers for support and guidance when as they engaged in the challenges of establishing positive relationships and leadership. The teacher’s role of facilitating group work enriched all participants’ understandings of discriminatory behaviours that created constraints to positive relationships.
Johnson, Johnson and Johnson Holubec’s (1994) research promotes the integration of collaborative and cooperative pedagogies to promote group work because this also promotes significant learning. The researcher in the current study guided this process as a facilitator by consciously scaffolding students’ understanding of themselves and others to improve interpersonal relationships.

In the course of their own development human beings also actively shape the very forces that are active in shaping them. This mediational model, which entails the mutual influence of the individual and supra-individual factors, lies at the heart of many attempts to develop our understanding of the possibilities for human interventions in the processes of human learning and development. (Daniels, 2001, p. 1)

The next sections will discuss perspectives on collaborative, cooperative and competitive learning to support the choice of group processes for this research and ultimately the Tribes process (Gibbs, 1997, 2001), before discussing the teacher’s facilitative role. The last section of this chapter will discuss values education, which underpins the choice of classroom and research methodology to create a safe, supportive and democratic classroom culture.

1.2.1 Perspectives on collaborative learning

The classroom is a contrived situation where there is not always parity between students and the teacher or a freedom of choice to participate. Students are not unlike adults who need time to develop genuine trust in their relationships.

Lacking the intimacy that confirms trust among family members or long-time friends, team members must rely on other evidence that they do not intend to harm one another. They create trust as the consequence, not precondition, of close interaction by displaying professional reciprocity clearly and concretely in each small exchange. (Warren Little, 1987, p. 512)
Hogan (2003) argues that when relationships are trusting there is a greater level of caring and sharing, because there is an underlying assumption that behaviour is based on good intentions. Therefore, one could argue that fostering trust in a classroom is critical to establishing positive relationships, but may require some skill for the facilitator. Rogers and Kutnick (1994) argue that there is not adequate teacher training in the effective development of sound pedagogies that reflect current research on how to facilitate student learning using group work. Teachers and researchers often assumed collaboration implied group work (Hart, 1992), which was planned by the teacher, so there was often a focus on students’ lack of social skills. Hart’s (1992) research has broadened this perspective to include spontaneous collaboration between students, which was not planned by teachers. The current researcher has adapted Hart’s framework for establishing a self-supporting environment to allow collaboration for many different purposes and also to foster trust as the foundation for a safe, supportive and democratic classroom.

Antil, Jenkins, Wayne and Vadasay (1998) argue that societal trends show collaboration is not a passing fad that will come and go. It provides possibilities for achieving multiple educational goals at a personal and academic level to develop interpersonal, verbal and written communication skills. Likewise, cooperative learning is not a fad and no other instructional method used today can claim the quantity or quality of research highlighting its success (Gillies, 2003). Gillies and Ashman (1996) support the teaching of collaborative skills to primary school children. Their research showed that students who were trained to collaborate to facilitate each other’s learning were consistently more cooperative and helpful towards each other. They used more inclusive language and gave more detailed
explanations to each other in their classroom-based work groups than those students who were only directed to help others, but not trained. Teaching social skills to improve interpersonal and communication skills was critical to building and maintaining trust and managing conflict. The next section discusses the issues of competition and how it impedes cooperation and teambuilding within the context of the classroom.

1.2.2 Perspectives on cooperative learning and competition

Johnson, Johnson and Johnson Holubec (1994) argue that teaching cooperative skills is an essential requirement for students to learn how to learn from each other and thereby improve the potential of the individual to be an effective learner.

Therefore, teaching cooperative skills becomes an important prerequisite for academic learning because achievement improves as students become more effective in learning from each other. (p. 63)

Cooperation is usually understood to mean compliance with authority or sharing resources but Hill and Hill (1993) argue that it is not about harmony but more concerned with intellectual conflict, which Piaget called ‘cognitive conflict’. They believe the two essential characteristics of a cooperative activity are positive interdependence and goal similarity. Ames and Ames’s (1984) research into goal theory found that each child had different goal orientations for participating in an activity; which reflected their perspective on learning, be it competitive, cooperative or individualistic. Students who were competitive were primarily concerned with performance and ego goals and norm referenced their achievements with their peers. Students were cooperative and individualistic had mastery goals and were more
concerned with recognition of their effort and usually self-referenced their achievements.

The Johnson brothers conducted a meta-analysis of 122 research projects from 1924 to 1981 to compare the effects of cooperation, competition and individualistic learning on achievement. Their conclusions indicated overwhelmingly that in the majority of cases, cooperative learning was more productive than competitive and individualistic learning (Gillies & Ashman, 2003; Montgomery & Morris, 1988).

That the discussion process in cooperative groups promotes the discovery and development of higher quality thinking strategies for learning than does the individual reasoning found in competitive or individualistic learning situations. (Montgomery & Morris, 1988, p.141)

In comparison to competitive and individualistic arrangements, cooperative learning produces higher levels of achievement, self-esteem, and the liking of classmates.

Cooperation contributes to perceptions of similarity, regardless of whether the group is successful or unsuccessful. Thus how a classroom is structured has an important influence on children’s interpersonal perceptions of ability. (Ames & Ames, 1984, p. 46)

If the focus shifts from the individual to the group, this has a positive influence on self-perceptions, which assist in establishing cooperative values and interpersonal behaviours so students perceive each other similarly.

When we build co-operative partnerships and share the journey with others, we become part of a supportive team where ownership and responsibility are shared and we are all empowered. (Hill & Hill, 1993, p. 2)

Hill and Hill (1993, p. 3) state that “Teaching the skills of cooperative learning, group management and organisation will become more important than instruction and imparting knowledge”. Teachers can encourage membership to the class and a
sense of autonomy through cooperative group work, encouraging children to participate in rule and decision making and conflict resolution, and providing opportunities for sociomoral discussions (Davis, 2003, p. 219). Although it is beyond the scope of this research to investigate social interdependence theory as proposed by Johnson and Johnson (2003) the features of ‘cooperation’ as contrasted to ‘competition’, illustrate difficulties in sustaining healthy relationships based on trust, caring and sharing, if students do not have the ability to deal with competition constructively. The main features of competition, which are listed below, may reinforce negative interdependence which do not support the rationale of a cooperative and collaborative pedagogy in this research.

- Competition provides a focus on the individual winning, rather than on the intrinsic qualities of the task. Motivation is extrinsic.
- Competition is only motivating if the person perceives there is a chance of winning.
- Social and academic tend to work against each other. The desire to be accepted by, and friends with, one’s peers is directly opposed to consistently winning or losing
- The need to maintain one’s self esteem enhances the motivation to win. (Johnson and Johnson, 2003, p. 153)

The Australian Government (2004b) supports developing skills, attitudes and values to assist young people to make positive choices. Parents have a right to expect that their children will attend school without fear of being bullied, harassed or exposed to violence. The Tribes process (Gibbs, 1995, 2001) addresses many of these issues.

1.2.3 Rationale for group processes

Many researchers and educators would argue that the main benefits of thoughtfully structured group work include more child-centred ‘talk-time’ and the opportunity for

Vygotsky proposed that learning is a naturally social act in which participants talk among themselves. It is through talk that learning occurs (Gerlach, 1994). Learning also occurs because individuals interact with others who have different backgrounds, knowledge and experience. (p. 73)

However, group work can be ineffective if students do not have the prerequisite social skills (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001; Gillies, 2003). If current research is supporting interpersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1983, 1999; Goleman, 1996, 2004) as one of the most powerful predictors of success in life, one could vehemently argue that fostering interpersonal intelligence in school is essential (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001). Gillies (2003) recommends the interpersonal skills, listed below, are taught to enhance peer communication, cooperation and collaboration in the classroom.

- Actively listening to each other during group discussions;
- Considering the other person’s perspective on issues;
- Stating ideas freely without fear of derogatory comments;
- Being responsible for one’s own behaviour;
- Constructively critiquing the ideas presented. (Gillies, p. 38)

The research on learning styles and multiple intelligences reinforces the notion of student diversity in learning, and supports the need of teachers to extend their knowledge and instructional repertoire to cater for this diversity (Gardner, 1999). Some students’ learning styles are best suited to working in groups, which many employers are now demanding as a prerequisite for effective workplace relationships.

When was the last time you read a job ad in the paper that asked for employees to be skilled at sitting in rows while listening to the boss talk, and in addition, when confused, sit and do nothing until the boss comes around to help? (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001, p.145)
To add to the persuasiveness of these arguments others such as Hart (1992) and Gibbs (1995, 2001) value a process of engaging students as a resource for each other as they learn to cooperate and collaborate in the classroom.

To categorise different approaches to cooperative learning Bennett and Rolheiser (2001) have used three dimensions structural, process and safe classroom approach. The first dimension focuses on the variety of ways groups carry out tasks to achieve different effects (Kagan, 1990; Slavin, 1989). The next dimension focuses on the social theory of how groups work in relation to academic and social learning (Johnson, Johnson & Johnson Holubec, 1994; Schmuck & Schmuck, 1998). Prior to commencing cooperative group work, many teachers teach a structure characterised by the process described by Johnson, Johnson and Johnson Holubec (1994). The activities are designed to incorporate the five elements of cooperative learning: positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing. The task may be broken into smaller parts for individual group members to work on before it is collated into the final product. The last dimension connects arguments developed by brain theorists such as LeDoux (1998) and Caine, Caine & Crowell (1994) who argue that the brain has a collection of emotional systems that determine an individual’s emotional state and readiness to learn. Joseph (2002) agrees that emotional states act as powerful mediators of arousal and attention, learning and memory and that the impact of negative emotions associated with ‘threat’ inhibit learning. Cooperative learning is a belief system that relates to the idea that when students are thoughtfully placed in small cooperative groups and encouraged to develop the skills to collaborate in a cooperative manner a safe learning environment is created. Bennett
and Rolheiser (2001) state “this dimension of safety” is necessary “in order to achieve the benefit of working with others” (p. 144).

In contrast to cooperation, during collaboration the parties work on the task as a whole through to completion (Friend & Cook, 1992). Collaboration in an adult context is defined as “a style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work towards a common goal” (Friend & Cook, 1992, p. 5). Bruffee (1984) proposes that cooperation is more suited to primary school due to its more structured nature and that collaboration is more suited to adult learning. There is an assumption that adults have the prerequisite social skills for collaborative learning that children do not. Hart’s (1992) observation refutes these claims and concludes that students were collaborating effectively in a primary school for many different purposes without the structure of group work that had been organised by the teacher. Hart (1992) expected that the students would need this structure to operate effectively in groups. As a result, Hart’s (1992) research shifted focus to the self-supporting environment that the teachers created, which allowed collaboration to happen for many different purposes.

Even though some researchers have differentiated between collaboration and cooperation based on how interaction occurs, these terms are often used interchangeably because they do have common elements, such as students being able to use their interpersonal skills to communicate effectively, get along and resolve conflict to complete the task. The teacher’s role in the current study was to create a safe, cooperative and supportive classroom context, to assist students’ skills to know
when to use collaboration during the process of Tribes (Gibbs, 1998, 2001). In most studies, collaborative learning has shown to be more effective than non-cooperative learning in raising the levels of variables that contribute to motivation, in raising achievement and in producing positive social outcomes (Biehler & Snowman, 1993; Fogarty, 1995). Dewey (1938) believed that “an educational experience involves a transaction between an individual and his environment and as the social content widens, so does the educational effect” (Connell, 1980). The research of Jenkins, Antil, Wayne and Vadasay (2003) cited improved self-esteem, feelings of security from being part of a group and higher success rates and products for using cooperative learning with students at educational risk. The justification for using Tribes in the current research, discussed in the next section, has been explored within the context of cooperative and collaborative learning.

1.2.4 Rationale for ‘Tribes’

Gibbs (1995, 2001) researched and developed the Tribes process, which is based on cooperative learning pedagogy to establish group processes to improve the capacity of students to get along with each other. Gibbs states that in the past, Western societies have valued independence and competition to the exclusion of interdependence, which has resulted in people knowing how to operate but not cooperate. Gibbs argues that the basic habits of caring and sharing as a community have been lost. Initially the model was developed at a time when educators in California were concerned about substance abuse and the behaviour problems of students. Test scores were declining and many teachers were leaving the profession in the 70s and 80s. The increasing pressures on families in modern society resulted in many children not gaining a sense of identity and self-worth, nor established cultural
values and bonding to significant others (Gibbs, 1995, p. 36). Gibbs believed that developing positive learning environments at school would promote both social skill development and academic learning, which was supported by research conducted by The Research Triangle Institute, under a U.S. Department of Education contract. The major recommendation was that the Tribes TLC program be used to teach social skills to all children (Gibbs, 2001). The primary mission of the Tribes TLC is now defined as follows:

…to assure the healthy development of every child in the school community so that each child has the knowledge, skills and resiliency to be successful in our rapidly changing world. (Gibbs, 2001, p. 400)

Tribes is now used in many schools across the world because it has “decreased student behaviour problems, increased self-esteem and improved teachers’ energy and morale” in both primary and secondary settings (Gibbs, 2001, p. 400), as students learn how to work together. Gibbs’ work has been adapted for this study because it promotes the values of mutual respect and appreciating the contribution of others. The Tribes process was flexible enough to incorporate many of the best features of cooperative and collaborative learning and draw on an abundance of well-researched strategies that support the child intellectually, socially and emotionally (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001).

Cooperative and collaborative strategies and the use of group work are consistent with sociocultural theory that supports optimal learning being constructed and negotiated through social interactions. Working together in a cooperative classroom shares the burden of thinking and problem solving across the group and provides a richer knowledge base from which to operate. Using whole class meetings in the
current study as a tool to examine the pedagogies that were being promoted provided the opportunity for both the students and the teacher to express their points of view. Speech gains its power and meaning in these social contexts and so develops the child’s ability to think and grow. Renshaw (1992, p. 6) concludes the power of group work lies in “What we say to each other matters for what we will be able to think about later”. Bruffee adds:

Furthermore any effort to understand and cultivate in ourselves the kind of thought we value most requires us to understand and cultivate the kinds of community life that establish and maintain conversation that is the origin of that kind of thought. To think well as individuals we must learn to think well collectively, that is, we must learn to converse well. (Bruffee, 1984, p. 641-2)

Parallels can be drawn between the processes involved in the three phases of the ‘Tribes’ (Gibbs, 1995, 2001) ‘Inclusion (individual efforts to access group), Influence (interpersonal effort) and Community (collaboration)’; and Rogoff’s (1990) ‘apprenticeship’ model ‘Guided Participation’ (Individual effort to access group) and ‘Participatory Appropriation' (collaborating within a community). Both processes focus on the active role students play, with peers assisting peers, which supports Hart’s collaborative framework (1992), in understanding how individuals access the cultural, social and intellectual knowledge about their world and determine how they act upon this information. The value of Rogoff’s (1990) apprenticeship process lies in the inclusion of more than a single expert or novice, as a resource for the students in a classroom situation.

The apprenticeship system often involves a group of novices (peers) who serve as resources for one another in exploring new domain and aiding and challenging one another. (Rogoff, 1990, p.39)

Rogoff (1990) identifies that the teacher’s role as ‘mediator’ or ‘expert’ is extended because even though the teacher may be relatively more skilled than the students
(novices) the teacher is still developing breadth and depth of skill in understanding the process of carrying out the activity and guiding others in it. The next section further elaborates on this mediation role.

### 1.3 The teacher’s role as facilitator

The teacher’s role as facilitator was seen as being central to the learning experience for Dewey and Vygotsky. Dewey (1938) viewed the teacher as ‘an intellectual leader of a social group’ (Connell, 1980) and Vygotsky viewed teachers as ‘fostering the development of knowledge and ability’ (Wood, 1988). Making learning authentic for students by making links to everyday experiences is important (Bruning, Schraw & Renning, 1995; McGilly, 1994). Procedural knowledge may be taught for conflict resolution but everyday classroom relationships provided the authentic setting to develop and apply the conceptual knowledge through the process of metacognition. Teachers should withhold judgement of a student’s performance to provide the opportunity for student self-reflection to increase the student’s self discipline and also as a means of contributing to a positive classroom climate (Bash & Camp, 1981). There are no panaceas to guarantee a consistent, positive relational tone in a classroom but when conflicts do arise teachers can ask,

> What can I do here today to encourage, to nurture, and to improve the quality of life? (Clark, 1995, p. 4)

The teacher’s role as facilitator needs to reflect a transition from an input-output model of education to a model where both the teacher and students actively co-conconstruct knowledge and learn to collaborate and work in teams (Boomer, Lester, Onore & Cook, 1992).
Findings from a sociocultural perspective indicate the quality of student relationships with teachers reflects the interpersonal culture of the classrooms and schools, as well as opportunities to invest in alternative relationships so students and teachers connect with each other as well as the material. Coil (1996) and Bennett and Rolheiser (2001) agree that students are not interested in what a teacher knows, until they know they care. Facilitating class meetings in this research provided the opportunity to be strategic in the choice of items to structure the classroom environment. Hill (1997) argues that cooperation needs to be present at three levels to be successful.

It must permeate the educational environment through implementation at three levels: (1) learning activities that are cooperatively structured, (2) classroom practices that foster sharing, caring and an overall supportive atmosphere: and (3) the extension of cooperative principles into broader areas of social relations and societal structures. (Hill, 1997, p. 121)

The next section discusses how leadership skills are mediated in a classroom.

1.3.1 Mediating leadership skills

It is critical that teachers understand the complexity of their role in facilitating cooperation, positive interdependence and respect for the diversity of students in their class (Bruffee, 1984; Gibbs, 2001). Schmuck and Schmuck (1983) quote Gibbs’s research that identified two clusters of leadership behaviours for teachers which impact on the social context of group development; persuasive, where there is a lack of confidence in their students so the classroom tone is authoritative and norms are set for the class; participative, where there is trust and the students have an equal position to the teacher relating to power. There is mutual respect, which encourages a classroom climate that is warm, supportive and open to making decisions collaboratively to determine the policies and procedures for learning and
behaviour. Davies (1982) believes that children are prepared to co-operate with teachers if they perceived it to be in their best interest to do so. However, Rogoff (1990) raises questions about how different cultures define ‘the adult-child relationship’ and the expectations that are placed on the teacher’s role. Even though the Western Australian Curriculum Council (1998) promotes democratic values in the classroom ‘the appropriateness of adults acting like the equals of children needs to be addressed, as not all parents in the school community may embrace these values. There may be an implicit expectation from the school community that the teacher’s role is ‘persuasive’ as opposed to ‘participative’, as defined by Gibbs (1995).

Parallels can be made from a broader sociocultural perspective to this research as Cumming-Potvin et al., (2003b, p. 403) made in their research that support classroom meetings as promoting collaborative power relations, which are consistent with the Commonwealth Government’s agenda of social justice. Students hold a diversity of perspectives based on their differential values, which are translated into practice during the discussion that is generated in class meetings. These discussions are evidence of Vygotsky’s concept of appropriation as the sociocultural perspective reveals links between student conversations and the manner in which students construct and reconstruct their identity in the classroom community within their Tribe.

Davis (2003) conceptualises the role and influence of student-teacher relationships on children’s social and cognitive development by adding the importance of understanding the social context of interaction to ultimately answer the question,
‘What do we know about the nature and influence of students’ and teacher’s relationships developmentally?’ The focus of the classroom should include social as well as academic goals. Davis (2003) also suggests engaging students as co-evaluators to assist them to understand their strengths and weaknesses and to discover their own potential as learners through self-regulation of academic and social behaviour.

The current research was interested in how classroom meetings created the social climate and group dynamics, which supported the pedagogies of collaborative learning in a safe, supportive environment. Schmuck and Schmuck (1983) state that “climate is what the classroom activity is in carrying out educational goals; it is how the curriculum and learning materials are actually used through the human exchange; and it is the styles of relating among members of the classroom group”. Freakley and Burgh (2002, p. 36) compare the teacher to a conductor during discussions who needs to coordinate and enhance their performance by becoming sensitised to the responses of the students and exercise caution in the timing of their point of view so not to dominate as the ‘expert’. Millett (2002b) questions the role of leadership in traditional schools, which may be limited to a select few. This may convey that other students are neither capable nor worthy of leadership roles and negate those students who make a personal choice to lead by example.

This attitude may tend to encourage passivity and prevent some students from demonstrating leadership. In line with the principle of choice that underlies ethical decision-making, it is important for the establishment of an ethical school that we foster an environment where students are encouraged to choose to take a lead on issues that interest them. (Millett, 2002b, p. 12)

Millett (2002b) suggests that schools reflect on their practices and examine the underlying values. Is student cooperation and collaboration an integral part of the
school culture? Ideally students should be empowered to experience the role of facilitator, in small groups, reflect on their ability to develop individual responsibility for the functioning of the group and modify their behaviour to benefit the group.

Reflecting on group processes allows participants to concentrate on how they and others do rather than on what was produced. The reflective exercise should be directed at individual actions as elements of the group process rather than on criticising the person. (Freakley & Burgh 2002, p. 41)

The next two sections discuss how social skills are mediated through group processes through the explicit teaching of social skills and how the role of student reflection promotes effective group development.

1.3.2 Mediating group processes: Social skills

A strong values base in the classroom of honesty, acceptance, tolerance and forgiveness establishes the climate for inclusivity. Coie (1990) discusses that rejected children rarely attain popularity status and that the data on the stability of peer status suggests that much change occurs naturally, irrespective of strategic intervention, such as teaching social skills. However, the current research considers other factors that may influence peer status such as the development of the child’s individual ability to self-monitor their thoughts, feelings and behaviour through the use of class meetings and reflection logs. The research of Asher and Renshaw (1998) suggests that low status children do not necessarily lack social skills but may be trapped in the role of a marginal group member by their peer status, which may limit their ability to show their true competence.

The results of Quaglia and Fox’s (2003) empirical observations have identified eight conditions that make a difference to student aspirations in the classroom and their
future success in life. These are having a sense of belonging and a sense of accomplishment, identifying with heroes, having fun and excitement, curiosity and creativity, a spirit of adventure, leadership and a sense of responsibility, confidence to take action. They argue that the process of education should be meaningful and worthwhile for each child while respecting sociocultural diversity.

The researcher viewed these concepts as complementary and attempted to examine a process that accommodated and celebrated cultural diversity. However, the notion that teachers need to reflect on their behaviour and may need to go outside their comfort zone to think and work differently, as nonconformists, to ‘come up with unique and creative ways that can be used as bait to reel in students into the mainstream of school life’ and create conditions that promote belonging to a community is foundational (Quaglia & Fox, 2003, p. 8). Teachers need to connect emotionally with their students by modelling mutual respect and conveying confidently their philosophical base for student interactions.

The classroom used in the current research promoted programs to teach cooperative skills at four levels. Hill and Hill (1993) considered these skills important in group processes such as: forming groups, working as a group, problem solving and managing differences. Teachers need to understand the pedagogies they are promoting and be strategic in scaffolding students through the group development process. Villa and Thousand (1994) argue that the most effective teams are those who ‘are able to maintain equity and parity in decision-making power among members by arriving at decisions through a consensual rather than a democratic process.'
Achieving consensus involves students developing skills to facilitate the process of cohesion. Students need to understand that their voices will be heard but they will not always agree with the decisions that are made by the group. Consistent findings from the social skills research demonstrates that students learn the social skills leading to peer group acceptance and resilience better in the naturalistic context of school than in withdrawal programs (McGrath, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 2003). Coie (1990) states that if social skills training is to be effective, particularly for socially rejected peers, it is important for the child to value social skills training. These children may still have trouble modifying their behaviour because once they have a negative reputation their peers may not accept or notice the small changes they are making. These students often give up and revert to old, maladaptive behaviours. The teacher is in a position to support these students and encourage peer acceptance if the problems have been identified and discussed honestly and openly at class meetings.

1.3.3 Reflective practices for group processing

Connell (1980) states that reflective practices are central to all teaching and Dewey (1938) agrees reflection is an essential tool for collaborative learning. Piaget believed that the cognitive conflict generated by collaboration caused children to rethink their point of view and refine their thinking (Wood, 1988). Vygotsky (1938) viewed reflective thought as being public or social conversation internalised. Bruffee (1984) argued that if thought was internalised conversation then any effort to understand how we think requires us to understand the nature of conversation; any effort to understand the conversation requires us to understand the nature of community life that generates and maintains conversation.
An individual’s values, beliefs and assumptions underpin the personal interpretation of events and meaning assigned, which ultimately drive human behaviour. The conclusions reached act to reinforce the person’s beliefs, values and assumptions, which reflect how the person forms their selected version of future events. Reflection is critical to this process and talking and writing about learning assists in making explicit how one learns. Reflection is critical to learning because it is a means of engaging one’s PPK and making external information a part of an internalised knowledge base (Edwards, 2004; Fogarty, 2001b; Gibbs, 1995, 2001).

If one fails to develop any sense of reflective intervention in the knowledge one encounters it operates continually from the outside in - knowledge controls and guides you. If you develop a sense of self - premised on the ability to penetrate knowledge for your own uses, and you share and negotiate the results, then you become a member of the culture-creating community. (Bruner, 1986, p. 132)

Classroom meetings were opportunities to empower participants to engage in creating their own classroom culture. Reflecting on the previous week’s actions and progress allowed participants to monitor their ability to self regulate and take control of their feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Ashman and Gillies (2003) refer to this process as “internalization”, where the individual transforms “external stimuli to internal codes that are consistent with their own knowledge by changing and modifying the original ideas and applying their own unique cognitive character to them” (Ashman & Gillies, 2003, p. 199). In the current study students needed an understanding of the concepts being discussed before they could integrate their new knowledge into their PPK to create new perspectives in their thinking.

The use of reflection allows confusions to be cleared up and assists groups to soar to greater heights (Gibbs, 1995, p. 81). It allows individual’s perceptions of worth or
power as a member of a group to be assessed. The experienced facilitator will scaffold a variety of strategies for participants to express their diverse views in a supportive and safe environment. “Empirical studies confirm that the time spent with students on group processing also leads to greater retention of subject matter and academic achievement” (Gibbs, 2001, p. 403). During periods of reflection, students also need to understand how to argue effectively through developing effective thinking skills.

Edward de Bono (1992) advocated teaching thinking skills explicitly because he argued that intelligent people are not always good thinkers. De Bono argues “The skill of the thinker determines how intelligence is used” (p. 6) and how effectively students can use their intelligence to act upon experience. They often fall into the trap of thinking that if they can argue about a topic they do not need to explore alternatives any further. De Bono (1992) believes that students need to be taught to explore possibilities and develop wisdom to appreciate other points of view and humility to accept and act on other’s perceptions. This requires maturity and a level of tolerance and humility to accept that peers may have alternative ideas that are worthy of consideration. “Wisdom depends heavily on perception. It is a matter of teaching perception - not just logic” (De Bono, 1992, p. 8).

1.4 Values education

Edward de Bono (1994) views values as the most important ingredient in civilisation. They are a means of turning antisocial behaviour around into social cooperation, which makes life better for everyone and cares for the weak. De Bono examined the importance of understanding the source of values, questioning their validity and
articulating them to others. Each group of students is unique in their values and attitudes, which direct their actions. Presland (2002) states quality teaching and quality relationships are the ultimate reason to give children a say to help them grow into ethical and compassionate people. Therefore it is important to understand the beliefs that determine values and influence thoughts and actions.

Aspen and Hill (1996) agree that values education is not solely about feelings and emotions and values are not objects. Values have much more status and are not private because of their interpersonal dimensions, but belong to the public domain, within discussion and debate.

They are styles of behaviour that govern our conduct. They set up norms and give us principles for conduct. They are governed by the way we perceive them, desire them and want to replicate or emulate them. (Aspen & Hill, 1996)

Weekly classroom meetings in the current study provided the forum for this type of value discourse with students. The dialogue and behaviour of students provided evidence of the degree of normative value development. Values are underpinned by an individual’s normative belief systems, which can be derived from an objective, relative, or subjective stance and this diversity raises concerns as to the ethical nature of values education. Aspen and Hill (1996) argue that educators have the ethical burden of providing proof to show that the values promoted won’t restrict the child but will enhance opportunities for growth. For example, the third value of ‘respect and concern for others and their rights’ (Curriculum Council, 1998) promotes mutual respect and the foundation for effective relationships. Teachers have a duty of care to all students to promote growth and well-being at a cognitive, social and emotional level and are legally bound by a code of conduct to behave ethically (The
Department of Education’s Code of Conduct and The W.A. Public Sector Code of Ethics, 2004). Values are based on what we believe to be important.

Values are determined by the beliefs we hold. They are ideas about what someone or a group thinks is important in life and they play a very important part in our decision making. We express our values by the way we think and act. (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 324)

The Federal and State governments encourage teaching values such as ‘tolerance’ and ‘respect and concern for each other’. This supports a shift from an environment where individuals are competing to one where they will need to learn how to make friends and develop the skills of collaboration. Cooperative learning teaches social skills and provides opportunities for positive peer bonding in the classroom. A cooperative learning environment provides the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills, which Gardner (1999) and Goleman (1996) agree is a powerful predictor of future success. Promoting principles of mutual respect, mutual understanding, and creative cooperation are worthwhile values (Covey, 1994) that develop life skills.

A safe and supportive environment allows trust and honesty to grow in the establishment of meaningful relationships that foster inclusion and belonging to a group (Gibbs, 1995, 2001). Cabello and Terrell (cited in Davis, 2003, p. 218) established that quality student-teacher relationships were influenced by the incorporation of interpersonal values into daily classroom routines, that promote positive relationships, for example by modelling mini-lessons about justice and respect for others. It was the learners who developed common values in the process of articulating a shared vision for the classroom.
The Federal Australian Government articulates general and abstract ethical principles, such as ‘justice for all’ and ‘beneficence’, in the policies about social justice and equal opportunities. In Western Australia, The Curriculum Council (1998), after a process of community consultation, established five core shared values as a general framework for teachers and students to foster democratic principles in their classrooms, which are listed below. These are considered to be fundamental values that are not changed by circumstance.

1. A pursuit of knowledge and a commitment to achievement of potential
2. Self-acceptance and respect for self
3. Respect and concern for others and their rights
4. Social and civic responsibility
5. Environmental responsibility. (Curriculum Council, 1998)

Values affect choices and decisions about the level of effort and persistence in student behaviour and performance. Research has shown positive academic outcomes for students who are taught collaborative and cooperative strategies. Students who are in supportive relationships have a more positive attitude and feel happier at school (Bernard, 2004 & Stipek, 2002). Bernard (2004) states that those students who do not achieve well in school are often in conflict with their teacher and, as a result, this may have a negative impact on the classroom tone and peer relationships. It is important to make positive emotional connections between students and teachers to motivate effective learning (Gibbs, 1995, 2001).

Millett (2004a) differentiates attitudes, values and beliefs in the following summary.

- An attitude is an affective regard one has for a value (outcome or ideal).
- A value (outcome or ideal) is the object of such regard.
- A belief may be about an outcome, ideal or general state of affairs but unlike attitudes, regards each intellectually rather than affectively. (p. 3)
Millett (2004a) states that it is important for educators to be clear about the distinctions between beliefs, which operate at an intellectual level and attitudes, which operate at an affective level. A person may hold a belief that could be based on opinion or fact. Consequently values operate at both an intellectual and affective level. Millett (2004a) discusses the difficulties of assessing values due to their very nature; “We can at best make inferences about the values people hold based on our interpretation of their actions” (Millett, 2004a, p. 3). This is fraught with difficulties of subjectivity. One could argue that students in the current study supported the values of caring and sharing, based on the decrease in bullying behaviours. However, one of the main perpetrators of bullying stated that he did not like getting into trouble when he was caught. It is difficult to assess if he believed it was intrinsically wrong to bully others or his motivation was primarily to avoid the negative consequences of bullying. Millett (2004a) would argue that when teaching values education it does matter what the motivation is to be able to assess values as an outcome.

In the context of the Western Australian Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998), the difficulty, if not impossibility of assessing values pretty much rules them out as outcomes - but they can remain, as Alexander suggests, in the cognitive domain as an identifiable area of content. (Millett, 2004a, p.3)

Therefore in the current study the researcher viewed class meetings as opportunities to talk about values rather than teach them. Haynes (2002) argues that values education should not be imposed on students and they must have the freedom to choose their own values. This may present difficulties at school level with implementation of a values education program. Haynes (2002) suggests the model for an ethical school, could be based on three fundamental elements, ‘Consistency, Consequences and Care’.
They need to know what it means to *Care*. They need to understand the *Consequences* of their thoughts and actions. And they need to understand that there ought to be a principle or a set of principles that they can apply with *Consistency* in all the decisions they make. (Millett, 2002b, p. 6)

In the current study the weekly class meetings modelled a democratic process to discuss these elements through open and participatory discussions. The community negotiated normative guiding principles through the exploration of all views and care was taken not to promote partisan views. The students had the opportunity to reflect on personal meaning and the freedom to make their own judgements and choices about their behaviour.

Making values explicit, through critical interrogation, provides opportunities to identify and embrace those values that become the guiding principles for living one’s life. The argument for this process is further necessitated by the fact that Australia is a multicultural nation where the government has legislated through its policies that multiculturalism is espoused to be a positive value. There is a need for these conversations to allow students to interrogate their values, which ultimately become their truths of reason on which they will make their value judgements.

Dealing with values in a community of enquiry allows reasons to be heard, to be tested and evaluated so that students make up their own minds in a considered way after reflecting on a variety of alternatives. (Millett, 2004a, p.4)

Philosophy education for children in primary schools is being promoted because it moves beyond ‘values clarification’ or ‘moral dilemmas’ to the exploration of alternatives through philosophical inquiry (Cam, 1995; Freakley & Burgh, 2002; 1995: Lipman; 1988 Millett, 2004a, Millett, 2004b).
Transforming the classroom into a community of inquiry requires an environment in which the students and the teacher respect each others’ thoughts and feelings, support and trust each other in the exploration of thoughts, ideas, opinions, reflect upon the group dynamics and understandings developed through the discussions and activities, and develop guidelines or rules for the group. (Freakley & Burgh, 2002, p. 7)

Millett (2002b) supports a view of education that allows all participants the opportunity for open debate to create an ethical community, by providing the spaces where all voices are *prima facie* equal so ideas are aired, heard and their validity assessed. Students need to be a part of the process to create a democratic classroom. There is not one model that will fit all situations and the answer lies in creating a ‘site specific’ mechanism through which open discussions can occur. Teaching critical philosophical inquiry can provide the framework for this mechanism to explore and teach values. Millett (2000b) argues that the purpose of education encompasses a responsibility to develop active citizens who can argue and come together as a community of inquirers to think through complex issues and come to a balanced understanding of them. There ought to be a principle or a set of principles that they can apply with consistency in all the decisions they make (Millett, 2002b, p. 6).

The current study integrated the concepts of respect, trust and reflection to negotiate core shared values in the establishment of ‘Tribes’ (Gibbs, 1995, 2001). The students and the teacher reflected on their relationship and examined how individuals were supported emotionally and socially during weekly class meetings. Bruffee (1984, p. 640) is quoted by Oakshot (1962) who argues that reflective practice not only changes the individual within but also those with whom one interacts. If thought is internalised conversation then any effort to understand how we think requires us to
understand the nature of conversation. Therefore any effort to understand the
conversation requires us to understand the nature of ourselves and the community
life that generates and maintains this conversation.

The Curriculum Framework K-12 (Curriculum Council, 1998) represents a major
commitment to reform schools in Western Australian. The endorsement of a set of
core shared values to underpin the Curriculum Framework acknowledges that values
are fundamental to shaping curriculum and future citizens. These values are
perceived as foundational to perpetuating an Australian democratic society and
legislated to be explicitly taught by all teachers in Western Australian schools from
K-12. The objectives of this research were to examine a teacher’s facilitative role to
engage students in Values Education (Curriculum Council, 1998) based on a
cooperative and collaborative learning pedagogy. The literature reviewed has
established the fundamental nature of values education as part of the process of
educating future citizens. The research on cooperation and collaboration supports the
use of group work as an effective tool to establish positive cohesion within the
classroom context. In the following discussion about Hart’s (1992) work it will be
established how the elements within the literature reviewed have been incorporated
into classroom planning to frame this action research process.

1.5 Collaborative framework

The conditions for collaboration are listed in the first column in Table 1.2 (see p. 43),
which were utilised to implement the Tribes (Gibbs, 1995, 2001) process and the
‘You Can Do It!’ program (Bernard, 2004). The middle column details how the
teacher’s role as facilitator was partially defined by adapting Hart’s (1992)
framework for collaboration into classroom planning. The third column describes the data sources for the researcher from the context of normal classroom operations such as student reflection logs, teacher observations and the school behaviours management records (BMIS), which will be fully discussed later in Chapter 2.

Table 1.2
Conditions for collaboration in the current study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDITIONS</th>
<th>TEACHER’S ROLE AS FACILITATOR</th>
<th>DATA SOURCES FOR THIS STUDY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Develop the concept of children as resources for each other. | Facilitate positive social relationships that promote respect for self and others. Strategically teach units of work from the ‘You Can Do It!’ program in response to the needs of the students and context, e.g., ‘getting along’ to teach a common language for social and emotional support. | • Teacher and student reflection logs to record
1. Perceptions of group processes
2. Behaviours that are evidence of emerging values
3. Classroom tone |
| 2. Establish supportive relationships | Create a supportive environment that promotes cooperation, collaboration and values diversity through teambuilding activities. Use inclusion activities from Tribes (Gibbs, 2001) Give specific feedback to students on their behaviour in words and actions that support collaboration and cooperation. Use social circle daily to express feelings | • Teacher and student reflection logs to record
1. Teacher observations
2. School’s BMIS computer records
3. Sociogram
• Parent interviews and surveys |
| 3. Establish an organised classroom environment. | Support student independence by providing routines and structures such as writing daily timetable on blackboard for student and reference and using contracts for spelling. | • Teacher observation of student independence and interdependence. |
| 4. Make a commitment to collaboration | Provide student choice and negotiation in decision-making process by collaboratively constructing weekly agendas for class meetings. | • Class meeting agendas and outcomes of the meetings. • Class goal setting |
| 5. Scaffold the choice to collaborate. 6. Provide quality and scope with activities. 7. Develop a range of quality activities that involve collaboration 8. Establish an understanding of the purposes of collaboration. 9. Provide opportunities for all students to experience collaboration, as some may never choose to collaborate. | Provide opportunities to develop appropriate skills, with teacher modelling and scaffolding across the curriculum. Provide activities that engage students because they are of interest to them. Implement cooperative strategies such as, ‘Think, Pair, and Share’.
Use Y charts that are developed with students for their reference: Speaking, listening, respect, concern, bullying, teasing, dobbing, telling, great group work, great learning, cooperation, leadership, inclusion, exclusion etc. Plan strategic lessons to foster collaboration and an understanding of when it may be useful to collaborate e.g., cooperative task for art/craft or technology and enterprise to produce a group product
Negotiate weekly class goals and critically reflect on progress towards achieving them.
Ensure successful collaborative experiences for students by considering the grouping of students, the task difficulty and roles students may need to perform. | • Teacher observation of students’ development in the
1. Values being demonstrated through behaviour and language used with each other. 2. Ability to problem solve 3. Ability to influence others in a positive, supportive way 4. Spontaneous use of collaboration. 5. Level of team building and acceptance of each other’s differences. 6. Personal attributes that were developing positive group cohesion within the classroom community. |

Adapted from Hart’s (1992) self supporting framework for collaboration
1.6 Tribes process

Figure 1.1 below illustrates the three cyclical phases of Tribes, which were adapted from Gibbs (1995, 2001) to suit the objectives of the current study. The ‘Tribes’ process (Gibbs, 1995, 2001) supports the principles of cooperative and collaborative learning, with a focus on team building. This cyclical process operates within three interdependent phases: inclusion, influence and community. The four Tribes agreements involved behaviours and values related to mutual respect, attentive listening, the right to pass and no put-downs, which supported the Curriculum Council’s (1998) core shared values. An additional agreement of personal best was used in the current study, to accommodate Bernard’s (2004) conditions of success, which included taking pride in personal achievements.

Figure 1.1
*Three cyclical phases of Tribes (adapted from Gibbs, 1995, 2001)*

Hart (1992), Gibbs (1995, 2001) and Bernard (2004) were the practical application of promoting a positive learning environment in this study. These three perspectives complemented each other and provided the structure for the promotion of positive working relationships in a safe, supportive classroom environment, in which group
processes could be developed. A sociocultural view, as postulated by Vygotsky (1978), provided the theoretical framework to reflect and interpret upon the context as it was being created. Reflective practices were integral to the Tribes process for both the students and the researcher. The researcher asked the reflective questions about the Tribes’ process throughout the year in Table 1.3 below. The implementation of these phases was cyclical rather than linear; when each new Tribe was formed, inclusion activities were conducted to build new relationships and teams.

Table 1.3
Researcher’s reflective questions to scaffold students through the Tribes process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1 Inclusion</th>
<th>Phase 2 Influence</th>
<th>Phase 3 Celebration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A sense of belonging</td>
<td>Valuing differences</td>
<td>Working together creatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will I be accepted?</td>
<td>Does my opinion count?</td>
<td>How did I function?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presenting self</td>
<td>• Setting goals</td>
<td>• Group challenge and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stating needs and expectations</td>
<td>• Managing conflict</td>
<td>• Constructive thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being acknowledged</td>
<td>• Making decisions</td>
<td>• Social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Solving problems</td>
<td>• Celebrating diversity</td>
<td>• Shared responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Celebrating diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Celebrating achievements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have I made provisions for everybody to get to know each other? (Feelings, skills, personal qualities)</td>
<td>Are students able to set goals and reflect on their needs?</td>
<td>Can the group solve its own problems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I use the social circle daily to check feelings and energy levels?</td>
<td>Do the students understand the responsibilities of leadership?</td>
<td>Have they felt supported in the process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I use pairs and triads first because it is less threatening? (Before group work)</td>
<td>Is leadership shared and rotated?</td>
<td>Can the group evaluate themselves?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do students value honesty and mutual respect?</td>
<td>Is the climate established to promote innovative and creative ideas?</td>
<td>Can the individual evaluate themselves in relation to the group and set goals for personal improvement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can each student express themselves freely to other class members? (Opinions of others are valued)</td>
<td>Do students take responsibility for their words and actions?</td>
<td>Have the natural leaders supported the more passive and shy students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do students use ‘lift ups’ and express appreciation to each other?</td>
<td>Are students able to resolve conflicts and reach consensus?</td>
<td>Have I developed a class of independent, self-directed learners who are proud of their achievements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do students have adequate speaking and listening skills to benefit from group work?</td>
<td>Does each member perceive they are valued and their skills are being used?</td>
<td>Are the students intrinsically motivated?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Gibbs (1995, 2001).*
1.7 ‘You Can Do It! ‘Program

Bernard’s (2004) the *You Can Do It!* Program has resulted in a comprehensive whole school approach, with long-term objectives of student academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioural well-being. Underpinning these objectives are four foundations for success, which Bernard identified as *confidence, getting along, organisation and persistence*. In addition, Bernard has planned units of work for teachers to use from K-7. Each unit of work is based on promoting positive thinking such as ‘accepting myself, taking risks and being independent’ for confidence; ‘social responsibility, playing by the rules, thinking first and being tolerant of others’ for getting along. Bernard published *parent and mentor programs* in 2004, which were also used by this researcher in Term 4. This provided insights into parents’ perspectives about the benefits of such a program for their children.

1.8 Objectives of this research

The objectives of this study are to examine the teacher’s facilitative role, while negotiating a cooperative and collaborative classroom. Existing programs such as Tribes (Gibbs, 1995, 2001) and Bernard’s (2004) *You Can Do It!* Program were integrated through the use of class meetings to create a safe, supportive and democratic classroom. Hart’s (1992) collaborative framework, the Tribes process (Gibbs, 1995, 2001) and the ‘You can Do It!’ (Bernard, 2004) program in Figure 1.2 (see page 47) illustrate how these three researchers’ perspectives have been integrated into the current study to provide a richer source of ideas, knowledge and strategies to promote values education.
1.8.1 The research questions

What is the role of the teacher in facilitating the process of establishing a collaborative, cooperative and safe classroom environment that encourages positive interpersonal relationships?

What are the major features of this dynamic process that elucidate how to create a classroom environment that is responsive to the social and emotional well-being of the students and the teacher?
Chapter 2

METHOD

USING THE CLASSROOM CONTEXT FOR RESEARCH

Introduction

Fogarty (2001a) describes classroom based action research as one of the most
dynamic, authentic, and relevant learning experience for the teacher. The choice of
qualitative research methods complemented the action research process because the
focus remained on the action in the classroom which was also shaping the social
context. The use of qualitative research methods facilitated achieving the objectives
of the research to identify critical themes that emerged from the data. The framework
provided by sociocultural theory complemented the inductive process of interpreting
the data to understand the teacher’s role as it evolved. The data generated was
context specific and reflected the uniqueness of the relationships that were
developing in this classroom. However, the emerging themes did reflect the
commonality of issues faced by primary classroom teachers, which generated the
final outcome of this research in the frameworks developed in the last chapter.

The methods employed in this study provided a focus on students’ attitudes within
the context of the development of interpersonal relationships in a primary classroom.
The issues of validity and reliability are addressed; with a commentary on the
researcher’s frame of reference to expound how the researcher is positioned to
interpret the data. The phases of the study and data collection methods have been
tabulated in this chapter to facilitate an understanding of time periods in which the
action research process was conducted throughout a school year to construct this case
study.

Throughout the rest of this document acronyms are used for the most common
sources of data to streamline the reporting and analyses of these data sources. The
summary below provides a guide for the reader.

- Teacher’s observations (TOB)
- Student reflection logs (SRL)
- Parent surveys (PS)
- Bushland’s Primary School Behaviour Management Information System (BMIS)
- Student interviews (SI)

2.1 The choice of qualitative method

Qualitative research methods were chosen primarily for this research because they
were flexible enough to accommodate different viewpoints, without predetermining
the content or themes of what would emerge from the data. This post positivist
framework is concerned with the importance of the context in which social
interactions occur and the meanings people bring to the situation to define the multi
qualitative research as giving answers to ‘who, which, what, where, and why
questions’ as opposed to the ‘how much or how many questions’ of quantitative
research. This definition implies using methods that are non intrusive to collect data,
if the researcher wants to uncover the tacit understandings of the participants. This
researcher was already working in the field as a practitioner in the role of the
classroom teacher, and performing an on going action research process to reflect on
teaching practices. Although the use of qualitative research methods enhanced this process, it was also challenging because the connections between the research and action (teaching practice) needed to be analysed in a systematic, yet open and flexible manner, to inform this study.

Patton (2002) and Shipman (1997) agree that qualitative research methods, such as the use of case study, are useful for investigating diversity in the classroom by giving attention to qualitative differences among individuals, while capturing developmental dynamics of the classroom environment. Patton (2002) argues that case study is not a methodological choice but a decision about what is to be studied and ‘well-constructed case studies are holistic and context sensitive’. The case study provided rich descriptions, to build the foundations for qualitative analysis of this classroom context. Clark (1995) states that case studies

Can illustrate concepts and theoretical models in context, providing opportunities to analyse and reflect on real classrooms events. Unlike research based on samples it keeps attention on contexts, never extracting variables from the conditions from which they arise. (p. 57)

Patton (2002) describes three major sources of qualitative data, which are generated from in-depth open-ended interviews, written documents and direct observation. These sources of data investigate opinions and values that could assist in the interpretation of behaviours, but the major emphasis is searching for meaning that is embedded in an authentic context. In this qualitative research, ideas and evidence were mutually interdependent during the inductive process of data collection and analysis, which suited the choice of case study as the research design for this study.
Researchers have been grappling with the difficulty of studying complex human functioning for over a hundred years due to the plethora of aspects that need to be considered and the difficulty of isolating them (Boomer et al., 1992; Jacob, 1999; O’Donnell, 2004; Shipman, 1997). Thorndike (1910) is quoted by O’Donnell (2004, p. 255) who stated that “the extreme complexity and intimate mixture with habits in the case of human instincts prevents studies of them, even when made with great care, from giving entirely unambiguous and elegant results”. In the current study, a case study was chosen as the research design to capture the naturalistic and holistic nature of human interactions in the classroom. The unit of analysis was the teacher and a class of 31 primary students, 17 boys and 14 girls. The challenge was further compounded when the researcher was also the designer of the research environment. However, Patton (2002) supports such efforts to unravel this complexity.

The “vicarious experience” that comes from reading a rich case account can contribute to the social construction of knowledge that, in a cumulative sense, builds general, if not necessarily generalizable, knowledge. (Patton, 2002, p. 583)

Contextualisation gives meaning to the data and is compatible with sociocultural theory that moves away from the positivist paradigm, where the nature of reality is viewed as an objective and tangible element. Case studies value the holistic nature of the context in which participants interact and the emergence of themes that may not be expected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Wadsworth, 1997). The cyclic, dynamic process of action research was appropriate for the purpose of this study by allowing flexibility in the data collection to define participants’ multiple perspectives. Issues of power and trustworthiness are discussed in relation to the ethical dilemmas during the research process and how the researcher’s beliefs, consciously or unconsciously, influence the process. Making explicit the procedures used and the researcher’s
frame of reference to illuminate how the data have been interpreted have addressed these issues to some degree.

2.1.1 Ethical dilemmas: Issues of power and trustworthiness

Riddell (1989) raises issues about control and interpretation of data and asks, “to whom does the data belong?” as there are issues of power when analysing and interpreting data. Lather (1986) suggests that we need to critically interrogate our own unexamined techniques of sense-making. Why do we respond in a certain way? Clark (1995) states that making personal theories explicit may uncover familiar belief patterns that may bias interpretation.

By itself, this process of seeing the world through our own theoretical lenses is no problem. But it can become a problem for a professional teacher when this interpretive process and the beliefs and theories that underlie it remain completely unconscious. In this case, we become mechanical, reactionary, bored and frustrated. (Clark, 1995, p. 126)

Lather (1991) warns of the effects of power because textual and social constructions created by us, in our efforts to understand our situations, are the effects of power, as language is seen as both a carrier and creator of a culture’s epistemology. Patton (2002) states that interpretation, by definition, involves going beyond the descriptive data and looking for the significance of what has been found.

The rigors of interpretation and bringing data to bear on explanations include dealing with rival explanations, accounting for disconfirming cases, and accounting for data irregularities as part of testing the viability of an interpretation. (Patton, 2002, p. 480)

and discourses are historically situated, so truth cannot be spoken of in the absence of power. Cherryholmes (1988) suggests that to understand, we need to take control of our discourses and practices instead of being controlled by them:

Power shapes and informs our psyche and the result is that we are objects of social institutions and processes while we intentionally engage in meaningful behaviour. (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 35-36)

In the dual role of researcher and teacher, consideration was given to the choice of methods, which was considered less important than the values underpinning their use. However, issues of consent when dealing with minors were also considered when asking questions about relationships, opinions and values. Adults set their boundaries about how to answer questions of a personal nature and the same respect was afforded to the children in this study. In Western Australia, teachers work under the directives of the Department of Education and Training’s policies. Teachers need to critically interrogate the influences of their philosophies on their teaching practice. Teachers are experienced in dealing with matters of confidentiality in the normal course of their work. In the current research, the students were advised that both deputy principals and the School Chaplain were available, if students had any concerns about the research being conducted in the classroom. ‘The School Volunteer Mentor Program’ was also available to students, if parents or teachers considered students were experiencing social or emotional problems at school. During the course of this study these sources of support were not requested by parents, the classroom teacher or students.
2.1.2 Gate keeping

This researcher had worked as an educator at Bushlands Primary School for eleven years and had established a high level of trust amongst the parents and students. This was beneficial to the research, which achieved a full participation rate from all students and parents. There was an implicit parental understanding that the teacher would respect the confidentiality linked to this position of privilege and power. However, there was also a legal and explicit expectation in the Government of Western Australia’s publication ‘Staff Conduct’ (2004) that the teaching practices complied with Code of Conduct and The W.A. Public Sector Code of Ethics.

There were concerns initially gaining approval from Murdoch University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (2004) on the grounds of the dependency issues involved with teachers conducting research in their own class and the personal nature of the data which would be generated. Kemmis (2004), who is an expert in matters of ethics, questioned the necessity for such approval as a classroom teacher already has a legal obligation to the students in the class (who are not subjects) but legal persons to whom there is a legal obligation and a duty of care. Therefore, ethical and moral behaviour is required and there are strong legal sanctions in place to protect the children in a teacher’s care if any harmful events should take place. The guarantees about privacy and confidentiality of personal information, requirements that harm not be caused, the duty of care-all these are legally required in the teacher’s professional work (Kemmis, 2004). After gaining approval at different levels and receiving the completed letters of consent from the students and parents, (see Appendix 1, page 168) the research commenced.
2.2 Validity and reliability

The concerns with questions of validity and reliability in qualitative research have stemmed from assumptions that have been made based on the positivist tradition of research. The terms ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ are often used respectively to refer to quantitative and qualitative research. This polarisation clouds the real issue of considering the purpose for using particular research methods. Patton (2002) argues that the important challenge in research is “to appropriately match methods to purposes, questions and issues and not to universally advocate any single methodological approach for all inquiry situations” (p. 585).

Patton (1991) and Cherryholmes (1988) argue that all research is subjective and values laden to some degree, because the data are filtered through the perceptions of humans. There is a responsibility in both traditions to use methods that are transparent to allow the reader to make their own judgements. In the current study, the methods employed have been explained, student observations have been systematically recorded and reflections have been completed, on which value judgements have been made.

2.2.1 Focus on validity

Patton (1987, 1990, 2002) argues that qualitative research is based on subjective accounts of peoples’ lives in particular contexts, in order to gain insights into their thoughts, values and actions. It is important to consider the purposes of, and the audiences for, qualitative research because research and evaluation have different purposes and therefore different methods will be employed. Therefore different
criterion will be used to judge the outcomes, depending on expected uses and intended
users (Patton, 2002).

Qualitative research is particularly useful for getting at the tacit knowledge of an
organisation, as individuals’ stories are narrated to deepen understanding of the
situation. Even though stories are values laden they can be powerful evidence of
truth. Wadsworth (1997) states of empirical evidence or knowledge that there is an
assumption or an illusion that somehow data coming in through the senses are ‘pure’
and not actually filtered through perceptions, which are based on life experiences,
and given new meanings in social contexts. All perception is values laden but the
context of the culture gives the agreed meanings. An appeal to the empirical facts is
usually an appeal to agree about constructed meanings.

Validity or truth can be defined as the extent to which an account accurately
represents the social phenomena to which it refers (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983;
Silverman, 2000). Critics of qualitative research question the validity of subjective
note taking, which is collected and interpreted by the researcher. It can be argued that
all research is subjective to a degree because humans perform it. Human error and
bias can even be found in the in the positivist tradition, which claims to be objective
through the rigorous research design, which controls variables, data collection and
interpretation of the data. The collection of detailed responses from the respondents
or the writing of notes from the field may appear non standard, but this is intentional,
to keep all options open to find patterns or categories that reflect the respondents’
point of view in the analyses of data.
In this study, the researcher has documented the procedures and the methods used to collect and analyse data to be transparent to the reader about the research methodology and data analysis. Goetz and Le Compte (1984) argue that data needs to be triangulated from several sources to improve validity when using qualitative research methods. This researcher did not rely solely on observations but interviewed students to triangulate findings from their reflection logs. Direct quotes are made of both the students’ and teacher’s language to provide a more balanced view of events. This is an important aspect of qualitative research to create an interchange of ideas to develop understandings between researchers and make clearer the usefulness of the findings.

2.2.2 Focus on reliability

From a positivist point of view reliability can be defined as the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observers on different occasions (Silverman, 2000 quotes Hammersley, 1992). However, the objective of this study was to collect authentic data about the interpersonal relationships within this unique classroom context. Authenticity was improved by the collaborative nature of the action research process, using methods that allowed data to be collated from all stakeholders during the process to increase the reliability of the findings. Grundy (1995) states that real improvement in social situations depends upon people acting together to bring about change. The role of the critical friend (who was also the deputy principal and on site daily) became crucial. In the role of deputy principal, students were managed across a range of contexts and the ensuing discussions between the researcher and critical friend provided a different perspective about how students were managing their interpersonal
relationships. These discussions became a reflective tool which informed future practice. The critical friend also read and provided verbal and written feedback about the draft research thesis, the parent surveys, the students’ written reflections and the transcripts of the student interviews.

Acker, Barry, and Esseveld, (1983) raise issues about the process of research, which may allow participants to reflect on the questions they are asked. In their research respondents gave different answers to the same questions over a period of time, which they argue articulated this new awareness. Similarly, in this research, students were interviewed throughout the school year to investigate their insights about relationships, leaderships and friendships. As a result of interviewing the students, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of observations that had been made, which were further clarified or confirmed.

Stake (1978) analysed Polanyi’s concept of ‘tacit knowledge’ which explains a hidden or deeper level of knowledge that the respondent accesses. Some would argue that the probing of the researcher gives rise to this situation, but Stake would argue it is closer to the truth and reflects a truer reality, which is the objective of qualitative research. The face-to-face interviews allowed this researcher to make more detailed observations of tacit knowledge including body language when students answered questions about making friends or students whose behaviours were perceived as annoying. Detailed anecdotal notes were taken throughout the year to create a profile of each student and how they interacted with their peers. The opportunity for interviewing the whole class on an individual basis occurred in Term 4. This
researcher has made explicit the procedures used in this chapter for the reader to make their own evaluations as to the reliability of the conclusions drawn.

2.3 The researcher’s frame of reference

The researcher in this study had been teaching for over twenty-five years, which included both professional development and life experiences that developed a unique PPK. Breen’s (1997) research (quoted by Annandale, Bindon, Handley, Johnston, Locket & Lynch, 2004a, p. 5) concluded that teachers gradually integrate and adopt innovations based on their notions of what works best for them. This implicit knowledge was deeply entrenched in the values, beliefs and actions of the researcher and was made explicit through the action research process, as the data were collected, described, analysed, interpreted and used to inform future actions. As an educator, this researcher was interested in identifying best practice to support positive interpersonal relationships. The underlying belief was that the classroom and school are sociocultural environments where values are implicitly taught through words and actions, which impact on a student’s perception of that environment and how they are going to interact with it. The researcher needed to be aware of how personal ethics, values and interpersonal style impacted on the process of change in the facilitator’s role. Hogan (2003) describes a ‘living frame of facilitation’ to understand and capture the dynamic process of change. This model is relevant to the current study because it reflects the fluidity of context variables in a ‘living classroom’, as opposed to a static model where there was little change.

The importance of emotions to learning became a recurring theme in the researcher’s readings (Fogarty, 1997, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Goleman, 1996, 2004). Bennett and
Rolheiser (2001) and Goleman (1996) describe Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) ideas on achieving optimal learning through achieving a psychological ‘state of flow’ where the learner experiences immense pleasure, while engaging in tasks that would ordinarily be considered complex. This ideal level of operation was the ultimate goal for the choice of the ‘Tribes’ process (Gibbs, 1995, 2001), to encourage students to learn to cooperate with each other. However, the students in this study were traditionally accustomed to the use of extrinsic rewards to motivate compliant behaviour. The notion of intrinsic rewards for positive peer interaction and support was complemented by the use of low-key extrinsic rewards with the use of group points for following the Tribes agreements. Even though there was an element of competition between groups at the beginning of the study, this was gradually replaced by a spirit of cooperation, as the ‘team culture’ of the classroom evolved during the study. The next section discusses the research design and how the case study was constructed.

2.4 Research design: Case study

Patton (2002, p. 450) outlines the process of constructing case studies, using three steps, which have been followed in this study:

- Step 1 - collecting the raw data. (see section 2.4.1)
- Step 2 - constructing the case study, by condensing these raw data and identifying emerging themes. (see section 2.4.2)
- Step 3 - presenting the case study as a holistic narrative, detailing both the emerging themes and the context, which is necessary to understand the case. (see section 2.4.3)
Patton (2002) describes three major sources of qualitative data, which are generated from in-depth open-ended interviews, written documents and direct observations, which were all used for the current study. Parent surveys were also used to provide additional data about the development of students’ interpersonal relationships.

2.4.1 Data collection for the case study

The frequency of data collection sources for the year illustrates the cumulative nature of the data collection process and is summarised in Table 2.1 (see p.62). Each highlighted area in bold font will be described in more detail in the following sections because they were the most prolific and important sources of data for this study. Teacher observations included data from class meetings, sociograms and informal student and parent interviews, which will be coded ‘TOB’. Formal, individual student interviews were conducted towards the end of the study and will be coded ‘SI’ to distinguish these interviews from other data. Student reflection logs, School behaviour management records, and parent surveys are coded ‘SRL’, ‘BMIS’ and ‘PS’ respectively, as previously mentioned.
### Table 2.1
*Summary of the frequency of data collection sources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DAILY DATA</strong></th>
<th><strong>WEEKLY DATA</strong></th>
<th><strong>EACH TERM</strong></th>
<th><strong>OTHER</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s anecdotal notes based on teacher’s observations.</td>
<td>Classroom meetings.</td>
<td>Summary of Term’s class meetings.</td>
<td>Each of the five Sociograms were completed before each round of Tribes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal chats with parents before and after school.</td>
<td>Class goals.</td>
<td>Parent surveys Term 1, 2 and 3.</td>
<td>Individual student interviews conducted in Term 4 Week 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal chats with critical friend, deputy principal and other staff members.</td>
<td>Students’ Reflection logs.</td>
<td>Parent Information Night in Term 1 and Term 4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School BMIS records.</td>
<td>Teacher’s reflective summary.</td>
<td>Feedback from University supervisors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Teacher observations (TOB)

Methods of observation used in the current study drew on this researcher’s involvement in other classroom based action research, as a teacher consultant to the ‘First Steps Projects’ for Literacy and Numeracy. Activities used with students were designed in collaboration with classroom teachers before they were trialled. Data were collected, analysed and feedback given by teachers to assist in the final design of these projects.

*Powerful assessment takes place when teachers are observing students at work in regular class activities. (Annandale, Bindon, Handley, Johnston, Locket & Lynch, 2004a, p. 24)*

This type of assessment required teachers to make observations about their students’ literacy and numeracy learning and be systematic in the recording and analysis of these data. The plethora of data that could be collated in any regular classroom necessitates setting up a system to reflect the purpose of the research. These skills were applied to the current research to reflect on students’ behaviour and make
judgements about the development of interpersonal skills and how this impacted on the classroom community.

The researcher used the seating plan of each Tribe to record daily observations and changes to seating initiated by the students. Students were allowed to change their seats only once a week. This was an attempt to allow the time necessary to sort out social problems and experience the satisfaction and empowerment of problem solving within the Tribe. Incidental parent interviews were also added to these sheets. The recording of these data on one document facilitated triangulation of data, as often what was happening at school appeared to be influenced by events at home. These visual plans also facilitated comparison between Tribes for events that were happening in the classroom.

Additional individual anecdotal notes were written on separate forms for each Tribe. These documents were duplicated in advance so they were accessible for the researcher’s use on a daily basis and they were filed with the typed records of the weekly class meetings, goal setting and the teacher’s reflective summaries from the students’ reflections logs. The sociograms that were completed prior to the formation of Tribes were also filed with the parent surveys that were filled out each Term. The weekly school BMIS reports, which are explained in a later section, were also collated with any other relevant data i.e., parent interviews and conversations with critical friend.
Classroom meetings

The formal weekly classroom meetings, based on Glasser’s (1969) work, were conducted once a week to allow both students and the teacher to raise issues of concern about any aspect of classroom management and interpersonal relationships. The shared teacher/student agendas established the democratic process of participative decision-making. At the beginning of the research the Tribes agreements were elaborated onto ‘Y Charts’ to make conceptual links to the children’s language and understandings. This process established a shared understanding of the Tribes agreements, which could be referred to in the daily operations of the classroom. Others, such as Alford, Herbert and Frangenheim (2004) would agree that this process is a powerful strategy to create deeper understandings and was used in this study as a reflective tool for the teacher and students to set weekly goals.

A powerful strategy to encourage learners to see beyond the obvious and to create a greater depth of understanding about a topic. Its great strength is that it enables an abstract quality to be perceived in concrete terms. (p. 74)

The ‘Y chart’ became one of the most important strategies used throughout the year to scaffold and make explicit to students their behaviours, language and feelings about topics such as respect and concern, group work, cooperation, inclusion, exclusion and leadership. The three parts of the chart were titled ‘Looks like’ -where students noted the behaviours one would see and body language; ‘Sounds like’ – which were the actual words that could describe the concept or the conversations that may occur between students; ‘Feels like’ -was the emotional response to the concept when it is occurring. Bennett and Smilanich (1994) describe these charts as a strategy to use students’ own language and make links with their knowledge and that of their
peers. Subsequently the charts became a permanent reference in the classroom for class meetings and reflection periods. The students were challenged to use higher order thinking skills to provide creative and innovative responses, which is confirmed by the following comments made by the researcher’s critical friend after the students’ interview transcripts (November, 2004) had been read.

Using these charts led to more sophisticated understandings of concepts, which is evidenced in the students’ ability to solve their social problems with minimal adult intervention. (Critical friend’s comment, 12.2.05)

Prior to the students commencing work in established groups, individual students would raise issues for discussion. When the process of Tribes commenced, the issues raised would focus on group interactions during the week. These class meetings provided data on the students who raised issues, who offered ideas for solutions and the type of solutions offered. Time was given for students’ ideas to be implemented during the week and feedback was sought at the next class meeting the following week. Weekly class goals were established as a result of this process and they were used as a reflective tool each week to assess progress towards improvement of interpersonal relationships and student cooperation.

The sharing of students ‘real-life ethical issues’ provided authentic opportunities for social problem solving that was context rich and accessible to the students. This process allowed the critique of students’ ethical frameworks against those of their peers. Students were given information and the opportunity to shift in their value positions through peer and teacher feedback in a non-judgemental, supportive environment. The weekly class meetings provided parallel opportunities, as described by Freakley and Burgh (2002), when teaching philosophy as the tools of inquiry. Situations are created to assist students to develop the skills to articulate and
refine their point of view. Students discover for themselves ‘the norms, criteria and ideals’ by which to live.

Broadly speaking, Pierce assumed that an *immersion* into critical, purposive, and self-corrective inquiry can provide people with the norms and ideals required to make wiser decisions about the choices in their own lives. (Freakley & Burgh, 2002, p. 6)

The next section discusses the student reflection logs, which were a major source of data about students’ private feelings about other students and provided some useful insights for the study, which are discussed in the next chapter.

**Student reflection logs (SRL)**

Because the student reflection logs provided students with opportunities to express feelings and opinions, these documents were treated as confidential. This was important because many students wrote about matters that they were not prepared to raise at class meetings, such as bullying, feeling jealous or being left out. The students trusted the researcher to handle this information discreetly by addressing these issues during class meetings in a general manner. However, because many students did not write at length, the researcher privately interviewed the students. In addition, Tribe reflection forms were constructed with the students to record the Tribe’s weekly reflection on their progress as a group. This resulted in the researcher unobtrusively listening to students, as discussion took place within the Tribes.

Reflecting on group processes allows participants to concentrate on how they and others *do* rather than on *what* was produced. The reflective exercise should be directed at individual actions as elements of the group process rather than on criticising the person. (Freakley & Burgh 2002, p. 41)

With the aim of differentiating between the facts and emotional rhetoric, when students had disagreements, reflection logs were used to express different points of
views. Following this written reflection, students engaged in discussion and often this process produced a more accurate account of events, which enabled students to find their own solutions.

As the writing process allows the transfer of inert knowledge to relevant application reflection logs or journals are widely used by many educators and researchers (Annandale, Bindon, Handley, Johnston, Locket & Lynch; 2004a; Fogarty, 2001).

The reflection sometimes gives the mind an accurate image and other times the reflection is distorted by emotional baggage or other forms of interference. (Fogarty, 1997, p. 184)

Student reflection logs were also used as a metacognitive tool to reflect on the class meeting discussions and integrate new information. Fogarty (1997) suggests three related purposes for metacognition; planning - articulating what one is trying to do; monitoring - being conscious during the process of how well one is achieving what one set out to do; evaluating - reflecting how well one has done. Students were asked to write about how well they thought their new Tribe would function, and then monitor progress against criteria that had been collaboratively established. Finally students reflected on their Tribe’s progress by using a graphic organiser such as a PMI (positives, negatives and interesting aspects). These reflections provided a permanent record for the researcher.

**Bushland’s Behaviour Management Information System (BMIS)**

In 2002 Staff members collaboratively rewrote Bushlands’ BMIS policy with the school community (represented by the School Council) to reflect the five core shared values of the Curriculum Council (1998). The aim was to treat students in a fair and consistent manner, which modelled adult/ student respect. Each day, the
administration team would update the behaviour records of students who had been interviewed and counselled. Each teacher was provided with a written copy of these data, which became another means to triangulate classroom and playground behaviour observations about the students’ interpersonal relationships and their level of prosocial behaviour. If the students had no records for the week, the class would be awarded a ‘deputy principal’ sticker that was later placed onto a chart. At the end of each Term, the class would receive the negotiated reward if they met the criteria for acceptable behaviour. The school data on playground behaviour were triangulated with classroom observations and students’ reflections.

Parent surveys (PS)

Surveys are primarily used for quantitative research but they were seen as an efficient means of eliciting parent opinions throughout the year, which could be triangulated with other qualitative data. A copy of the parent survey in Appendix 2 illustrates that parents were given the opportunity to express their views, rather than merely ticking a box.

Content domains

The content domains of the parent self-response surveys reflected the purpose of the research to assess parent perceptions of their child’s ability to get along with peers. Considerable thought was given to the wording of the questions to make them as concise and neutral as possible. There was a mix of open and closed questions, to elicit a range of responses (Neuman, 2003). However, the researcher was cognisant that parental responses would be embedded within their frame of reference about the purpose of schooling. Parents’ past educational experience appeared to bias them towards certain expectations about classroom methodology, discipline, assessment
and reporting. There were mixed parental expectations as to the level of classroom structure and teacher direction required to create a supportive and caring environment. It was beyond the scope of this research to explore the impacts of government polices, such as the introduction of the Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998) to reform school practices and align education with the needs of students for the 21st century. Many educators support urgent changes to teach the necessary skills of cooperation and collaboration (Dryden & Vos, 1994; Gibbs, 1995, 2001). This survey aimed to isolate an aspect of the classroom culture related to interpersonal relationships, which could be illuminated through friendships, leadership and parental perceptions of changes in their child’s attitude towards school.

**Procedure**

A group of parents was used to pilot the survey prior to it being sent to all parents. This allowed refinement of questions so the respondent’s interpretation of the purpose of the questions matched the researcher’s intention and purpose. The researcher constructed and administered parent surveys at the end of Terms 1, 2 and 3. Parent nights were held at the beginning of the research project, in Term 1, and at the conclusion, in Term 4, which were attended by the critical friend, who was also available to talk to parents. The parent surveys (see Appendix 2, p. 169-170) were collated each Term and a comparative summary of responses from the three surveys was made to group patterns and trends in the responses, which is reported later in Chapter 3. At the end of the study, the results were also presented to parents for discussion (Parent Information Night, 19.11.04).


**Limitations**

To situate the data in this study and provide credible analyses in Chapter 3, the researcher’s frame of reference has already been expounded in detail. Due to the time constraints related to conducting individual interviews, parent surveys were used as an efficient means of collecting perceptions. However, there were limitations to this procedure, for both the researcher and parents. Some responses needed more elaboration to present a better understanding to the researcher. Parents may have needed more elaboration for the questions. This was alleviated to some degree when some parents returned their surveys personally and requested an interview to discuss issues further. Throughout the year, regular formal and informal contact with most parents resulted in additional anecdotal notes being recorded, which were useful when analysing and interpreting the data. Confidentiality was consistently reinforced to parents in an effort to elicit genuine responses. All parents completed and returned all surveys, which facilitated making generalisations for this study.

**Sociograms**

The current study is based on the assumption that when a child’s interpersonal preferences are used to form groups then these groups have the potential to be more cohesive and social adjustment is enhanced. Sociometry was one tool used in conjunction with teacher observations to form groups. The sociograms were a reflection of the dynamic relationships in the classroom and provided one means of collecting data about students’ friendships at one level. The criterion for the measurement of interpersonal preferences among participants was the selection and ranking of three students with whom they would like to sit. Students were encouraged to explore new relationships. The researcher did not assume that the
choices made reflected the popularity of the students because the criterion used was not about popularity but the ability to effectively collaborate or cooperate with the person chosen. The first nomination that the student wrote was used to place students in their Tribe and the second and third nominations were used if there was a conflict of interest within the tribe. For example if the outcome would result in students being placed with non-supportive students then the other preferences would be used. If the preferences were not reciprocated, the teacher used classroom observations to place the student in a supportive group. These Tribes stayed together for 5-6 weeks. This time frame was chosen because students needed time to develop their interpersonal skills and their ability to foster satisfying relationships with each other. Bonney and Hampleman (1962, p.61) discuss that teachers need to not only be aware of what now exists with student relationships but “what the pupils would like to have exist so that they better realize their personal desires”.

Negative students’ nominations, where students listed the peers they did not want in their Tribe, were not encouraged. Generally more than two thirds of the students stated that they were willing to consider getting along with their peers in the class so they did not write negative nominations. These data were triangulated with the rich, naturalistic data from the daily teacher observations of student behaviour across a wide variety of contexts to provide clues and evidence about how well students were coping in their relationships.

Moreno (as quoted by Asher & Gottman, 1981) invented the use of sociometry methodology in the 1930’s to describe the interpersonal attraction between group members in prison and reform schools. Gibbs (1995, 2001) adapted sociometry for
community and educational research of group processes. Sociometry is one tool that can be used by the teacher to respond to existing interpersonal bonds and to foster future opportunities for friendships.

Iverson, Barton and Iverson (1997) concluded from their research that there were no adverse effects on students when teachers used sociometrics to examine students’ relationships. This study used sociometrics, student reflection logs and teacher observations to triangulate data to construct groups that supported students who had been identified as being shy or not having any friends. Hill (1997, p. 123) states that there is a need for intervention with students who are experiencing difficulties establishing friendships. Allard, Cooper, Hildebrand and Wealands (1995) describe the power dynamics in the relationships operating in a class and how this information can inform the teacher. Their research has been adapted to provide a context for discussing the results of the current research in Chapter 3.

Whilst using sociometrics in the classroom can indicate how well students are liked and how a teacher can promote social acceptance, they are not a true indicator of students’ social skills (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000, p. 233). To counter this information, a variety of means of data collection such as direct observations and interviews is advocated. This information can be used to develop classroom groups in an informed manner to facilitate the creation of a safe and caring classroom which supports those students who have been identified as socially isolated (Politano & Davies, 1994; Schmuck & Schmuck, 1988).

Teachers who understand the sequential nature of the developing classroom group and can accurately diagnose the skills of the members can influence the growth in a planned and productive way. (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1988, p. 41)
Student interviews

Due to time constraints, individual formal interviews with students occurred only once, towards the end of the study. Other interviews, which were usually related to current social problems, were conducted incidentally throughout the year with individuals and groups of children. The researcher recorded these incidents to provide a cumulative ‘frame of reference’ for individual student perceptions of situations and relationships. The main purposes of the formal interviews were to establish the students’ construct of ‘friendship’ and gain individual feedback about class meetings and Tribes. The interviewer used active listening skills to transcribe student responses and then read back their transcripts to the students. The researcher used the same script (below) with each student to provide consistency during individual interviews in week 4, Term 4.

Teacher’s script

‘Hello… how are you today? I am going to ask you to complete a sentence about what you understand friendship to be so I would like you to think about it. I am going to type what you say so I can make a list of what everybody says. When I have asked everybody the same questions I will make a summary in the next few days to share with everybody. Your name will not be used, only your opinions. Have you got any questions? Pause
Do you want to go ahead?

Please finish the sentence  A friend is…
1. How have class meetings been for you this year? What have you learnt?
2. What do you think the classroom may have been like without class meetings?
3. How has Tribes been for you this year?
4. Have you been leader or vice-leader? What was it like for you?
5. How have you felt about coming to school this year?’
Consistency was maintained for all interviews, which were conducted outside the
classroom in an adjacent common withdrawal area, while a student teacher
conducted lessons with the rest of the class. Patton (2002) states that ‘confidentiality’
improves the rigour and authenticity of collecting data. Each student was informed
their name would remain anonymous. Minor changes were made to questions 3 and 5
because the original words ‘helped’ in question 3 and ‘happy’ in question 5 were
perceived as leading questions and may have encouraged an automatic positive
response from the students. Biases were minimised by adhering to the script so the
data could be analysed comparatively.

The dual role of teacher/researcher provided additional insights into the students’
personalities and the researcher was afforded a level of trust an outsider may not
have achieved. This was a ‘double edged sword’ as the researcher was aware of the
‘halo effect’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) for those students who may wish to give an
answer that they knew would ‘please the teacher’. As such, the researcher
emphasized the fact that honest opinions were sought for the interviews and there
were no right or wrong answers. Nevertheless, it was challenging to maintain
minimal encouragement and intervention with some students who looked for
reassurance. Despite the ‘one-off’ nature of these interviews, their reliability was
improved by the researcher’s ability to triangulate these data with many sources from
teachers, parents and other students, as well as student reflection logs, which had
been collected all year. As such, it can be argued that these interviews provided
authentic, rich and descriptive data, which were representative of the students’
beliefs and values at this point in time.
The practising student teacher and the deputy principal (also in the role as critical friend) made comments during Term 4 that the class atmosphere during this period was positive. There were no BMIS records for the first four weeks of Term 4 and the classroom behaviour for this last round of Tribes was very encouraging. The researcher felt relaxed interviewing the students because there was not the usual pressure of dealing with students who were experiencing difficulties in their relationships in the classroom and playground. Each interview lasted 10-15 minutes and was conducted with all students over three days from 8.11.04-11.11.04. Each student agreed to participate in the process before the teacher proceeded with the questions. During the interviews, the students’ smiles and relaxed body language gave the impression they enjoyed the experience.

2.4.2 Constructing the case study

The case is built around three emerging themes: relationships, leadership and friendship. Due to the qualitative nature of the research there was tension between allowing themes to emerge and being strategic to create Hart’s (1992) conditions for collaboration and using Gibbs (1995, 2001) Tribes process to create a safe, supportive and democratic classroom culture. However, the use of class meetings to establish dialogue between the teacher and the students about classroom operations determined the direction and pace of change and allowed other themes to emerge as important to this action research process. The researcher did not anticipate the importance of the emergent themes at the beginning of the study, until there was the opportunity to reflect on the entire study and analyse all the data at the conclusion of the research. Patterson, Stansell and Lee (1990) warn if the focus is too narrow it is easy to miss these unique features. At the beginning of the year, the researcher
strategically focussed on building relationships by explicitly teaching the core shared value of ‘respect and concern for others and their rights’. This value addressed the underlying issues of bullying and teasing to provide the foundation for scaffolding positive relationships to promote group work or Tribes (Gibbs, 2001).

As students took responsibility for their behaviour and learned to negotiate with each other, the focus for the facilitator shifted from the class as a whole to assisting individual students to manage their Tribe. Tribes became a scaffold to teach leadership skills and the students became motivated to become leaders in their Tribes. Due to positive feedback from parents and students and requests from students to become leaders, the researcher began to realise the potential of leadership to develop student confidence and self-esteem. Hence the second emergent theme of leadership was developed during the five different rounds of Tribes, which consisted of students of mixed gender and year levels, which broadened friendships groups. By the end of Term 3, there were still a few students who remained marginalised and their parents requested assistance. The focus for Term four became the last emergent theme of friendships. A summary of the phases of the study in Figure 2.1 below includes the dates the Tribes were formed, on the left, and the data sources within a timeline, on the right, to position the three emergent themes in the middle section.
Reducing raw data and identifying the themes was an inductive, ongoing process.

The researcher constantly sought clarification from students through their reflection logs and informal interviews. The numerous phases of the study identified critical dates whereby emerging themes surfaced. These phases were not linear in the sense that each emerging theme was exclusive to that phase.

Whilst developing positive relationships and friendships was the focus throughout the year, the questions that the researcher examined became more complex as the year progressed. As students formed larger friendship groups, the researcher became more aware of the students whose behaviour marginalised them from the established ‘norms of the class’. Once the parameters for acceptable behaviour were established,
the community of students and teachers continually problem-solved during class meetings to make provisions for inclusion of all students. It was beyond the scope of this study to explore different goal orientations for each student but the researcher used social goals as intrinsic rewards for students who needed scaffolding to experience the benefits of collaboration and cooperation. The researcher modelled and established mutual respect and trust with the students by allowing friends to sit next to each other, even if their behaviour was not cooperative in past years, trusting these students would make prosocial choices. The alternative of separating these students would not have communicated the message that the researcher believed these students could develop self-control and wanted to be part of this classroom community. This process was challenging for the researcher but ultimately rewarding as the students who had been uncooperative in the past became empowered by the positive responses of their peers to the changes they had chosen to make. The next section discusses how the case study will be presented.

2.4.3 Presenting the case study

The fluid and emergent nature of naturalistic inquiry makes the distinction between data gathering and analysis far less absolute in fieldwork. (Patton, 2002, p. 426, 503)

Even though the research questions guided the initial direction of the research, there needed to be openness to other possibilities emerging from the classroom context. This researcher encountered similar problems to O’Donnell (2004) in terms of managing large amounts of data that are generated with qualitative research: thus emerging themes were analysed and readjusted through various waves of data collection. Once the major themes had been established at the end of the study in December 2004, the student reflection logs were reread, to substantiate emergent
findings and verify if any important aspects had been overlooked. These logs were annotated with ‘post-it’ notes and cross-referenced with teacher observations to provide the basis for selecting the vignettes that would exemplify the themes.

The same process of cross-referencing was used for the researcher’s files, which contained all documents pertaining to the study. This process clarified important recurrent themes such as ‘bullying and teasing’ and emergent behaviours of mutual respect demonstrated by previously antisocial students. Other themes such as gender and multicultural issues did not play a key role in students’ interpersonal relationships. However, because these themes permeated the process, they were reported to add to nuances in the interpretation of student and teacher perceptions. The challenge was in selecting the significant data to construct the case study, triangulating the sources and providing enough details to illuminate and make the case. The notion of ‘The organisational iceberg’ used by Hogan (2003) assisted the interpretation of the data in the current study to provide layered analyses. From this perspective the researcher is interpreting student behaviour based on what is seen and heard, which may be limiting evidence. There were covert issues such as social status and power struggles, which are layered upon the students’ values and attitudes, which may be unconscious and therefore inaccessible to the researcher, leading to misconceptions and deficits (Phillips & Soltis, 1991). To overcome this limitation, as illustrated in Table 2.2 below, the teacher’s observations were triangulated with data from students, parents and the school.
Table 2.2
Data collection sources (to illustrate the possibilities for triangulation).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
<th>PARENTS</th>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>RESEARCHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Class Y charts</td>
<td>• Formal and informal</td>
<td>• Critical friend</td>
<td>• Researcher’s observations, anecdotal notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>and reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student reflection logs</td>
<td>• Parent surveys</td>
<td>1. Class meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tribe reflection sheets</td>
<td>• Parent nights</td>
<td>2. Class goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sociograms</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Class plans of each Tribes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Sociograms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Critical friend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chapter has presented the methods that have been used to collect data for this research. Issues of validity and reliability have been discussed and the various tools used for gathering data have been described. To provide a sense of the denouement of the research process the next chapter presents the three phases of the case study, with emergent themes, in chronological order. Because the vignettes had different starting points during the study, the analysis continued, either until the end of the year or is backtracked, depending on relevancy for illustrating a process of change in student attitudes.
Chapter 3

THE RESULTS

MEDIATING CLASSROOM CULTURE BASED ON SAFE, SUPPORTIVE AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study in the form of vignettes from the daily life of the classroom. These vignettes reflect the teacher and students progress towards a safe, supportive and democratic classroom environment from the points of view of the classroom teacher, the participating students and their parents and Bushlands’ Primary School’s administrative team. During the action research process, the facilitation role of the teacher was conceptualised as providing scaffolding opportunities to maximise the multiple perspectives of 31 students. As indicated in Figure 3.1 below, different ZPDs operated in the classroom, within three interrelated themes ‘relationships, leadership and friendships’.

Figure 3.1
Model of the teacher’s facilitative role to scaffold student understandings
The time at which mediation occurred for the three emerging themes of relationships, leadership and friendships in this study are summarised in Table 3.1 (see below) and explained in more depth in this chapter. The metaphorical iceberg used in the second column illustrates students’ relationships progressing to deeper levels of awareness during the study, which improved students’ ability to relate to each other. The third column summarises the vignettes chosen for further discussion in this chapter. The last column identifies the specific Term in which teacher ‘mediation’ occurred for each theme and the focus of the content of class discussions during class meetings.

Table 3.1
Researcher’s ‘mediation’ role for Terms 1, 2, 3 and 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAJOR THEMES</th>
<th>METAPHORICAL ICEBERG</th>
<th>VIGNETTES</th>
<th>TERMS IN WHICH ‘MEDIATION’ OCCURRED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>• Test the tip of the iceberg</td>
<td>Mediating Relationships • Mutual respect • Bullying/teasing • Personal empowerment • Parent support</td>
<td>Term 1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lift students’ awareness of their behaviours.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>• Test the waters</td>
<td>Mediating Leadership • leadership and social networks for Tribes 1,2,3,4 and 5 • Leadership criteria</td>
<td>Term 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meet the challenges of leadership and experience deeper levels of mutual respect and trust.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>• Probe beneath the iceberg</td>
<td>Mediating Friendship • Students’ construct of friendship • Cliques • Contingency friendships. • Discriminatory behaviours</td>
<td>Term 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lift students’ awareness of discriminatory behaviours that promote exclusion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1 Mediating relationships: mutual respect

Using the criteria of teacher time and attention, the research of Allard, Cooper, Hildebrand and Wealands (1995) investigated power relationships in the classroom. Their research was adapted to the current study to initially group students into four groups based on teacher observations at the beginning of the study. An additional criterion about anti social behaviour was used because, students who exhibited such behaviour, were a major concern when setting up a safe, supportive and democratic classroom. These students’ names have been highlighted in bold font in Table 3.2 ‘Class profile one’ (see page 84). These groups were not the Tribes groups but groups based on teacher time and attention formed for the purpose of comparison at the end of the study, to examine how the class profile had changed.

The terms used to describe the characteristics of the four groups in Tables 3.2 are adapted from Allard et al.’s, (1995) research. Group one is composed of the ‘academically able, independent’ student. Group two is identified as the ‘popular child’, who is not necessarily an independent student. Allard et al., describe both these groups as usually being the leaders and innovators in classrooms. Group three is composed of the ‘middle of the road - followers’ who have the least power and demand the least amount of teacher time. Group four represents the students who have social, learning and behaviour difficulties; these students are usually unpopular and often demand the most teacher attention. Contrary to other students’ perceptions, Group four is the most powerful because they take up substantial teacher time when the other groups will not work or play with them. This is a significant issue when trying to establish cooperation and collaboration with a group of students whose behaviour is not inclusive and respectful of all class members. Allard et al.,
concluded that students were ‘perceptive and tended to know who belonged to which group, regardless of how the teacher tried to avoid this’. The researcher used the information in Table 3.2 and the results of the first sociogram (19.2.04), for student placement in the first Tribes, in week 5 Term 1.

Table 3.2

*Class profile one*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM 1, WEEK 4</th>
<th>GROUP 1</th>
<th>GROUP 2</th>
<th>GROUP 3</th>
<th>GROUP 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for group</td>
<td>• Academically able</td>
<td>• Popular</td>
<td>• Middle of the road</td>
<td>• Social, learning and behaviour problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Independent students</td>
<td>• May not</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Unpopular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>work be independent students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students (31)</td>
<td>Eileen</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Christine</td>
<td>Wendy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Daren</td>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Jason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Denis</td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>Lindsay</td>
<td>Phuc</td>
<td>Damon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joey</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Huong</td>
<td>Steven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Nathan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Michael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Justin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Justin (Left school in Week 4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Allard et al., 1995.*

*Note.* Students whose names appear in **bold** exhibit behaviour that is antisocial.

These groups were a useful starting point for data analysis and provided a frame of reference to position the following discussion of how the researcher scaffolded student relationships at the beginning of the year. This researcher reflected on the observed behaviour of the students, which also included parent and student perceptions of interpersonal relationships issues that needed to be resolved. On the first day of school, the majority of the parents whose children were identified as experiencing social and emotional difficulties raised their concerns (see Table 3.2, p. 84, group 4). These students had not yet made a friend and/or had been bullied by Peter, Daren, Denis and Lindsay, who were all popular students in this class. This
researcher perceived that the value of ‘respect and concern for others and their rights’ needed to be addressed urgently at the first class meeting with a ‘Y chart’ to assess students’ understandings.

After four weeks of allowing students free choice about where they sat in the classroom and conducting team building activities I was able to categorise the students into various groups based on behaviour and teacher time. (TOB, February, 2004)

The teacher’s role as mediator to establish mutual respect is discussed in relation to bullying and teasing, personal empowerment and the role of parents.

3.1.1 Bullying and teasing

Generally, the reality of school life for students is that within particular established ethical boundaries, teachers have the ultimate power and responsibility, and students have to do as adults tell them. As such, in the context of the current study, the process of establishing authentic interactions, which were negotiated with students, took time and patience. During Term 1 (2004) the issue of ‘status’ between students and teachers was addressed during discussions at a Parent Information Night. The expectations of some students, parents, and members of the school community advocated a more traditional teacher-centred classroom, due to the number of students who were experiencing social and behavioural problems. It was perceived that these students needed a strict classroom discipline policy to curb antisocial behaviour (BMIS, 2003 & 2004, Week 1, Term 1). The teacher argued that whilst the process of negotiation and offering choices did not guarantee students would make the ‘right choice’ it was important to provide time and opportunities to support the process of learning, a claim supported by Goleman (2004).
We have to create contexts in schools in which they see these skills as valued in their peer relationships, not just by adults but by other children. And children need to realise from an early age that this is really what growing up is all about. (Goleman, 2004, p. 275)

In the participating class, at least eight students had behaviour records documented from the previous year that were evidence of entrenched bullying and lack of respect for each other. By the end of the first week of Term 1, this group of students were responsible for over 50 percent of the reported misdemeanours in the playground for seventeen classes (BMIS, 6.2.04). The major categories documented were teasing, bullying, fighting and swearing (for Lindsay, Denis, Daren, Steven, Michael, Peter, John and Jason). This researcher was in a position to mediate positive relations with all students but was limited if student prejudices persisted or students did not want to cooperate and continued to exclude other students. This issue will be explored further under the theme of ‘Friendships’. It is outside the scope of this research to explore in depth all the sociocultural variables such as gender, ethnicity, personality, learning styles, the interaction of the brain and emotion that create power structures in the classroom. However, the school BMIS data and SRL will be used to position the discussion of how improved peer relationships were negotiated. The research of Rodkin and Hodges (2003) provides useful insights into analysing particular social positions in the classroom, such as two friends Michael and Denis who consistently bullied fellow students Damon, Steven and Nathan.

Bullies seem to target children who are physically weak, are less assertive and have low self-worth and perceptions of social competence. It is interesting that friendships can serve as a protective factor for the victim because the bully may increase the likelihood of retaliation from these friends. Often these friends are similar in characteristics to the victim and have been marginalised by their peers. Children are likely to seek out targets that have been marginalized by the peer group because targeting low status student is unlikely to be negatively evaluated by the peer group. (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003, p. 392)
Damon, Steven and Nathan’s profiles coincide with the profile of low status, marginalised children described by Rodkin and Hodges’ (2003), who often seek the support of the teacher. For example, by sitting in close proximity to the researcher on the mat, Damon, Steven and Nathan were able to physically distance themselves from their high status peer intimidators. Hence the students’ choice of positions on the mat revealed their friendship groups and the potential ‘power groups’.

The marginalisation of low status students in the classroom is also evidenced by the choices students made about whom they wanted in their Tribes. The sections on leadership further explore the impact of popular students assisting low status students to be leaders in later Tribes, which in turn raised low status students’ profiles with their peers. For example, Steven received no nominations all year, with Damon and Nathan only receiving a few. One could argue that all the boys’ attempts to make friends would have been hampered by the fact that Michael and Denis had a high social status and therefore influenced the other boys in the class, who gave their tacit approval to bullying behaviours by continually excluding these boys (TOB, Term1, 2004 & Sociogram 1). Further evidence was provided when students had to sit on the mat for discussions. Denis and Michael would keep a space for each other and not allow Damon, Steven and Nathan within proximity (TOB, 2004).

Most of the other boys in the class implicitly understood what was happening and closed any gap to also exclude Damon, Steven and Nathan from the social circle that students formed on the mat, prior to class discussions. As a result of this practice, Damon, Steven and Nathan dawdled to the mat and the teacher would assist in placing them next to a supportive class member or they would choose to sit either
side of the teacher. The researcher noticed this situation because of the amount of
time and effort it took to arrange all students into a social circle each day.

The researcher carefully chose buddy friendships with well-adjusted peers, as models
of effective social interaction when each new tribe was formed. Michael stopped
bullying these boys towards the end of the year and the reasons he gave support
Rodkin and Hodges (2003) findings that having friends may serve as protective
factors for bullying.

I have stopped teasing Damon. I teased him because he had no friends. I
stopped because he now has some friends. Nathan will stick up for him. I
wouldn’t like to be teased and I don’t like getting in trouble either. That is
why I stopped. (SI, Michael, 8.11.04)

Rodkin and Hodges (2003) argue that maintaining a warm and caring attitude
towards all students maintains positive cohesion in a classroom because peers were
found to be less rejecting of aggressive peers than when teachers hold negative
beliefs about aggressive students. If teachers are not sensitive in their handling of
aggressive students, they can inadvertently lift the status of these students and create
alternative authority structures conducive to the emergence of high status aggressors.

This strategy proved effective for both Michael and Denis, who maintained
their level of popularity within their peer group throughout the year but also
developed positive relationships and a greater level of trust with both their
peers and myself, by the end of the research. (TOB, 2004)

Underlying tensions were revealed when Damon, Nathan and Steven spoke during
discussions. Denis, Michael, Lindsay, Peter and John would sneer, roll their eyes, or
make loud and derogatory comments out loud such as ‘loser’ to negate these three
boys’ contributions. Classroom meetings addressed these issues openly through
discussion and negotiated with all students about the boundaries for acceptable
behaviour (TOB, Term1). Denis’ behaviour in the extract below illustrates that he clearly understood the boundaries for acceptable behaviour for group work and the Tribe expectations of leaders being a good role model.

I enjoyed group work because you get to do it together and not on your own. I learned to get along and take turns. I wasn’t voted leader and I wanted to be because I wanted to have a go. I would have had to behave more and I would have. (SI, Denis, 11.11.04)

To encourage responsible choices consideration had to be given to creative solutions, which were negotiated with the students. The level of trust between the students was quickly established with team building activities from Tribes (Gibbs, 2001) such as the daily social circle to share feelings to connect emotionally with each other. For example, ‘Today I feel happy because Mary is coming over to my house after school’. The level of participation in the class meetings rose significantly during Term 1 from a few students participating to the majority of the class eager to give their opinions. By Week 8, Term 1, the teacher reflected that most students were engaged and allowed the length of class meeting to be extended (TOB, 26.3.04). The extracts from the student reflection logs (SRL, 25.3.04, Term 1) also provided evidence of students feeling included, recognising their need for self-control and learning how to problem solve.

We had a lot of info like how to stop fights. (Daren)
Everybody got to say what they really felt about the group. (Lindsay)
We talked about self-control. (Denis)
I don’t know how to handle myself. (Damon, who also received a BMIS record this week)
I learnt about the way that problems are solved. (Nathan)
I got ideas about me and Wendy. (Jason, who had been arguing with Wendy)
I got to say something. (Joey)
We brought up good stuff, not just bad stuff. (Judy)
People told the truth. I was happy about the meetings today. (Helen)

Some people asked good questions. (Ann)
These comments are representative of many students in the class who showed behaviours that were evidence of emerging values such as honesty, fair play and a genuine desire to cooperate. Daren learnt some new information about dealing with conflict and Lindsay and Joey appreciated the opportunity to have their say. Denis had been involved in fighting and throwing other people’s property around the classroom the same week he wrote his comment. In student interviews at the end of the year (SI, 10.11.04) Daren reaffirmed his earlier comment about class meetings (SRL, 25.3.04) being useful for him, by providing information that improved his ability to solve social problems.

It’s good to get rid of everyone’s problems and you don’t keep having fights in the class. I learnt about friendship and getting along. I didn’t know almost all of this stuff so it was useful for me. (SI, 10.11.04)

By the end of Term 1, the researcher noted a demonstration of mutual respect and an even distribution of students from both genders participating in the discussions. Lindsay and Denis began making positive contributions to classroom activities and played a more active role in class meetings, which was noticed by the other boys in the class (TOB, 8.4.04) particularly by Michael. There were weekly dance classes in Term 2, where students had the opportunity to be outside the constraints of the classroom with students from the other year 4/5 classes. All the students from the researcher’s class chose to dance rather than misbehave, contrary to students from the other classes. The researcher was both surprised and encouraged by what happened, as indicated in the following teacher observations during Term 2.

Michael was making an effort to change and in the context of dance lessons his behaviour was exemplary. At the same time the boys from the other classes were making rude and unkind remarks about ‘boy/girl germs’ and pulled their jumpers over their hands, so they would not touch each other. Claire chose Michael each week as her partner because she wrote in her reflection log that he was a great dancer (SRL, 1.7.04). Michael smiled and
concentrated during these lessons and was perceived to be enjoying himself. Both his peers and the three teachers who observed the dance classes nominated him for the class dance medal at the end of the Term 2 for his outstanding efforts. (TOB, Term 2)

The researcher perceived that during Term 2 Michael’s attitude about his abilities changed as he realised he could achieve as a result of his efforts in the dance lessons. He continued to struggle with his schoolwork, but was more positive in his attitude and willing to persist. He readily accepted assistance from the researcher, which allowed a level of trust to grow between the researcher and Michael. Michael’s mother had reported in Term 1 that Michael’s behaviour was out of control and she did not know what to do (TOB, Term 1). She confirmed these changes in Michael’s attitude at informal meetings throughout Terms 3 and 4 and in a more formal context on the Parent Information Night (TOB, 29.11.04). Michael and Denis were best friend and often displaying antisocial behaviours with their peers. However, on the Parent Information Night the teacher noted both boys sitting with their mothers attentively and appearing relaxed.

Denis’s mother was visibly relaxed and smiling, with Denis sitting next to her. Denis was friendly and polite. She expressed her pleasure with the change in attitude of her son, both at school and at home. (TOB, 29.11.04)

Throughout the year there was a decline in the reported incidences of playground bullying with a particular group of boys, which is summarised in Table 3.3, page 92. These figures represent a significant change to prosocial behaviour, in contrast to previous years, when many of these boys had undertaken individual behaviour management programs with limited success, as the antisocial behaviour amongst these boys had escalated by the end of 2003. This situation necessitated intervention to create five composite classes for 2004, as opposed to two classes of year five
students. The researcher negotiated with these students to create non-traditional spaces, where they could take some responsibility for changing their behaviour.

### Table 3.3

*Summary of school BMIS data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Term 1</th>
<th>Term 2</th>
<th>Term 3</th>
<th>Term 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daren</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denis</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsay</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four out of nine Year 4 boys had BMIS records.

All the year 5 boys had BMIS records.

### 3.1.2 Individual empowerment

Hogan and Pressley (1997) argue that a teacher needs patience and sensitivity to understand how to provide optimal support during the process of scaffolding, which can be emotionally exhausting. To provide this level of support, it took time for this researcher to understand the students’ individual needs. When a student’s ZPD is narrow the teacher may need to give more frequent and detailed cues to scaffold the student’s understanding of their behaviour. This appeared so for Jason, who was in group 4 of Table 3.2 (see page 84), because he needed regular counselling and guidance to understand how his behaviour impacted on his peers throughout the year. Jason’s story illustrated many recurring themes in the classroom, which resulted from poor impulse control and lack of social skills. Table 3.3, page 92, indicates
challenging behaviours for another eleven students whose names have been also
highlighted in bold font.

Based on his schoolwork and academic results, Jason was an intelligent and
articulate child, but he persisted in displaying behaviours which did not assist him to
make friends. Jason’s peers selected him only for the first and third Tribe. This
resulted in problems placing Jason in a Tribe for the majority of the year because his
peers had reported they could not work with Jason because he made too many noises
or disturbed them. At the beginning of the study, both Jason and John chose Justin as
their first preference for Tribes 1. However, Justin relocated to another school during
the same week, so Jason and John’s second choices were implemented. The boys had
chosen each other (TOB, 4.3.04; Sociogram, 19.2.04). The researcher thought this
would be an opportunity for a friendship to develop, but a series of events resulted in
John stating he no longer wanted anything to do with Jason, as indicated in the
following extract taken from the teacher’s observation records (16.3.04).

Two weeks later John came to me in tears, visibly upset with Jason who was
standing next to him. Jason reported that John had sworn at him. After further
investigation Jason said he was trying to encourage John by saying, ‘Get on
with your work’. John added, ‘He screamed at me, “Get on with your work!”’
And hurt my ears’. I discussed a more supportive scenario with the boys, by
using an appropriate tone and volume, yet not sounding too bossy. John was
asked how he would have liked Jason to speak to him. John replied that Jason
could have said, ‘Get on with your work. Are you stuck? (In a nice voice).’ I
asked Jason to role-play this scenario back to John. He did it really well and
both boys returned to their desks laughing. (TOB, 16.3.04)

Role-play was a non-threatening strategy for Jason and John to learn to communicate
more effectively. However, over the next few weeks, as these incidences reoccurred
between Jason and John, Jason would protest his innocence. Jason started to be
perceived as untrustworthy by his Tribe, which was evidenced in the student
reflection logs (SRL, 4.3.04). Every member of Jason’s Tribe complained he was too talkative and loud and they could not concentrate near him (TOB, 16.3.04). The researcher identified a pattern with Jason’s behaviour. Jason would initiate an argument with his Tribe members and then complain to the researcher that his Tribe members were treating him unfairly.

The following extract exemplifies a series of conversations that the researcher had with Jason’s mother to discuss the difficulties Jason would have making friends if this behaviour persisted.

Jason was often overheard arguing with Tribe members and then he would report to me, in a whining voice, that he was being unfairly treated. He would return to his seat and speak politely or smile at the student whom he had just reported. On this occasion Dean had allegedly taken a grape from Jason’s desk without his permission. Jason was making a loud fuss at his desk about it. After I mediated the discussion, Jason admitted that he had offered Dean a grape but he did not expect him to take it. Jason had a smile on his face after Dean started to get upset. (TOB, 18.3.04)

Jason had behaved this way on other occasions and it could be argued that he was playing ‘power games’ to try to gain friends, but it backfired and his peers became angry with him. (TOB, 27.2.04)

During formal interviews, Jason’s mother stated that she believed her son did not possess the appropriate social skills to make friends (TOB, 9.3.04 & 30.3.04). She was excited that Tribes might help him make a friend as he had not yet made any friends in the classroom community. He was an only child and his mother confided that she could not resist indulging him and felt that was part of his problem in establishing friendships. Jason was not used to sharing because he was also the youngest cousin in his family and usually got his own way. The researcher gave Jason the choice of taking responsibility for his behaviour as the strategy of sitting
Jason away from his peers to prevent antisocial behaviour had not worked in previous years.

    Jason’s mother had suggested that Jason needed to have a desk on his own because he was easily distracted and having his own desk kept him out of trouble. I suggested that by keeping Jason in a group situation it provided the context for him to develop social skills with guidance and support from the teacher and his peers. (TOB, Term1)

For the majority of the year, the growing tension between Jason and his peers remained an underlying current. For Jason, changing Tribes did bring short respites from this antisocial behaviour with a new group of peers who provided some experiences of positive interactions. However, one could argue that Jason’s lack of maturity prevented him from ceasing to engage in antisocial behaviours that were not showing respect towards other students. Towards the end of the study the individual student interviews revealed one of the behaviours that annoyed Jason’s peers was Jason’s lack of respect for their personal space (TOB, 19.11.04). It was puzzling to the researcher that when Jason was questioned about this behaviour he replied, “Nobody told me I was annoying them. Nobody told me they didn’t like that behaviour” (TOB, 19.11.04). The researcher wondered if Jason really believed what he had stated or simply chose to ignore the rights of others.

    Jason has his own desk and tray but has difficulty confining his movements to this area. He leans over and across his peers’ desk space and they complain this annoys them. He does not put his things away when he is asked. His materials have often been found in other group’s trays. (TOB, 18.3.04)

It was unexpected but encouraging for the researcher that Jason only had a few reported incidences of rough play in the playground (BMIS - Terms 1, 2 & 3). Although he seemed to be in conflict with most of his peers in the classroom he was generally accepted by most of the boys in the playground to play team games such as
However, when the siren signalled the end of recess and the students lined up outside the classroom, the researcher noted that frequently nobody stood next to Jason in the line (TOB, Term1). In addition Jason’s peers did not choose him as a partner for activities nor to be a member of their Tribe (TOB, Tribes 2, 4 & 5, 2004). Jason wrote thoughtful reflections that indicated he had an understanding of how he needed to change his behaviour to make friends. He was observing his peers, who became an example for him and he appreciated their support.

I have helped my group by trying and having more self-control. I have felt better because I have not been talking much and everyone has self-control, which encourages me. (SRL, 24.6.04, Term 2, Week 9)

If you tease, gossip or be angry or have tantrums you will not be a good friend. I know Huong is a good friend to Phuc and Phuc is nice to him so that’s why I want him to be my friend. He would be a brilliant friend. (SRL, 19.8.04, Term 3, Week 4)

In the playground Denis, Michael and Steven have been my friends. They protect me. They have said, ‘Let’s never fight again so I think we will never fight once again’. (SRL, 16.9.04, Term 3, Week 8)

In addition Jason wrote in his journal ‘It was easy to fit into a group (SRL, 18.11.04, Term 4, Week 5), which could be interpreted as a perceived improvement in peer relationships.

I had also observed that there were fewer incidences of complaints from Jason and his peers. The use of a home/school diary assisted Jason’s mother to reflect with Jason at home about school incidences throughout the year. Jason’s mother stated she had noted significant improvements in her son’s behaviour throughout the year, even if it had not always translated into consistent cooperation at school. (TOB, 29.11.04, Term 4, Week 7)

Jason’s journey illustrates how the researcher was positioned to mediate situations between students to scaffold their understandings of themselves and others, to see different perspectives. Reflective practices supported students’ integration of new knowledge and ideas, using their peers as role models as indicated by Jason’s words.
in his reflection log on the previous page. Jason gradually took more responsibility for his behaviour, which empowered him to control his impulses and the researcher and his parents noticed this.

At the end of the year Jason’s mother commented that she had seen changes in her son’s behaviour and although this had not translated into more friendships with his current peers, there were less incidences of antisocial behaviour. Jason’s mother was happy with his progress. When I questioned Jason he would more readily take responsibility for his misdemeanours, which he had not done in the past. (TOB, December, 2004)

3.1.3 Parent support

The deputy principal had witnessed Peter deliberately kicking another child in the leg in the playground (BMIS, 8.9.04). Peter initially denied he had kicked the child but later on the same day, he took responsibility and added that he had done it in anger.

Peter had been in trouble in the playground on three separate occasions over three Terms. He had a supportive home environment. He had complained that he had been treated unfairly at school. His mother wrote a three-paged letter describing Peter’s feelings and used examples, which had been related to her by Peter. There were phrases such as ‘there were others involved but they didn’t get into trouble’, ‘I am by no means excusing Peter’s behaviour but…’ this letter was followed up by a half hour telephone call initiated by Peter’s mother on the same day to myself. (TOB, 8.9.04)

Peter’s mother had made reasonable assumptions based on what Peter had related to her. However, when the researcher spoke to Peter’s mum, she realised that Peter’s perceptions were not a totally accurate account of events. Peter had BMIS records on 13.9.04, 18.10.04, 28.10.04 & 2.11.04, for similar incidents. Further analysis of this letter exposed a deeper issue, which had been partially surfaced at a parent interview earlier in the year. An extract from the following interview indicates parental concerns about previous bullying by Peter’s peers because they had perceived her son as dumb.
Peter’s mother expressed concern about other children perceiving her child as ‘dumb’ because he was upset by comments made in the playground by the other boys. She said that he had always felt dumb and had a low self-esteem. He took things personally. This has gone on for most of his five years at school. He had no specific friends in year 5 and could I help him. (TOB, 1.4.04)

In contrast to Peter’s mother’s perceptions of Peter’s friendships, the researcher observed Peter was part of large group of boys in the classroom who were friends, and Peter was also selected by these peers in subsequent sociograms. Peter’s family may not have been aware of his friendships at school because Peter did not socialise with his peers after school. Peter deliberately played the ‘clown’ role in the classroom and had been ‘calling out’ inappropriate phrases such as, ‘Daah!’ that drew negative attention to himself from both his peers and the researcher (TOB, Term 1). As the year progressed these incidences decreased and the researcher privately reminded Peter when he was behaving in this way. However, when Peter wrote comments in his reflection log about the role he usually played in a group they concurred with teacher observations (TOB, 2004) and showed he was taking responsibility for change and needed to be congratulated.

I’m a joker and an idea person, because that’s the way I am. I would like to be an encourager and a helper. I am willing to do it. (SRL, 30.11.04)

Students need to receive consistent feedback about core values such as honesty from their parents and the school community to learn responsibility and resiliency. Bernard (2004) has identified several parenting styles that contribute to student underachievement and poor social and emotional well-being. The analyses of the parenting styles were outside the scope of this study. However when students came to school with a poor self-regulatory control, then specific teacher intervention was needed to scaffold the child to adapt to the norms of a classroom and their peers.
parents were interested in their child’s well-being and the number of interviews over
the year reflected parental concern when their child did not have anyone to play with
or misbehaved at school (TOB, 2004). The fortnightly school newsletters written by
the principal were used to promote positive relationships between the school and
community by providing helpful ‘parenting tips’. Although the intention of the
principal was to improve communication between the school and the home, some
parents may have perceived the tone of the newsletter as judgemental. The following
extract from a school newsletter discusses lying.

Primary school children are learning the difference between reality and
fantasy and may tell lies for a range of reasons, which could include:
• To avoid the consequences of their actions;
• Because they have learnt their parents tell lies;
• To gain approval and acceptance from their friends. (Bushlands
newsletter, No.19, 8.12.04)

This newsletter was an attempt to enlist parental support of school values when their
child received a consequence for misbehaviour at school. When this happens the
child learns not to blame other students for their behaviour.

A parent program, which was organised by the researcher and operated by parents at
Bushlands, provided a positive context to discuss such issues and offer longer-term
solutions. Throughout the year, the researcher recorded similar situations involving
Denis, Steven and Michael’s parents, where the parents argued that their child was
not at fault and should not receive a consequence. There was an increased level of
parental trust as the year progressed and these incidences became less frequent. The
parents of all these students attended the Parent Information Night (29.11.04) and
expressed their appreciation for the care and consistency of the classroom teacher in
managing social problems positively and effectively with their children. These
parents also expressed opinions and perceptions that their children were happy to come to school and enjoyed their new friendships, which translated into happier relationships at home with their siblings and parents. In addition the deputy principal, who had attended the Parent Information Night, wrote

> It was a pleasure to attend your parent session on Monday. There is a very special bond/relationship that has developed between you and the students and it is clear that the parents appreciate your work. (Critical Friend, 3.12.04)

### 3.2 Mediating leadership

The use of rewards in relation to group work was one of the first issues of leadership that the researcher negotiated with the students. Millett (2005) argues that leaders by definition are obliged to cultivate a climate, which is conducive to making good ethical decisions. Leaders also need to be sensitive to the values and ideas they promote. The current study used the guiding ethical principles of the Curriculum Council (1998), as articulated in the five shared core values that underpinned the teaching and learning program in the classroom. Class meetings provided the opportunity for all students to reflect with the researcher on their values during the decision making process.

There were many decisions that explored ethical issues such as the use of extrinsic rewards. The researcher had concerns about using extrinsic rewards in a class that was promoting cooperation. However, the reality of the situation was that these students had not experienced a high level of autonomy and were not accustomed to participative decision-making and group work in past years. The researcher needed to scaffold students’ understandings by agreeing to a system of extrinsic rewards that motivated students initially to ‘buy into’ the process of building relationships that
valued cooperation and collaboration. Most students had assumed the use of
competition within the class. However, during the process of ‘sharing power’ in the
classroom, students shared the researcher’s concerns for the use of extrinsic rewards
and the problems of equity, as illustrated in the following example.

I initiated ‘marbles in a jar’ at the beginning of the year to establish basic
routines of being organised for lessons and following class rules. The class
negotiated the rewards they would receive, as each level was reached.
However, this simple system raised concerns from some students about every
student receiving a class reward when they were misbehaving at other times.
Once Tribes started group points came into effect. Subsequent discussions in
class meetings during Term 1 established the need for explicit criteria for
group points and consequences for Tribe members who did not cooperate that
were not attached to group points. (TOB, Term 1, Week 3)

Due to the profile of this challenging group of students, past teachers had used
extrinsic rewards to encourage the establishment of a positive learning environment.
Before the commencement of Tribes 1, Lindsay, Denis, Daren, Steven and Jason
suggested a reward system using group points in Term 1, Week 4 (TOB), which the
rest of the class supported. The teacher expressed apprehension about being
consistent and fair to all students when allocating points for group effort. This was
resolved to some degree, by the students agreeing to the concept of ‘different
goalposts for different students’. The use of extrinsic rewards and competitive
systems may have resulted in negative comparisons between students and lead to
exclusions because students were not making an effort for their Tribe. However, the
researcher made a clear distinction between classroom and playground behaviour by
awarding points only for the classroom and not including playground misbehaviour.
The Tribes’ process (Gibbs, 1998, 2001) was used to promote social goals, such as
sitting with a friend, with the teacher expectation that responsible choices would be
made for behaviour. The students could also use the class meetings to discuss
behaviours in general, but not to discuss individual personalities.
During Term 4, a practising student teacher taught this class of students for the first five weeks and instigated a simple reward system, using stars and lollies.

The student teacher was so absorbed in teaching she often forgot to use her star system but the students still maintained consistently high work standards and exemplary classroom behaviour. One could infer that working to achieve personal goals with their peers intrinsically rewarded the students, in addition to the challenges of the activities in which they were engaged. (TOB, Term 4, Weeks 1 - 5)

The rest of the Term continued with the minimal use of extrinsic rewards. This allowed the students to focus on the positive aspects of working in a Tribe, which one could argue were intrinsically rewarding for the students. Throughout the year 24 out of the 31 students experienced a leadership role which extended their views about effective leadership by critically examining personal belief systems. The use of ‘power’ was redefined to include leading by example and supporting others. Table 3.4 (see below) summarises the tribal leadership and is used to position the discussion of how peers developed leadership skills and widened social networks, while supporting each other.

Table 3.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribe 1</td>
<td>Term 1</td>
<td>7 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribe 2</td>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>6 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribe 3</td>
<td>Term 2</td>
<td>5 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribe 4</td>
<td>Term 3</td>
<td>10 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribe 5</td>
<td>Term 4</td>
<td>7 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Tribe 1 | Term 1 | 7 Weeks |
| Tribe 2 | Term 2 | 6 Weeks |
| Tribe 3 | Term 2 | 5 Weeks |
| Tribe 4 | Term 3 | 10 Weeks |
| Tribe 5 | Term 4 | 7 Weeks |

Note: Tribes 4 and 5 vice leaders were introduced.
The exemplars of student relationships and leadership that developed for each round of Tribes illustrate how social networks evolved, when students with high social status established friendships with each other. This shift in friendships widened the circle of opportunities for the students, with a lower social status, who were also friends of these high status students. These new friendships allowed multiple ZPDs to operate for problem solving, which improved students’ social skills and widened their sphere of influence and social status. The first leaders and vice leaders supported students who had a lower social status to become effective leaders during later Tribes.

Table 3.5 (see p. 104) summarises all the tribal leaders for each Tribe using bold font. Allard et al’s (1995) categories are also adapted to further regroup each tribe under four columns along the top of the table, according to teacher attention and time, with additional criteria of students’ behaviours that were prosocial or antisocial. Prosocial behaviours included students’ actions that were cooperative therefore contributing to positive group cohesion and classroom tone (students from groups 1 & 4). Antisocial behaviours included bullying and teasing or uncooperative actions such as deliberately ‘annoying’ other students, therefore contributing to negative group cohesion and classroom tone (students from groups 2 & 3). Table 3.5 has been constructed to guide the reader throughout the rest of this chapter to understand the movements of students between these groups throughout the study. The sociogram nominations have been summarised within brackets prior to each student’s name, by collating the peer nominations for each round of Tribes. The reader can compare the changes in students’ social status, which are partly reflected in the total number of preferences (in brackets) given to each student by their peers.
Table 3.5
Summary of Tribes leaders and sociograms for Tribes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Categories</th>
<th>GROUP 1 (Positive influence on the community)</th>
<th>GROUP 2 (Negative influence on the community)</th>
<th>GROUP 3 (No peer nominations. Minimal social influence amongst peers)</th>
<th>GROUP 4 (No peer nominations. Minimum social influence amongst peers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tribes 0ne</td>
<td>(7) Eileen Phuc</td>
<td>(4) Angela Margaret</td>
<td>(4) Jason, John Michael</td>
<td>Wendy Steven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) Angela Margaret</td>
<td>(3) John Michael</td>
<td>(3) John Michael, Denis Lindsay</td>
<td>Steven, Audrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Jack Henry Peter</td>
<td>(1) Damon</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Christine Karen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Christian (new boy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 students</td>
<td>Joey Claire, Susan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nathan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ann, Helen, Mary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Damon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dean joined the class Week 4. The teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Justin left the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chose him as a Tribe leader.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>during Week 4 Term 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribes Two</td>
<td>(6) Eileen</td>
<td>(6) Daren</td>
<td>(4) John, Denis</td>
<td>Huong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>(3) Lindsay Peter</td>
<td>(4) Michael, Denis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6) Susan</td>
<td>(1) John</td>
<td></td>
<td>Steven, Audrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5) Henry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 students</td>
<td>Susan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Henry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(new boy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jack, Angela Claire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nathan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ann, Margaret</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Damon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Catherine, Judy, Phuc</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Henry, Peter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Susan, Phuc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phuc, Claire, Helen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mary, Jack</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31 students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christian was an emotionally disturbed child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>who was in the class for 4 Weeks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tribes Three</td>
<td>(12) Eileen</td>
<td>(4) Daren, Michael</td>
<td>Steven, John</td>
<td>Huong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6) Henry</td>
<td>(2) Jason, Michael</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5) Susan</td>
<td>(2) Damon, Lindsay</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(4) Angela</td>
<td>(1) Damon</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(3) Christine, Karen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Dean, Phuc, Claire, Helen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Catherine, Judy, Phuc, Mary, Jack</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribe Four</td>
<td>(9) Dean</td>
<td>(7) Daren</td>
<td>Jason, Steven</td>
<td>Judy, Margaret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8) Eileen, Susan</td>
<td>(6) Peter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5) Henry, Angela</td>
<td>(4) Michael</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) Phuc, Huong</td>
<td>(3) John, Jack</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Ann, Karen</td>
<td>(2) Denis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Christine, Claire, Helen, Margaret</td>
<td>(1) Damon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Catherine, Judy, Phuc, Mary, Jack</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tribes Five</td>
<td>(9) Eileen</td>
<td>(9) Daren</td>
<td>Audrey, Steven</td>
<td>Catherine, Claire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8) Henry</td>
<td>(8) Peter</td>
<td></td>
<td>Huong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7) Dean</td>
<td>(7) Denis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6) Susan</td>
<td>(6) Michael</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) Phuc, Huong</td>
<td>(5) Michael</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Wendy, Ann, Helen, Mary, Jack</td>
<td>(4) Michael</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31 students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Juliet joined the</td>
<td>(2) Joey, Lindsay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class Week 7, Term</td>
<td>(1) Christine, Judy, Phuc, Mary, Jack</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 and left Week 3,</td>
<td>(1) Karen, Angela, Margaret, Nathan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term 4).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Allard et al., (1995).

Note. Students whose names appear in bold were Tribal leaders.
It is noticeable, but not surprising, that peers mainly voted their leaders from Groups 1 and 2, as both groups had ‘popular’ students. However, the researcher was challenged to engage Group 2 to bond in a positive way to other students.

Eileen, Dean, Henry and Susan (from Group 1) maintained their high social status all year. However, Judy, Catherine and Claire (from Group 4) had their potential leadership qualities recognised by their peers later in the year, even though they did not have peer nominations in the sociograms at the time. Groups 3 and 4 had minimal social influence with their peers, with Group 3 being actively rejected by their peers, when they were excluded from group and partner activities, by not being chosen. Although Group 4 students were not selected by their peers in the sociograms, they remained on the fringes of various groups and were not actively rejected by their peers.

The following observations revealed the styles of leadership for Eileen and Helen, who were ‘collaborative’, and for Dean and Daren who were ‘autocratic’, as they organised the seating for the first Tribes.

**Eileen** was a popular, mature year 5 girl, who negotiated with her group and took the most time to get the seating according to the preferences of the Tribe members. There were no arguments, just negotiation. **Dean**, a popular year 4 boy, new to the class, took a more autocratic approach and told each person where to sit. He did not receive any opposition, just a sad expression on Nathan and Damon’s faces, who wanted to sit together. **Daren**, another popular year 5 boy, firstly organised the students he perceived would misbehave by placing himself in between Denis and Steven who were also his friends. Peter wanted to sit next to Denis but he did not get a say. The other leader **Angela** was absent so **Helen**, a year 5 girl, took over and she negotiated as Eileen had done so the group members were satisfied with the outcome. However, she did make sure Huong, Susan and Phuc were accommodated first because they wanted to share their equipment. (TOB, 4.3.04)
Based on classroom observations and knowledge of the students’ social capabilities the researcher chose the first four leaders for Tribes 1. From Tribes 2 onwards, peers elected their leaders (Tribes 2, 3, 4 & 5) and vice leaders (Tribes 4 & 5). In the majority of instances, this selection process provided the basis for leaders’ authority and influence within their groups to support the norms of the classroom. The next four sections will highlight how each Tribal leader (Tribes 1 – 4) affected the social networks that were developing, using diagram to illustrate the most important social connections that impacted on the classroom community. As a result, many shy and unassertive students increased their confidence and ability to develop positive relationships with their peers.

### 3.2.1 Tribes 1 leadership

Daren displayed antisocial behaviour in former years and held a high social status with his peers, including two friends Michael and Denis, who both continued their antisocial behaviours in 2004 (BMIS, 2003 & 2004; TOB, 2004; Sociogram 1). The researcher’s strategy of providing the opportunity for Daren to be one of the first Tribal leaders was to encourage prosocial behaviour.

Leadership for Daren gave him a position of trust and status. I was surprised to observe Daren’s autocratic style with his peers, which was not challenged when he decided where his peers would sit in the Tribe. He took control and placed himself between Denis and Daren to also keep Peter and Daren apart, who had both displayed disruptive behaviours in class. I could not have chosen a better leader to manage Denis, Daren and Peter. (TOB, Weeks 1-4)

Daren experienced positive feedback from his Tribe for seven weeks, and became an increasingly positive influence within the classroom community during the remainder of the study. However, when Daren’s peers voted him as leader in subsequent Tribes he declined and stated that it was too challenging for him. It could
be argued that Daren felt too vulnerable in a leadership position and risked losing the friendships of Michael and Denis. However, Daren was connected socially to all the boys in the class who displayed uncooperative behaviours. In 2004 he made a new friend, Lindsay, who also had a similar reputation of displaying antisocial behaviours (TOB & BMIS, 2004). Lindsay and Daren both made a new friend, Dean and all three boys established a strong positive influence on the dynamics of all the boys’ relationships, supported by the positive leadership of Eileen. Figure 3.2 (see below) shows the social connections of all leaders with Eileen having a major influence on all relationships with both genders during Tribes 1 and for the rest of the study.

![Graph showing social connections](image)

Figure 3.2
*Leadership: social connections Tribes 1*
3.2.2 Tribes 2 leadership

During Tribes 2 the researcher’s earlier observations, that only four students had the required social skills to lead their peers, was reinforced (TOB, Term 2). Tribes 2 could be described as a period during which the first leaders supported ‘peer selected’ leaders, whom the researcher identified as shy or unassertive students. For example, even though Lindsay was the elected leader, he allowed Eileen to do the ‘leading’ for him but he still worked diligently with Daren, with whom he had formed a new friendship. With their positive attitude towards their work, which was maintained for the remainder of the year, the two boys provided excellent role models for the other boys in the class. During Tribes 2 Eileen, Daren and Lindsay, who were all high status students, became closer friends and the researcher perceived these friendships alleviated tensions between the genders. As a result, more students chose to work cooperatively in mixed gender groups (TOB, 2004).

Both Susan and Henry were shy and unassertive students who lead their Tribes by example and widened their peers’ perception of leadership, beyond being a confident person to be ‘in charge’. Susan and Henry also provided opportunities for their peers to support them in their role, as in the case of Helen (TOB, Term 2). Susan’s friend, Helen, was assertive and assisted Susan to lead their Tribe, while Helen had the opportunity to demonstrate she was caring, consistent and patient with Jason, whose behaviours were challenging the cohesion of their Tribe. Helen’s leadership potential was realised at later date when her peers voted her to be a leader (Tribes 4 - Term 3). Henry also led his Tribe by example but he did not like conflict and was unsure how to deal with it. He was an excellent student, but preferred to follow rather than lead. Henry’s parents confided that Henry was quiet, conscientious and a little shy and
experienced difficulties of being a leader, with students who were ‘mean to each other’ (TOB, Term 2). His peers also voted Henry for a leadership role in Tribes 4 and 5 again, as his leadership style was caring and democratic.

Margaret received the same number of votes as Jack for leadership in her Tribe and finally won the position. However, the four boys in the Tribe were never fully supportive of Margaret as leader. Angela, who had been a leader herself Tribes 1, now supported Margaret in their Tribe. This resulted in the two girls forming a lasting friendship for the rest of the year (TOB, Term 1). Figure 3.3 (see below) summarises the main social connections developed in each Tribe for three high status students, Lindsay, Daren and Eileen, who were in one Tribe together; Helen and Susan; Henry, Michael and Denis; and Margaret who was also a high status student, supported by Angela.

Figure 3.3
Leadership: social connections Tribes 2
3.2.3 **Tribes 3 leadership**

Each new round of Tribes created new group dynamics and new challenges for relationships, which became significant to creating better communication and friendships skills. However, the opportunities also presented challenges for positive group cohesion because students who cooperated in one Tribe did not necessarily display similar behaviours in their next Tribe. Cooperation did not follow a linear process because the new Tribes created new contexts and opportunities for new partnerships. Lindsay was one such student who had been in two consecutive Tribes where there was a high level of cooperation within the group dynamics. Lindsay was now faced with the option of behaving in an antisocial and disruptive manner with Daren (Lindsay’s new friend this year) and Jack (who wanted to be Daren’s friend), or risk being ostracised by his new Tribe. He chose to align himself with Daren. Jack was a year younger than Daren and Lindsay but his schoolwork demonstrated that he was a high achiever. In previous Tribes, both Daren and Lindsay took pride in their work and produced high standards (TOB, Term1 & 2). The researcher believed Daren and Lindsay would support Jack’s leadership, as they had voted for him. However, on several occasions during this round of Tribes Jack stated he did not want to be the leader anymore because it was too challenging and he did not enjoy it (TOB, Term 2). Jack did not get the support he needed from Daren and Lindsay, who had both been leaders.

Lindsay recognised that it was difficult for him to maintain his friendship with Daren and behave cooperatively in this Tribe. He was not assertive and did not ignore Daren’s disruptive behaviours but had become upset that his cooperative reputation...
was at risk. Lindsay wrote in his reflection log that he needed to be placed in his next Tribe away from Daren.

Lindsay was aware of what was happening and took responsibility to make changes for Tribes 4 and asked to go into Dean’s Tribe for the next tribe, ‘to keep him out of trouble’ (Lindsay’s words). (SRL, 7.7.04 & TOB, Term 2)

Figure 3.4 (see below) illustrates the leaders chosen for this third round of Tribes, who were mainly shy and unassertive students, such as Ann, Claire and Phuc. The success of their leadership depended on the support they gained from the rest of the Tribe to assist them to lead. In contrast to Jack’s leadership, the other three Tribes supported Ann, Claire and Phuc.

Figure 3.4

Leadership: social connections Tribes 3

Jack’s behaviour was immature and he did not gain the respect of Daren and Lindsay, who did not cooperate with him nor support his leadership.

Eileen supported Ann to lead. Ann was very shy but gained confidence through the process and widened her social group beyond her one established friend.

Claire had expressed concerns about friendships. Her peers selected her for Tribes 1, 2, 3 & 4 but not for Tribes 5. Her peers selected her for leadership roles in Tribes 3 & 5. She was a great role model, a caring and diligent student.

Even though Phuc started the year as Dean’s best friend, he did not gain peer selection for Tribes 2. Leadership in Tribes 3 raised his status that he remained popular for the rest of the year.
By Tribes 3, it became more important for each Tribe to support their leaders as these students were not confident, as in Ann’s case that follows.

Ann was extremely shy and the leadership role gave her self-confidence, which grew as the year progressed. This was evidenced in the larger group of friends she made. Ann’s mother commented on how leadership had changed her daughter. She now wanted to invite many different girls home to play. In previous years Ann had only played with her twin brother and one girlfriend she had made in pre-primary who was also a quiet and shy person. (TOB, Term 2)

During Tribes 3 Eileen was now supporting another new friend Ann, when Ann was voted leader. Eileen’s friends became Ann’s friends. At this point however, Eileen’s popularity was growing to such an extent that it created problems for her existing friendships because, friends such as Angela and Margaret, wanted her as an exclusive friend.

Angela and Margaret argued over having Eileen sit next to them. Both girls admitted they were jealous and wanted Eileen to themselves. They compromised and took turns sitting next to Eileen on a weekly basis. (TOB, Term 2)

Claire confided to the researcher at the beginning of the year that she did not make friends easily and did not know why (TOB, Term 1 Week1). Claire was a loner, and was not chosen by her peers in the sociograms. She led ‘by example’ and slowly gained her peers’ respect. As indicated in the following extracts from Wendy, Claire and Phuc’s interviews, the Tribes process and the leadership roles appeared to increase these students’ confidence and ability to make friends.

I didn’t know Lindsay and Denis and now I talk to them everyday. At the end of the year I want to say thankyou to you because you taught the whole class how to be friends. I am vice leader now and I feel I have a responsibility to them as they voted for me. I get to help people. (SI, Claire, 10.11.04)

It has been pretty hard because you’re sitting next to different people and you don’t know how they will treat you. Some are nice and some are bad. I made new friends and that was good. I made more friends than last year. I have
been leader and I liked it. I got to do jobs and tell people what to do. (SI, Phuc, 9.11.04)

3.2.4 Tribes 4 leadership

Figure 3.5 summarises, diagrammatically, some of the main issues for Tribes 4 after Joey suggested additional vice leadership roles, so more students could have the experience and responsibility of leadership.

Figure 3.5  
Leadership: social connections Tribes 4

To create smaller groups and the opportunity for more leaders, in Term 3 all students agreed to a change in group size from eight to six students per Tribe (TOB, 1.7.04). At this point in Term 3 the level of cooperation in the class had increased for the majority of the students. In addition the researcher perceived more students’ voices were being heard during discussions within class meetings and Tribes. However,
there were many challenges for the leaders in Tribes 4, as the process of creating new
groups created new dynamics. Michael and Denis were constantly in trouble in the
playground and Michael seemed to become more defiant when he was withdrawn
from the playground for bullying and teasing Steven, Nathan and Damon. The
researcher was very conscious of maintaining positive relationships with Michael
and Denis and discussed the playground situation with them. Michael stated that he
wanted to be in a Tribe consisting exclusively of boys and he would cooperate so the
researcher formed such a Tribe. However, this Tribe was the most disruptive group
in the class and created many social problems. Many of the boys who had previously
demonstrated cooperative behaviour in other Tribes regressed to behaving
immaturely, which was encouraged by Daren’s ineffective leadership.

Michael cooperated for the first 4 weeks but then regressed. The other boys
supported his misbehaviour by laughing with him and sometimes joining in.
Daren was voted leader for a second time with Henry as vice leader. The
negative influence of Michael was a more powerful force for Daren than his
desire to lead his Tribe to be cooperative. Henry became a lone member, who
refused to join in their antisocial behaviour but was still accepted by the other
five boys. Daren was not prepared to take a stand against Michael and one
could argue he did not want to lose face with his other friends, Lindsay and
Denis who were in another Tribe. (TOB, Term 3)

Judy and Joey were two Year 4 students who lead their Tribe effectively together.
Dean and Lindsay, two previous leaders, supported Judy and Joey to manage two
potentially difficult students, Denis and Wendy. This Tribe had ongoing problems,
which took the Term to resolve, but Judy’s personal growth is reflected in her
mother’s comments on parent survey 3 (PS 3, Term 3, 2004).

When Judy was a leader she found it more challenging than she anticipated.
She enjoyed the responsibility of organising (collecting) items for the group’s
activities but said that people wouldn’t listen when they were supposed to.
She actually became quite concerned over seating arrangements at one stage
(i.e., to eliminate talking, squabbles). It was interesting to see how she coped
with leadership and it has given her insight into what leaderships entails,
which I think, is a valuable experience in itself. (PS 3, Judy’s mother, November: 2004)

For Tribes 4, Lindsay had selected Dean, a year 4 boy, as his first preference. This proved a mutually beneficial relationship for both boys, as Lindsay was academically capable in Mathematics and English and Dean was a student for whom English was his second language. As illustrated by the card that Lindsay sent to Dean at the end of the year, the two boys became very good friends.

You are a good friend and you’re really funny. You protect your friends from other people and you make lots of friends. We all like you as a friend’ (Lindsay’s card to Dean). (TOB, 6.12.04)

My tacit knowledge of these students allowed different spaces to be created with the changes in Tribes, for lasting personal growth. Lindsay continued to mature and make responsible choices. Twice his peers voted for him to be a leader. He proved to be a responsible and empathetic leader. My observations were reinforced by both deputy principals’ comments to the effect that he had kept out of trouble and they had not seen him at the office, apart from only once this year. His mother provided further verification of the changes in Lindsay when she commented on his great work and how he had ‘kept his nose clean’. (TOB, Term 4)

Helen became the leader of her Tribe because the Tribe members stated that she was ‘organised and a hard worker’ (TOB, 2004). Together the two friends, Helen and Mary, managed the social difficulties of Jason and Steven and gave them lots of encouragement when they were cooperative. Helen changed her behaviour from being abrasive towards other students to becoming a respected leader who showed maturity in her management of her Tribe, as reflected in Helen’s reflection log. Helen appeared to have learned the challenges of leadership and understand that she needed to monitor her own language and actions to be an effective leader.

Being a leader was good and bad. I was pleased people actually chose me but it’s a big responsibility. If someone mucks around you can’t say, ‘Shut up!’ you have to calm them down and ask them to be quiet. Jason and Steven took turns at being good and bad. (SRL, Helen, 8.11.04)
3.2.5 Tribes 5

The final Tribes experience was the culmination of many opportunities for new contexts and new partnerships to foster positive relationships with peers. Spaces were created for students to be challenged in their development of social skills. During this round of Tribes, all groups operated cooperatively with few social problems, except for Jason and Denis, who took most of the year to understand the impact of their actions on their peers. The next section ‘reflections on leadership’ that follows incorporates comments about Tribes 5 at the end of the study, when students were interviewed about their perceptions of the Tribes experience.

3.2.6 Reflections on leadership

Leaders such as Judy had effective leadership skills and demonstrated a caring personality, but they were not selected by their peers for a tribe placement.

Judy would approach me when she was a leader to discuss her concerns about her Tribe. One could argue that her peers were astute enough to recognise her leadership qualities, which supported my view that the students did not vote leaders solely on a friendship basis, but based on leadership criteria. (TOB, Term 3)

This was an interesting observation as every Tribe member had at least one of their three preferences from the sociogram results, so they had the opportunity to select friends for leaders, as opposed to ‘rejected’ or ‘neglected’ students such as Judy, Catherine, Claire, John and Damon. As part of the process students negotiated criteria for effective leadership, which were referred to during class meetings throughout the study and the teacher made the following observations.

Once all students had experienced peer leadership during Tribes 1 they negotiated with the researcher the criteria for being an ‘effective leader’,
which were ‘being a good role model, showing respect by listening to everybody’s point of view, staying calm and being fair’. (TOB, 2004)

Some of the features of Goleman’s (2002) triad of emotional intelligence abilities for democratic leaders include collaboration, conflict management and influence, as well as the ability to be a great listener. These qualities assist leaders to connect with their teams and listen to feedback.

Even if a leader has a strong vision, the democratic style works well to surface ideas about how to implement that vision and generate fresh ideas for generating it. (Goleman, 2002, p. 86)

Goleman (1998) discusses social skills as the other dimension of emotional intelligence and states it is an essential key to effective leadership, which was recognised by the students in this research. Although Jason aspired to be a leader, his peers did not select him because he did not have the appropriate social skills to lead a group (TOB, 28.7.04). As indicated in the parent survey, Jason’s mother deemed her son to have the intellectual capability, as previously stated, but not effective social skills.

I do not consider my child to be mature for his age-he still needs to acquire a few social skills. (PS, 28.7.04)

Jason’s comments towards the end of the year reflect his mother’s perceptions of Jason’s need to develop his social skills and the researcher’s observations throughout the year that he did not usually support his Tribe.

I play the role of talker and put-downer. Being a talker is the easiest because it is interesting. I would like to be the boss. I am trying but they won’t let me. (SRL, 30.11.04)
The students perceived leadership as the opportunity to be responsible, help others and have the experience of being in charge. Angela projected her experiences into a hypothetical situation pertaining to future employment. The following comments provide insights into the challenges of being a leader for Angela and Ann.

I was leader in the first Tribe and I felt I could be responsible and help people to get along with each other. I learnt not to be so bossy. When I grow up and get a job and if my boss goes away I know what to do because I have been a leader and I have learnt so much. (TOB, 9.11.04, Angela)

I like being a leader. I have been happy because I have a lot of friends. Some I don’t like but I still get along with them. (TOB, 9.11.04, Ann)

Some of the best leaders are those who work behind the scenes to accomplish tasks as was evidenced when shy and quiet students such as Judy, Henry, Eileen and Mary took on leadership roles and managed to keep their Tribe focused on group goals by setting a positive example. The comments by Helen and Claire’s parents illustrated the challenges of leadership when students were dealing with their peers.

Helen has been a leader and it caused many discussions between us on how to show leadership and be liked at the same time. (PS 3, Helen’s mother, November: 2004)

Claire has an ability to become a good leader but probably needs to be taught some leadership qualities. E.g., not making a decision based on bullies’ opinions, and thinking more about making decisions for the right reasons and their consequences. (PS 3, Claire’s mother, November: 2004)

The parent surveys indicated that many parents viewed leadership skills as worthwhile and supported their children’s’ endeavours. The leadership styles of the leaders or their level of popularity were less important than their ability to be a good role model. Uncooperative students were spread across all Tribes and being a good role model meant neither initiating silly or unkind behaviour nor condoning it by ignoring it or joining in. The parent surveys provided a useful tool to make
Even though the majority of the surveys expressed similar sentiments to Helen’s mother, some students were still not making such progress within their social skills development. Their issues became the focus for Term 4 and Tribes 5, to mediate friendships for all students.

### 3.3 Mediating friendships

The importance of friendships is developmentally significant in childhood and adolescence because friends are used daily as cognitive and social resources (Hartup, 1996; Styles, 2004). The three criteria used by Hartup to discuss friendships and their development include: the distinctions between having friends and not having friends; the identity of the child’s friend; and the quality of the friendship. All three criteria
have been discussed to some degree throughout this chapter to establish the quality of interpersonal relationships

Supportive relationships between socially skilled individuals appear to be developmental advantages, whereas coercive and conflict-ridden relationships are developmental disadvantages, especially among antisocial children. (Hartup, 1996:10)

After almost one year’s focus on building positive relationships the researcher wanted to establish which elements the students considered were important for a friend. The responses from 30 students’ interviews to the question, ‘What is a friend?’ were coded and categorised (TOB, 8\textsuperscript{th}, 9\textsuperscript{th} & 10\textsuperscript{th} Nov. 2004). Table 3.6 (see p.121) summarises the range of descriptors students used to define their understandings of friendship. It is interesting to note that all student responses appear to personalise the understanding of friendship by focussing on the qualities of a friend. The most popular qualities revolved around a theme of nurturing, as indicated by verbs and adjectives such as ‘considerate, nice and cares for you’. When the students were questioned as to the reason ‘accepts you’ was only mentioned once they agreed that it was implicit in the most popular qualities already mentioned in the other elements.
### Summary of students’ concept of friendship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT COMMENTS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF STUDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cares for you or helps you</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerate, nice, kind or likes you</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes you, plays with you and has fun</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is not mean or nasty or fights with you</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest or trustworthy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is funny or has a sense of humour</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorts out fights so everyone's happy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tells you their secrets</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not spread rumours or tell lies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can rely on them</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepts you</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst one could argue that the values of a caring culture were well established; some students remained marginalised. The researcher reflected on the situation to understand how to facilitate group work to address the issues of exclusion.

Discriminatory behaviours, such as the use of body language or words by students to their peers, with intention of excluding them, were challenging for the researcher to address. However, these understandings are socially constructed and it was important to make connections with student understandings. ‘Y charts’ were used again to describe in student language the terms ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’. The students examined their understanding of these concepts and their role was in alienating other students from their group. The next section describes particular groups called ‘cliques’ as these understandings were applied to the groups in the classroom.
3.3.1 Understanding cliques

It can be argued with respect to the present study that using Tribes in the classroom provided the opportunities for all students to develop healthy relationships and break down unnecessary barriers. The focus on ‘friendships’ in Term 4 for class meetings provided the catalyst to support these changes. Students were realising how leaders had supported them, as evidenced in the increase in the social networks in the classroom and the wider friendship groups that developed.

Wiseman (2002) describes cliques as groups that exclude others to maintain their social status. They are often associated with girls but can also include boys. The experiences students have in their cliques become the basis for their future interactions with other students. They learn about friendship, support, understanding, power and trust. The feedback students receive from their peers influences beliefs and understandings about what is required to have friends. Wiseman (2002) discusses a range of issues for helping girls survive cliques, gossip and boyfriends in adolescence. Friendships are viewed as both the key to surviving adolescence and the greatest threat to happiness and well-being.

3.3.2 The importance of contingency friendships

Table 3.7 (see p. 123) has been constructed by again adapting the criteria of Allard et al., (1995) of teacher attention and time but also including the criterion of leadership, so comparisons can be made to Table 3.2 (see p. 84), which was constructed at the beginning of the study. The number of students suitable for leadership roles has increased from four to ten students, with a parallel increase in
students, who are independent and cooperative learners. The students with ‘L’ after their name are identified by the researcher as independent students who have proven leadership skills in this study. All data from Terms 1, 2, 3 and 4 have been collated to reposition the students into four new groups to discuss the last theme of ‘friendship’. The students whose names are highlighted in Group 4 were identified as excluded to some degree by their peers.

Table 3.7
Class profile two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM 4, WEEK 1</th>
<th>GROUP 1</th>
<th>GROUP 2</th>
<th>GROUP 3</th>
<th>GROUP 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for Group</td>
<td>• Academically able&lt;br&gt;• Independent students&lt;br&gt;• Leaders</td>
<td>• Popular (Not always independent students)&lt;br&gt;• Leaders</td>
<td>• Middle of the road&lt;br&gt;• Followers</td>
<td>• Social&lt;br&gt;• Learning&lt;br&gt;• Behaviour problems&lt;br&gt;• Unpopular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students (30)</td>
<td>Eileen-L&lt;br&gt;Helen -L&lt;br&gt;Henry-L&lt;br&gt;Judy-L&lt;br&gt;Huong -L&lt;br&gt;Angela-L&lt;br&gt;Claire-L&lt;br&gt;Ann-L&lt;br&gt;Susan-L&lt;br&gt;Dean-L&lt;br&gt;Mary&lt;br&gt;Jack Lindsay&lt;br&gt;Joey Margaret</td>
<td>Peter&lt;br&gt;Phuc&lt;br&gt;Daren&lt;br&gt;Michael&lt;br&gt;Denis</td>
<td>Christine&lt;br&gt;Catherine&lt;br&gt;Karen&lt;br&gt;Wendy&lt;br&gt;Audrey</td>
<td>Jason&lt;br&gt;Steven&lt;br&gt;Damon&lt;br&gt;Nathan&lt;br&gt;John&lt;br&gt; (This group of students were still excluded by their peers to some degree)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Allard et al., 1995.

Michael moved from Group 4 to Group 2 as the bullying had stopped (TOB, Term 3 & Term 4). Wendy and Audrey moved from Group 4 to Group 3, due to an improvement in their ability to get along with other students. Lindsay’s reflections on his relationships with Wendy initially indicate his frustrations with her behaviour, as in the following quotes from his reflection log.
She makes burping noises and I can’t do my work. She sucks her hair. (SRL, 4.3.04, Lindsay)

I feel miserable and angry because she is still annoying. She eats her hair and makes stupid noises on purpose to annoy me. (SRL, 11.3.04, Lindsay)

Lindsay empathised with Wendy and tried to understand her as indicated in the following extract his interview.

In the first two Tribes with Wendy we didn’t get along Tribes 1 and 2, and then in Tribes 4 we got along. She was mean to everyone in the group and she didn’t care if people were mean to her. She’s exactly like my mum. If you’re mean to her she’s mean right back. I knew what she was like and it was easier to get along. We talked more in the fourth Tribe and that helped me understand her better. Wendy changed because at first she had no friends. Then she made some because people started to know her. That made her a nicer person. (SI, Lindsay, 10.11.04)

As Lindsay learned to cope with his mother’s behaviour he was able to accept and appreciate differences amongst his peers and recognise Wendy’s efforts to change. Wendy’s interview revealed insights that Lindsay had already made, in the fact that Wendy did not have friends at the start of the year but learned to get to know people better.

Being in Tribes has helped me to get to know people better. I didn’t know most people at the start of the year. I am a friend with all the year 4’s and I have other friends in other classes. Being a leader was hard. The boys had no self-control and it didn’t change when they moved seats. (SI, Wendy, 8.11.05)

By the end of the study, the number of students that moved into Group 1 increased from six to fifteen students. The number of students with proven leadership qualities increased from four to ten students (TOB, 2004; PS, 2004; Critical friend’s verbal and written comments; Sociograms 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5). The results reflect an increase in the number of socially adept students who developed both autonomy and the ability to get along with other students across the whole class. The more socially adept
students also have contingency friends to cater for the situation when their special
friend is absent from school or when their friend offends them or wants their ‘own
space’. This was a protective factor or a defence mechanism that Steven did not
have. When Denis or Michael was absent, Steven was alone, as he did not have
contingency friends. When Denis and Michael were at school, Steven was prepared
to endure inappropriate behaviours to be accepted by them, as illustrated in the
following example.

Steven had his head buried in the sandpit by his ‘friends’ Denis and Michael.
The other boys laughed (Daren and Lindsay). Steven said he asked them to
do it. His face was very serious and he looked on the verge of tears. Steven
was trying to connect with these students by protecting them. The bullying
continued in this overt fashion, which resulted in adult intervention to stop it.
This child’s desperate attempts for acceptance were at too high a personal
cost. He was losing the respect of other peers and in the long Term it was
doing too much personal damage. (TOB & BMIS, 11.2.04)

It could be argued that Steven’s acceptance of Denis and Michael’s cruel behaviours
reflected deeper issues of Steven’s low self-esteem and Denis and Michael’s lack of
respect for him. Situations such as the ‘sandpit’ incident raise repeated issues related
to acceptable boundaries for behaviours between ‘friends’. Davies (1982; 70) states
children have a variety of frames of references for what a friend is; “the playing, the
fighting, the making and breaking of friendships are necessary ingredients for the
development and maintenance of the children’s shared world”. Up to seven years of
age friendships are a means to have fun and not taken too seriously by students. They
are fluid and ever changing. Between eight to twelve years of age, issues of inclusion
become vital as stable friendships start to emerge. Children also begin to compare
behaviour across individuals and across time. This information determines the social
status of the child and the group to which they may belong. Cooperation is seen as
important and being able to demonstrate self-regulatory behaviour (calming down).
As trust was built between students, there was little tolerance for those students who bullied other students. The practice of not tolerating bullying in the classroom was also reflected in Bushlands’ behaviour policy. Some students chose to use their reflection logs if they were uncomfortable raising the issues of bullying in front of the class. Steven was one such ‘low status’ child who endured repeated bouts of bullying and verbal abuse from Denis and yet Steven would defend him and say, ‘I asked him to do it’ or ‘I like it’. It could be argued that Steven’s diary entry revealed a wounded child with a low self-esteem.

Denis has bullied me because he says I am a monkey because I have pointy ears. (SRL, 19.2.04)

This upset Steven so much that he asked his mum to shave his facial hair on the side of his face. (TOB, 20.2.04)

I am feeling bad today because Denis and Michael don’t believe that I am making up my own stories but I am. I don’t think Denis will tease me anymore because my mum cut some of my side burns off. (SRL, 26.2.04)

Steven had asserted Denis was his friend in several diary entries at the same time he was being ignored, teased and bullied by him on 5.2.04, 12.2.04, 19.2.04, 11.3.04 and 1.4.04. (SRL & TOB)

Steven wrote he was happy because he was not being teased. (SRL, 11.3.04)

On the other hand Denis wrote, ‘Steven keeps talking and no one listens to him’. (SRL, 9.4.04)

The same week Steven had complained his group did not respect him because no one cared what he thought. This reduced him to tears. (TOB, 8.4.04)

The interviews with students indicate the complex nature of their developing understandings about friendship. They also illustrate the complex nature of bullying and the dynamics of friendship. The researcher believed there were elements in this relationship that were destructive for both Denis and Steven, but more so for Steven. Issues of trust and low self esteem permeate the underlying harassment of Steven. Steven did not have the courage to be assertive when he was bullied and remained a
target of bullying by other boys for most of the year. Denis did not make any positive changes in his attitude and behaviour towards Steven until the end of the year.

3.3.3 The final outcomes of Tribes

Using Tribes (Gibbs, 2001) provided a prosocial context to develop inclusion for all students and the opportunity to change student perceptions about peers who were excluded socially. This shift in perceptions about Jason, Michael and Jordan during their cooperative periods was supported by data gathered from student reflection logs and teacher observations (TOB, 2004 & SRL, 2004), which indicated that these students received positive feedback from their peers. However, Damon and Nathan remained on the fringes of groups and were rarely chosen by peers as a partner (TOB, 2004). Even though the following extract from Nathan’s interview sounds very positive, the teacher had observed Nathan did not have many friends and Dean never chose him as a partner for activities.

Tribes has helped me to make new friends such as Dean because he talks to me. Damon is my friend too. I was vice leader and it was fun because you got to make decisions when the leader was away. (SI, Nathan, 9.11.04)

It could be argued from Damon’s interview that although he was still experiencing social difficulties he perceived Tribes and a leadership role would help him to make friends and feel included. Phuc and Huong were kind to Damon, but they did not choose Damon to be included in any activities, when they were given the option.

I have made new friends but Phuc and Huong they talk a lot and it’s boring when I have to listen to them. I talk with Karen and Christine about our work. I am getting on with them but I don’t like John, Phuc, Huong and Catherine. I want to be vice leader with Karen as a leader so when she is away I could be a leader so people will like me more. I feel included because I get a turn and talk up more. (SI, Damon, 9.11.04)
It was important to understand the social positioning between students and the spaces created when new Tribes were formed. The process of Tribes did not address the asymmetrical power relations that developed and the students who were not included, because they did not understand the tacit rules of friendship. The use of sociograms provided some of this data. Negative nominations were used only once at the request of the students. The teacher wanted a focus on the positive aspects of the students’ relationships and the development of conflict resolution skills, so negative nominations were not encouraged. The core shared value of ‘mutual respect’ was revisited and the students wrote about their values in their friendships. The most important values were respect, honesty and trust, caring and loyalty in that order (TOB, Class discussion, 11.11.04). When the class discussed these results, Eileen stated that, “If you have respect for each other all the other values follow”. (Eileen’s SRL/TOB, 11.11.04) The following excerpts from Denis, Lindsay and Eileen’s interviews represent common student themes about using class meetings to learn about friendships, resolving conflict and how to be happy. (TOB, 11.11.04)

I learnt not to argue and be sensible. I listened to other people’s opinions and I learnt that we are all different and how to get along with each other. (SI, Denis, 11.11.04)

I learnt stuff about other people, if they are being left out, and if people are not getting along. When I listened to other people’s problems I started to think for myself and I would sort out my problems. (SI, Lindsay, 10.11.04)

A class without class meetings would not have as many people talking to each other. I think you share your problems and solve them. If John’s group is doing well or not so well you can see what you can do to improve. The teacher gets to talk to us and help us share our problems. Nobody laughs at you. (SI, Eileen, 10.11.04)

In addition, the critical friend, made the following comments after reading the interview transcripts.
Students have developed very sophisticated understandings of friends and how friendship groups work. Leadership skills have developed which have facilitated group work. Some students have developed a PPK, which they have transferred to outside the classroom (playground and home) in order to use their developed skills to solve problems. All students are happy to be at school because it is a safe and supportive environment. There is a huge change in the number of students from class arriving at the office due to playground disagreement. Some students were regular offenders and have recognised the change in themselves by saying that they are rarely in trouble and rarely go to the office. When students are interviewed by the administration they are polite, assertive and honest which allows the problem to be sorted out rapidly. (TOB, 7.12.04, Critical friend)

In the early stages of the process, the data collected focused on the teacher’s role and how it impacted on students’ interpersonal relationships in the classroom. The initial sources of data were based on teacher observations regarding the level of cooperation in the Tribes, the ability of students to listen actively and to show mutual respect for each other in all social situations. Behaviour reports from other sources across the school and from other teachers were also included as data sources during these early stages of the study. The focus shifted to the daily interactions of the students and their level of happiness based on their personal reports in their reflection logs, their verbal reports to the teacher and parental interviews about the social and emotional need of their children.

As the year progressed, concern shifted from the Tribes that were created, to individual students who needed more guidance and support than others to fit into a social group. The teacher needed to identify the critical features that could be revisited or added to the knowledge base of the students to lift the awareness of the issues of exclusion. It became obvious that further intervention would be needed to teach the tacit or unwritten rules of friendship (Elman & Kennedy–Moore, 2003) but this alone would not change the situation. The whole community needed to
understand what was happening and be prepared to look honestly at their part in this process. It was requiring a huge personal investment for some students to shift out of their comfort zone and change to accept prosocial values as the norm of the class. Students such as Jason, Michael and Denis who had been resistant to this notion all year would need to value this change before they took responsibility for it.

The final Tribes 5 process was used to tap into the PPK of the students in each Tribe before whole class discussions were held. This provided a more effective means for the teacher to facilitate the process through an understanding of the perception of the students. Use of all types of discourse practises, reflection logs, small group charts and whole class discussion would create the ‘missing links’ in the frame of reference for these students and the teacher’s understanding of the problem.

The core shared values explored what it meant to be compassionate and linked this to a healthy view of life and personal well-being. Empowering oneself was also about empowering others. Habermas’s work provided insights to these issues. Morrison (2001, p. 216) discusses the ideas of Habermas (1979), who was a social theorist and a philosopher and had a profound influence on education. Habermas’s ideas were to realise a society, which was based on equity and democracy, where all its members could be empowered to change the situation to eradicate inequality. ‘Power’ that denies some their rights and does not promote the principles of social justice for all needs to be challenged. In an educational context Habermas argues that ideology, the values, beliefs, is the means by which powerful groups promote and legitimise their particular-sectoral-interests at the expense of disempowered groups. The values operating in the current research were openly discussed to provide opportunities for
dialogue amongst the students and the teacher. The action research process was designed to expose the operation of vested interests that may be occurring at a conscious or subconscious level, to reveal to students how they may be acting to perpetuate a situation that keeps them or others disempowered. The role of bullies and victims is an exemplar that has been explored in this study. The parent surveys completed each term provided data that students were happy because they had a wider circle of friends. Shy students developed confidence to make new friends and students who were aggressive or who had poor impulse control moderated their behaviour. There were fewer incidences of bullying, with the exception of Jason, as in the following example.

Class meetings were used to discuss these issues in depth. During Term 4 there was a high level of trust and the students told the truth as a matter of course. Jason was the only student experiencing difficulties. He continued to ‘pinch and punch’ other students ‘for the first of the month’ even though he had been asked to stop. A boy from another class then punched him in the stomach. Jason cried and would not accept he had overstepped the boundary too. His focus remained on what was done to him. Jason sat on the beanbags while the rest of the class continued the class meeting. (TOB, 1.12.04)

During class meetings the value of honesty was discussed in an attempt to assist Jason. Angela, Eileen and Helen suggested that Jason could have a buddy each day to help him ‘stay out of trouble’. More than half the class volunteered for this role. As he wiped away his tears, Jason had a smile on his face and was visibly pleased with his fellow students’ willingness to help. He chose Jack as his first buddy and had a happy day. As these students showed compassion and support for Jason to normalise his behaviour, the community accepted Jason’s problem behaviour as their problem.
In this chapter the processes and development of all participants in this study to take responsibility for their words and actions to create positive cohesion in the classroom has been described. The vignettes illustrate the respective journeys of all participants, throughout the emerging themes, that shaped the classroom culture, during the process of using and reflecting on weekly class meetings. There were many surprises and disappointments when students made prosocial choices and other students’ behaviour seemed to regress. Yet there was a growing, positive momentum created throughout the study, which empowered students to make informed choices and experience encouragement from their peers.

The next chapter draws the major conclusions from the interrelated themes into a framework for teacher facilitation of a safe, supportive and democratic classroom. Limitations of this research are discussed and suggestions for future research are given.
Introduction

Values education has become a topical issue in Australian state schools, with claims in the media that ‘parents were abandoning government schools because they had become too values-neutral and too politically correct’ (Gibson, 26.10.04). In response the Department of Education and the WA Council for State Schools stated that Values were already embedded in The Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Council, 1998), which ‘fills the gap’ by legislating that values education will be explicitly taught in all schools. The five core shared values represent a framework that transcends different religious denominations and supports Australia’s multiculturalism and position on ‘Social Justice’ and ‘Equal Opportunities’ policies. Thorpe (2004) states that schools are committed to meeting both the academic and emotional needs of the students. The focus on values education can also be viewed as schools’ commitment to meeting the needs of future citizens by developing positive, productive attitudes that build character and resilience through the development of a sense of social and community responsibility.

In partnership with parents, today’s schools are committed to providing a comprehensive and relevant curriculum but also emotional resilience, life skills and a set of values that will set them up for life. (Thorpe, 2004)

Therefore the importance of teachers understanding their role in developing future citizens, in partnership with parents, requires some understanding of the concept of
resiliency, which is the ability to ‘bounce back from adversity’ (Bernard, 2004; McGrath & Noble, 2003). It is beyond the scope of this research to explore this issue in depth but resiliency has been integrated as a key concept in many educational programs to address issues such as school behaviour, discipline, bullying, violence and substance abuse. There are personal attributes and skills that can be developed to promote being resilient which include developing healthy relationships to increase social competence, being positive and having a sense of purpose and humour, which were integrated throughout this study. McGrath and Noble (2003) argue that the core values which support prosocial behaviour also develop resiliency and these values can be taught at school and integrated into the contemporary curriculum by establishing environmental contexts and processes that are protective. The protective factors include developing quality student relationships, ongoing opportunities for student participation to improve student connectedness and positive expectations (McGrath & Noble, 2003; REDI for the classroom, 2003).

The core prosocial values of honesty, fairness, support, cooperation, acceptance of differences, respect and friendship are considered universal values and are linked to the development of resiliency. (McGrath & Noble, 2003, p. 4)

The current study explored the most effective means of identifying how the teacher could facilitate a classroom community that promoted a shared culture that was consistent with government policies on values education. The sociocultural perspective provides a focus on how meaning is socially and culturally constructed (Rogoff, 1990). The current study provided insights into how sociocultural theory can provide a framework for the teacher, with students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This researcher has adapted De Long and Fahey’s (2000) ‘Elements of Culture’ to delineate the teacher’s role as ‘mediator’ to create a safe,
supportive and democratic classroom (see Figure 4.1 below). Each element of culture, depicted on the left, values, norms and practices, impact on behaviours and social knowledge creation, sharing and use, depicted on the right. The critical relationship of values and behaviours influenced social knowledge that was constructed, based on the Curriculum Council’s (1998) five core shared values. The ‘mediator’s’ role promoted discussion about values such as ‘respect and concern for others and their rights’ to establish the classroom norms of cooperation and collaboration.

Figure 4.1
*Elements of culture to create a safe, supportive and democratic classroom*

*Adapted from De Long and Fahey, 2000.*
The outcomes of this study resulted in creating social knowledge and shared understandings about positive interpersonal relationships, leadership and friendship. This study attempted to make explicit the elements of the culture that were operating as a positive or negative influence to establishing positive interpersonal relationships for all participants.

There are parallels that can be drawn between the research of Millett and Kay (2001) and the current study. The most noticeable results, after teaching philosophy to develop values for year 5 boys (one hour once a week) was the decline in the number of a small group of students who could be categorised as anti-social, racist, and /or less than honest (Millett & Kay, 2001, p. 10). Using weekly class meetings in the current research, one could argue, facilitated the development of positive attitudes in and out of the classroom, and as a result the recorded incidences of misbehaviour and antisocial behaviour reduced significantly. The researcher inferred that the teacher intervention impacted positively on the values held by the students. Both studies support the provision of opportunities for small group discussions, to cater for different learning styles, particularly for shy students who may have found whole class discussions intimidating. Small group discussions naturally evolved when the Tribes discussed their issues before class meetings and decided, through a democratic process, what needed to be discussed at a class level. One of the challenges of the facilitator was to monitor discussions so a few vocal children did not dominate and all views were aired.

The vignettes from the case study elucidate the perspectives of the community, school and classroom progress towards successfully negotiating a safe, supportive
and democratic culture over a school year. At each phase, the findings for the three themes ‘relationships; leadership and friendships’ were framed using data that emerged from the classroom context that was relevant to the development of both positive and negative interpersonal relationships.

4.1 Addressing the research questions

Classroom life establishes a type of community that can be shaped around certain values and class meetings provide the forum for shared conversations to establish and reinforce those values. There are many challenges trying to research values that are so inextricably woven into the fabric of each person’s character and much of which remains implicit. The following two research questions explored these issues.

- What is the role of the teacher in facilitating the process of establishing a collaborative, cooperative and safe classroom environment that encourages positive interpersonal relationships?

- What are the major features of this dynamic process that elucidate how to create a classroom environment that is responsive to the social and emotional well-being of the students and the teacher?

The first question will be discussed under the three themes of ‘relationships, leadership and friendship,’ prior to discussing the second question, with the ‘Frameworks for facilitation’ that have been created to conclude this study. The results of the study demonstrated that the three major themes emerging from the classroom context became the focus of classroom discussions and the critical elements for teacher facilitation. It can be argued that the themes of ‘relationships, leadership and friendship’ are parallel to the three stages of Tribes, ‘inclusion, influence and community’, which were deliberately implemented. However, this research extended this Tribes process, by incorporating two new elements into the
analysis of the life of one classroom over the period of one academic year. Firstly, concerns about specific students’ interpersonal relationships were addressed through the Tribe’s process and the use of weekly class meetings. Secondly, the reflection process mediated both discussion and reflection to negotiate teamwork and personal empowerment. The critical elements of this process have been summarised in the ‘Frameworks for facilitation’ later in this chapter, using the major conclusions from each of the three phases that follows.

**Scaffolding relationships: phase 1**

During phase one, the teacher’s role shifted from initiating the process of setting up Tribes through teambuilding and inclusion activities to actively negotiating roles, acceptable behaviours and values with students for them to take responsibility for building positive relationships. The processes also challenged students to examine their values with the recurring issue of ‘friendship’. The focus of the teacher’s facilitative role changed from whole class issues such as ‘bullying and teasing’, to group issues about ‘leadership’ to finally individual issues about students who may have experienced a feeling of ‘exclusion’ from the classroom community at some level. However, the explicit teaching of social skills to promote collaboration did improve student relationships, which supports the research of Gillies and Ashman (1996). Students did pay attention to the words they used and the non-verbal body language that may hurt other’s feelings. When asked to reflect on their behaviours students came to understand the power of their words and the impact on the classroom community.
As such, the use of student reflection was a powerful tool to assess student understandings of issues and interpersonal relationships. Reflection also provided the tool to integrate new knowledge into existing PPK to assist the process of change. The use of sociograms alone would not have facilitated better placement of students in their Tribes. Triangulation of data from many sources was required. The teacher’s knowledge of the child’s personality and aspirations for new friendships improved the teacher’s ability to create new opportunities for improved relationships.

**Scaffolding leadership: phase 2**

The students’ role shifted from one of dependence on the teacher to solely manage social problems and group work to one of independence and interdependence. Students took personal responsibility for their behaviour and maintaining positive relationships with their peers. Class meetings broadened students’ knowledge base by providing a forum for shared knowledge between peers and the teacher and increased PPK. Student attitudes and values shifted to incorporate new knowledge about inclusion and empowered them to make responsible choices. Creating opportunities for leadership became a motivational factor to normalise other students’ behaviour because they wanted to be chosen by their peers as a leader. The results provided evidence that teaching students specific skills about leadership empowered students to be better role models and develop more self-confidence. This resulted in increased friendships and a harmonious classroom environment.

These findings demonstrate how different research perspectives have been adapted for this study. Hart’s (1992) framework for collaboration has been integrated with the Tribes process (Gibbs, 1995, 2001), to provide the organisational structure of the
classroom. The facilitator’s focus on the social and emotional aspects of the students’ development also assisted in the development of Hart’s conditions for collaboration. The ‘human factor’ became increasingly important to manage the classroom (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001; Gibbs, 2001). At the beginning of the study the students developed respect and concern for each other, which laid the foundation for group work for the remainder of the study. As students realised the potential of leadership to improve their social status as well as develop social skills, they wanted the opportunity to ‘have-a-go’ and mainly enjoyed the additional responsibility.

Adopting a leadership role became a means of students supporting each other, developing deeper friendships and gaining a deeper understanding of the definition of ‘power’. In many cases, to get the job done the students’ definition expanded from ‘being in charge or control’ to being the best role model they could be. With the teacher as a guide in the background, students at this age were willing to experience the challenges of leading a group of students, who have different PPK and values. The teacher’s role as a mediator became superfluous towards the end of the study as students were empowered to lead and empowered others during the process.

The issue of the quality of student relationships was explored in the section on leadership and the final section on friendships. It was beyond the scope of this research to draw on issues about self-efficacy and its impact on relationships, which limited the findings. However, the student examples of language used in the extracts from their journals provided evidence of established and potential friendships, which could be triangulated with the data the teacher had collected, to establish if the friendship was empowering or constraining for the child. The challenges that have been described about the nature of the class and the need to establish psychological
safety and cohesion resulted in the use of extrinsic rewards, to engage the support of students whose behaviour was antisocial. The results demonstrate that students did engage in solving issues for the classroom community with increasing success.

**Scaffolding friendships: phase 3**

The last phase addressed the issue of exclusion and the implicit rules of being a friend and keeping friends. To identify emerging patterns, the final discussion was framed using the preferences the students made in their sociograms throughout the year. This could not have been addressed earlier in the process because trust and inclusion takes time to develop. Many of the students did not know each other at the beginning of the year, as they came from eight different classes the previous year. There were students who remained ‘rejected’ or ‘neglected’ by their peers and yet the assistance of the whole community did result in positive changes for these students. Moving groups created opportunities for friendships but ultimately some students needed to examine their behaviours to help themselves. At each stage, the class meetings were an ‘awareness lifting’ process to make explicit what may be implicit and this was one means of scaffolding students’ understandings about the quality of their relationships. It was also a means to empower students to make more informed choices and set their personal boundaries for acceptable and unacceptable behaviours.

The issue of inclusion for all students challenged the researcher to go beyond a surface level of mutual respect to engaging the community to take responsibility for individual actions that may exclude others. Hartup (1996) states that much research about friendships and their developmental significance focuses on whether or not a
child has a friend, but does not reveal who the friends are and the quality of those friendships in relation to their social group and status. This researcher attempted to address these issues by using sociograms, observations as well as verbal and written information supplied by the students and their parents, to identify the friendship groups, the social status of the students and the subsequent influence on the peer group. The analysis of these results focuses on the social status of the child and whether the behaviour was prosocial or antisocial to the classroom tone. Rogoff (1990) discusses the importance of peer relationships in relation to different levels of status and expertise that are more readily available between peers than adults. Peers do spend more time with their peers during the day as opposed to the teacher so one could argue that they are more accessible than adults. Peer interaction provides the opportunity to practice role relations as well as observe more skilled peers at work.

**Major conclusions for research question one**

This researcher also reflected on the final questions that Kelly and Green (1998, p. 145) raised in their work. What counts as knowing and knowledge, to and with whom, under what conditions, for what purpose, and with what outcomes? The meanings the students bring to the classroom, their knowing and knowledge is the starting point for establishing a classroom culture based on the core shared values that the Curriculum Council (1998) have stated are worth knowing.

What new understandings did this research reveal about the factors that support or constrain the development of a community of learners who value cooperation and collaboration? Students will find a way to belong to a group and gain attention whether it is positive or negative. Supporting a philosophy that negotiates with all
participants about creating the conditions that meets everyone’s needs conveys to students that the facilitator has everybody’s best interests at heart. Gradually students experience the intrinsic motivation that comes from sharing and caring for each other which becomes the motivating factor to adopt the classroom norms based on mutual respect. This study extended Hart’s (1992) nine conditions, to reflect the social and emotional needs of the students and how this impacted on group processes. Each new round of Tribes created new zones of possibilities, changing social contexts with dynamic positive and negative effects on the classroom community. As a result, there were fewer social problems and more situations where peers negotiated directly with peers, with no mediation from the teacher. Students were engaging in active citizenship, which is the ultimate goal of education (Curriculum Council, 1998).

What were the most effective reflective tools to facilitate change from knowledge ‘out there’ to be assimilated into the PPK of the students in this classroom? Which core shared values were the most important to actively scaffold, model and teach? To establish common understandings and a whole community approach to problem solving the most effective tools were the class meetings, ‘Y-charts’ and teacher and student reflection. Conversations were conducted with students about their social, academic and gender positioning so that all students could learn more productively even within unequal power relations. New learning models promoted student-centred learning and increased peer-learning as opposed to the outmoded teacher-centred models where students are passive learners.

Finally, because we believe peer-learning interactions do represent an important advance over transmissions or otherwise passive learning models, we need to generate and study ways that teachers and researchers might restructure and facilitate peer-learning groups. (Moje & Shepardson, 1998, p. 233)
The process of Tribes itself became a strategic tool because as a sense of community was established, individuals began to examine their perspectives and made prosocial choices. It was beyond the scope of this study to look at all the possible variables that influenced each student in the class to be predisposed to cooperate or not cooperate. It is acknowledged that variables from the student’s family of origin and the wider community also impacted on attitudes and values.

Group processes, links to sociocultural theory, the choice of the third core shared value of ‘Respect and concern for others and their rights’ (Curriculum Council, 1998), were reflected through the tribal agreement of ‘mutual respect’, was deliberate. Seven detailed descriptors elaborate how this value can be promoted using key words such as compassion, care, equality, respect, open learning environment, individual differences, cooperation and conflict resolution and family and home environment (Curriculum Council, 1998). These concepts and values complemented the purpose of this study and supported the use of discussion and modelling as part of the learning and teaching processes within the school environment.

The next section draws together the outcomes of the collaboration between the teacher and students during this study, to create a ‘Framework for facilitation’ which can be adapted to the needs of a primary school classroom that is interested in creating a safe, supportive and democratic classroom culture. This Framework is designed as a basis for teacher reflection on current practice to make explicit teaching theories and beliefs.
A Framework for facilitation

Theoretical epistemology strengthens the philosophical base from which an educator operates and allows critical reflection of current research within an informed frame of reference (Bernard; 2004; Edwards, 2004; Gibbs, 2001; Hart. 1992). Educators are in the unique position of being able to create a particular type of pedagogical classroom environment by shaping classroom values and goals, which theory can inform (Curriculum Council, 1998; Glasser, 1969; Johnson, Johnson & Johnson Holubec, 1994; Kagan, 1994). The action research process provides a systematic means of reflecting on one’s own practice to also understand the dynamic process when using classroom meetings to solve social problems.

By using the class as a social-problem-solving group, moral behaviour can be presented as a part of life rather than as dogma. The goal is to implement moral behaviour through honest discussion aimed at matching our actions and our words. (Glasser, 1969, p. 186)

Even though the teacher may initiate the role of pedagogical facilitator, peers can assume this identity if there is the opportunity for the creation of non-traditional spaces. During the process of multi-tiered scaffolding both the teacher and students assumed the voice of authority, as new identities were constructed when expertise was shared during social interaction and class meetings. The current study constructed an understanding of how students were socially constructing their knowledge about teamwork, leadership and friendships to scaffold positive interpersonal relationships that supported all students socially and emotionally. The Framework for facilitation identifies the critical features that arose from this classroom context (see Figure 4.2a on p.146).
Figure 4.2a  
*A Framework for teacher facilitation for a safe, supportive and democratic classroom community*

The three major themes of scaffolding ‘relationships’ at a class level, ‘leadership’ at a tribal level and ‘friendship’ at a community level to address individual needs were the issues discussed at classroom meetings. These meetings were the pedagogical
tools used to intervene and negotiate the culture that was being created by the developing relationships in the classroom.

Hayes, Lingard and Mills (2000) support the pluralising of pedagogy, to imply there is no one true way of teaching. However, it is important to determine appropriate pedagogies for particular contexts. The current study supports the principle of supporting teachers in their work by allowing them to make professional judgements about choosing pedagogies that reflect the needs of their students and their particular context (Hayes, Lingard & Mills, 2000).

The resulting ‘Framework for teacher facilitation of a safe, supportive and democratic classroom community’ is flexible and assumes positive relationships are foundational for effective collaboration. The teacher can use understandings based on multiple data sources, such as observations and student interviews, to assess the social status of the students, to form heterogenous groups and provide opportunities for rejected or neglected peers to form new friendships. The strength of this Framework is the flexibility it affords professional teachers to integrate both parent and student PPK and values within the process. It does not promote a particular program but suggests that students’ needs and aspirations drive the content of discussions. The teacher mediates ‘big picture’ issues such as ‘mutual respect, inclusion and exclusion, bullying and teasing’.

Figure 4.2a has been further refined to illustrate the interactive nature of the themes emerging from the study to include the concept of scaffolding multiple ZPDs (see Figure 4.2b, p. 148). The concurrent nature of scaffolding three themes allowed for
the students’ ZPDs to be extended during teacher mediation as a result of peers interacting with peers. Figure 4.2b links the concepts operating within the social context of the classroom in this study.

Figure 4.2b
A Framework for teacher facilitation to mediate a safe, supportive and democratic classroom community

Both figures (4.2a and 4.2b) represent the processes that the researcher has experienced throughout this study, moving between the practices of the classroom to the theories embedded in the literature to reflecting on classroom practice.
In the reflective phase of learning, the mind sorts and synthesises, rearranges and reconnects. This is when transfer takes place. This is the phase of the learning cycle that moves inert knowledge to relevant application. (Fogarty, 1997, p. 187)

Educators need to model positive leadership by creating a shared vision which all participants value and are committed to implement. The process of Tribes created mutual trust that provided the building blocks today that teaches the leaders of tomorrow. When teachers make decisions they need to make explicit the reasons for their choices and help students understand that the criteria are purposeful. Ultimately leadership is about values and taking responsibility for one’s actions which impacts on others both directly and indirectly, particularly in a classroom.

4.2 Limitations of the research

Due to the importance of triangulating data from all key stakeholders and the number of participants involved, this type of research, which examined the social and emotional development of students, was challenging and time consuming. The nature of the research did warrant a longitudinal research project to track students’ long-term development. In addition the dual role of researcher and teacher had both advantages and limitations. The researcher was in a privileged position and gained the trust of the participants, which resulted in access to personal and confidential information. This provided an improved perspective for the researcher to understand the individual needs of students. However, this privileged position can also be viewed as a limitation because the researcher perceived solutions that could not be imposed on the students and needed to have restraint to allow students to solve their social problems.
It was also a limitation to the researcher not to be able to directly record and analyse student conversations, which would have enriched the triangulation of data and provided another layer to the analyses. The students’ language during activities or in the playground is an indication of how they are assessing the context, which determines how they act within it and continue to act within it. It was beyond the scope of this study to explore gender differences and the effect of different cultural expectations. There were shy students who benefited from being in mixed gender groups and students who could not have performed leadership roles effectively without the support of more confident students. It would have been interesting to explore in more depth how the students words were empowering or restricting the group. Students did discuss how to encourage each other with their words by using ‘lift-ups’ or words that expressed appreciation to each other. However, individual student interviews towards the end of the study provided many insights into the outcome of students’ conversations, which shaped their beliefs about each other and classroom operations.

The issue of research into the micro and macro sociocultural contexts students created with student interactions is significant to understand how ZPDs were operating between students and their peers, but beyond the scope of this study. It would have deepened the understandings about the facilitator’s role and how to support students’ personal growth. The final outcomes of this study did result in similar challenges, realised by other researchers, as the basis for future classroom research to understand this context and how to support student learning (Jacob, 1999; MacCallum, 2001). The teacher as mediator provided opportunities for peers to learn from peers. However, a focus by the facilitator on conversations amongst peers in
their groups may have provided deeper insights to further support peer learning and bridge any cultural differences in the classroom as suggested by Beasley and Hogan (2004).

The benefits of this study to the participants were evidenced by the improvement in their social skills and confidence to collaborate with each other to solve their problems. However, this researcher was limited by the extent to which young children are able to use their metacognitive skills and articulate these processes. This issue is connected with the researcher’s ability to successfully scaffold student learning based on limited knowledge from observations and written products such as student reflection logs. Whilst the researcher used class meetings, Y charts and reflection logs to facilitate students’ understandings of how to reflect on their learning, the process was challenging because many students were not comfortable with the effort required to use their metacognitive skills. However, the process did establish open communication between students, teacher and parents, which is supported by Nicholls and Hazard (1993) to promote democratic education.

We need more conversations across the lines between students and teachers and through the walls that divide them from academic researchers, administrators, legislators, and parents. That, in the end, is democracy: a rich, adventurous conversation. This is the point and process of education. (p.192-3)

The promotion of democratic decision-making could not be imposed on students and they did have the ‘right to pass’ during discussions. They were encouraged to participate to benefit their own social and emotional development by expressing their feelings and views to others and asserting their right to have their opinions.
This study did not extend to examining and measuring how improved social skills impacted on the academic learning of the students. However, the literature review does document extensive research by others about the academic gains of promoting a safe and cooperative learning environment for all learners. The students’ workbooks provided evidence of improved learning outcomes for all of the students and consistently higher outputs for work of students who would not normally complete their written work. In a letter from the Deputy Principal of Bushlands, it was noted that these students had made significant academic gains based on the comparison of results of the West Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessments (WALNA) from Year 3 to Year 5, which are state wide assessments completed every year (Critical Friend, 12th February, 2005).

4.3 Future research

Modern educators are challenged to create classrooms that are enjoyable for students to engage both their intellect and emotions in the process of uplifting their spirit (Joseph, 2002). There is a continual stream of professional development in response to multiple innovations. Teachers, as professionals, need to sift through and separate the ‘wheat from the chaff’ by being clear about their theoretical epistemology and the values that drive their teaching. It is important that education ‘helps students learn how to get along with others, share and find a valued place in the community’ (Ravlich, 2005) by helping them understand themselves as human beings first. Attention to providing ‘a positive and emotionally rich environment is not a luxury but actually a necessity’ for an effective education for all students coming into the 21st century (Gibbs, 1995, 2001; Rose & Nicholl, 1997, p. 348). However, this
researcher agrees with Annandale et al., (2004a) that the teacher’s level of commitment to understanding the process is critical to its success.

The great irony of innovation in teaching is that the least tangible elements of the process are the most powerful. Too often it appears that a book or a collection of books is the key to positive change, where in fact the crucial factor is the teacher’s engagement in sustained, practical, owned professional development. (Annandale, Bindon, Handley, Johnston, Locket & Lynch, 2004a, p. 3)

The perceived contexts at school are different for each child and so is their motivation for learning. MacCallum’s (2001) longitudinal research into contexts in transition from primary school to high school concluded that a focus on the tasks as a key to motivating students is not going to solve the problem. There is need to research the micro sociocultural contexts that students create through their interactions. Research into the benefits of creating specific pedagogical contexts, which promote collaboration, is justified, as it is a high cost to society when students who are alienated by the system leave school with an inadequate education and poor job prospects because educators have not understood their needs.

Future research into factors that influence peer status, entry into a social group and rejection by peers would illuminate peer status as a variable to social skills development. Rogoff (1990) alludes to the difficulties of conducting research about peer culture, within the contexts of an institution such as school, where adults are in control and students are likely to behave differently than if they were in more naturalistic environments where they were in control. The student’s ability to self-monitor and regulate their feelings, thoughts and behaviours would provide insights into this complex area. Questions still remain about students such as Judy who had appropriate social skills and leadership qualities, as recognised by her peers, yet
remained neglected by her peers. Jason’s reasons for peer rejection may seem more obvious, due to ‘annoying behaviours’ (peers’ words) to gain attention. The importance of emotional intelligence and what that entails seems to be a key to understanding peer status and the power dynamics within the social structure of the classroom, to contextualise peer talk and provide an informed basis for the teacher to support positive peer dynamics. The facilitator needs to be committed to the vision of a cooperative and collaborative environment where power is shared to negotiate the optimal conditions for all participants to learn and be emotionally supported in that learning. Bennett and Rolheiser (2003) question how teachers can be supported to produce creative solutions to increasing classroom diversity in an era where they argue teachers are socialised towards mediocrity.
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Appendix 1 Letter of consent for parents and students

School of Education
Division of Arts

Project: Weekly class meetings will be used to support the establishment of a cooperative and collaborative classroom that supports the values of the Curriculum Framework such as Respect and Concern for Others.

Dear parents,

I am studying for a Masters Degree at Murdoch University investigating how to use weekly class meetings to assist students to develop friendships and independence at school. I am examining the teacher’s role in being strategic to develop group cohesion. There are four stages of group work that need to be established, finding common ground, establishing roles and goals, getting the job done and reflecting on how well the goals were achieved.

The research I am doing would be conducted as part of my normal teaching duties to establish effective learning environments. The focus is to examine classroom group dynamics so individual student names will not be used. I am seeking your consent to write up my research findings and publish as a thesis for my Masters degree. I will also be seeking your child’s consent. Please note that you and your child may withdraw consent at any time during the study without any disadvantage to your child.

My principal supervisor is Dr. Judith MacCallum who is the Director for the Centre for learning, Change and Development at Murdoch University. She can be contacted on Tel. 9360 7847 if you have any queries. Mrs. Alison Foster, Deputy Principal, has agreed to be my critical friend during this study at Marangaroo Primary School.

Regards

Mrs. V. Morcom
Year 4/5 classroom teacher

Please tear off and return the permission slip below after you have signed it.

I/we have read the information above. I/we understand that all information collected will be treated as confidential. Any questions I/we have asked have been answered to my/our satisfaction. I /we agree for my child to be part of this research. However, at any time I/we know I/we can change my/our mind/s without disadvantage to my child.

I/we agree that research data gathered this year may be written up to be published as a thesis for a Masters Research degree, but no names will be used which could identify individual children.

_______________________             __________________              ___________________
Parent/s guardian/s signature             Dr. Judith MacCallum              Mrs. Veronica Morcom

Date      Date      Date

Student’s name and signature___________________________________________________
Appendix 2 Parent survey
PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear parents,

It is hard to believe we are so close to the end of the year. This will be the last survey about Tribes for you to complete. I am also checking for a suitable time for parent feedback about this research one day after school or on a Tuesday morning 9-10.30am, during school hours, before the end of the year. I have collected many stories from my observations and watched your children grow and mature. I will share some Tribes activities with you and ask you for some feedback. It should be fun. I will advise you of the most popular preferences as soon as possible.

Please circle your first preference.

After school Monday 6.00-7.00pm               After school Tuesday 6.00-7.00pm

During school Tuesday 9-10.30am

PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS AS FULLY AS YOU CAN.

Thanking you for your time.

Regards

Veronica Morcom

20.10.04

1. Does your child have a group of friends to play with regularly at school?
   They don’t have to be in this class.

2. Has this group changed much or grown into a larger group?

3. Have you seen a change in your child’s ability to get along with others? Give examples if you can. (This can be outside school too)
4. Do you think your child is showing leadership skills or would enjoy the opportunity to be a group leader? If your child has been a leader please discuss what they thought about their role.

5. What do you think about groups in the classroom based on friendships?

6. Have there been any major changes to your child’s attitude towards school?

Thankyou for the time you spent to complete this survey. Please feel free to write additional comments that may come to mind over the page.