

Improving interaction and participation: Leadership development in the collaborative classroom

Veronica Morcom Judith MacCallum
Davallia Primary School *Murdoch University*

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Introduction

Sociocultural pedagogies, such as collaborative learning, are based on a set of assumptions about the centrality of communicative processes, interpersonal skills and community formation in the development of individual higher mental functions. Student leadership also assumes the development of effective communication and interpersonal skills as the social networks created support the ongoing social and emotional growth of each child and the improvement of interaction and participation within the classroom community.

This paper is based on research conducted in two primary classrooms where the first author was the teacher in 2004 and 2007. Initially, the focus of the research in the first classroom was on building peer relationships. Then part way through the year the teacher researcher identified ‘leadership’ as a motivation for changes in participation (Morcom, 2005). This became the focus for the research in the second classroom at a second school. Changes in interaction and participation in these classrooms are illustrated through the leadership journeys of three students, Lindsay and Judy from the 2004 class and Anna from the 2007.

Theoretical perspectives

The research uses a sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) to theorise the type of interaction that occurs in a collaborative classroom. Daniels (2001) argues that there is a fundamental connection between human mental functioning and the social, historical and cultural contexts in which it occurs. Sociocultural theory provides an account of learning and development as a culturally mediated process. Vygotsky (1978) believed an adult or peer (someone other than the learner) could mediate or “translate knowledge about the society and culture” (Ashman & Gillies, 2003, p. 199).

Vygotsky used the concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) to theorise the kind of pedagogy likely to promote significant learning. He 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 a child’s “actual development as determined by independent problem solving” and the “potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86).

Bruner (1986) extended Vygotsky’s notion of ZPD with the metaphor of scaffolding, which elaborated how adults support children’s learning through graduated, strategic steps that create ZPDs (Cumming-Potvin, Renshaw & van Kraayenoord, 2003). Scaffolding has often been considered to be a linear process but recent research describes a more dynamic, interactive process where the concept of ZPD is extended during guided participation. Thus “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., 2003, 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 this paper, which is based on two larger studies, ZPDs were operating and provided a feedback mechanism about the quality of peer relationships. This facilitated students’ personal practical knowledge about how to be part of a community and the core shared values that were important to this community. Peers and the classroom teacher guided the process, where the individual took responsibility for their words and actions and gave justifications for their choices. However, the teacher’s role was to progressively encourage students’ social and emotional development by challenging their current ideas. Vygotsky (1978) argued that all “good learning is that which is in advance of development” (p.89) and the teacher’s role was to maximise student learning by presenting activities that allowed this process to occur, with support.

Research aim

The main aim of the research project was to examine children’s motivational development in the primary school years through participation in specific instructional/social practices that provide opportunities for leadership in a collaborative learning community. This paper focuses specifically on student leadership within the context of a collaborative classroom, and how interaction and participation are improved through the development of supportive social networks. The conceptualisation of participation follows Rogoff’s (2003) notion that “humans develop through their changing participation in the sociocultural activities of their communities” (p. 11). The research extends our understanding of how teachers can be strategic to improve student interaction and participation by teaching and promoting leadership skills within smaller social groups where leadership is not limited to academically and/or socially able students.

Values and leadership skills

Collaboration was promoted, leadership and social skills were developed within small social groups and values were explicitly taught in the process of building a learning community. An understanding of the values that underpinned a collaborative classroom to promote student leadership became essential to improving interaction and participation. The Australian Government (2005) 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. 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)

Hogan (2003) asserts 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) state 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 assume collaboration implies group work (Hart, 1992), which was planned by the teacher, so there is 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 teacher researcher adapted Hart's framework for establishing a self-supporting environment to allow collaboration for many different purposes, which included developing leadership skills within the context of a safe, supportive and democratic classroom.

Gillies and Ashman (1996) support the teaching of collaborative skills to primary school children as their research showed that students who were trained to collaborate facilitated each other's learning, and 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.

Gillies' (2003) research points to explicitly teaching interpersonal skills, such as:

- 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. (p. 38)

Interpersonal skills were actively promoted in the research classrooms (2004, 2007) to build communication skills and develop personal responsibility, as well as academic learning.

School context

The two research schools had different characteristics in terms of each school's perception of community and this influenced the level and type of parent involvement at the two sites. School 1 (2004) was in a low socioeconomic area with increasing issues about bullying across the school. There was an emphasis on pastoral care and 'values education' became a school priority. School 2 (2007) was in a high socioeconomic area with low incidences of bullying. The school priority was 'higher order thinking skills'. The teaching styles at both schools were predominantly traditional. The students were not familiar with classrooms where teachers actively scaffolded and promoted collaboration through dialogue about what was valued as a classroom community to establish normative ground rules of trust and mutual respect.

Teaching and research elements

Meaningful peer interaction is at the heart of the innovative practice in both classrooms. The teaching strategies explicitly promoted the collaborative development of shared

knowledge and understanding; how to empower the individual to support and teach others; how to ‘be your authentic self’ in the process of creating effective learning communities through collaboration. Some of the instructional activities included: the daily social circle; class agreements; weekly class meetings and students’ reflection logs. The teaching and research elements became authentic data sources (summarised in Table 1) that gave the perspectives of all stakeholders including, the teacher, parents and students, as well as the administration at the schools. The ‘Y’ charts, sociograms, student interviews and surveys, parent surveys and teacher observations are further discussed within the context of this paper.

Table 1 The teaching and research elements and their purpose

Teaching and research elements	Purpose
Class ‘Y’ charts Chart has three parts: ‘ <i>Looks like</i> ’ - behaviours one would see and body language; ‘ <i>Sounds like</i> ’ – actual words that could describe the concept or the conversations that may occur between students; ‘ <i>Feels like</i> ’ - emotional response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish shared understandings. • Strategy that uses students’ own language and make links with their knowledge and that of their peers (Bennett & Smilanich, 1994).
Social circle Children sit in a circle and say how they feel Conducted daily in the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team building • Building a ‘caring culture’
Class meetings Conducted once a week and both the teacher and students write the weekly agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both the teacher and students raise issues of concern about any aspect of classroom • Democratic process of participative decision-making (Glasser, 1969).
Sociograms Students nominate three peers they would like in their new tribe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher created groups to promote new friendships and leadership contexts and opportunities to develop these skills.
Student interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using photos of the social circle, class meetings and group activities the students were asked to describe their understanding.
Parent interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gain parent perspectives of changes in values, attitudes and behaviours of their children in regards to friendship groups and leadership skills.
Teacher observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anecdotal notes taken daily of classroom interactions.
Student reflection logs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students wrote their personal reflections about classroom operations.
Tribes/ social groups (Gibbs, 2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social groups of 4-6 students were formed each term, based on the sociogram results and teacher observations. • Peers elected a leader and a vice leader for the duration of the tribe.
‘Lift ups’ - peers and the teacher write and give supportive comments to each other. ‘Team member of the week’ , voted by peers, after discussion in groups. ‘Teacher encouragement awards’ to demonstrate the teacher is aware of students’ efforts to cooperate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing appreciation of others to build a caring culture • Acknowledging the efforts of peers who provide social and emotional support to others or improve their behaviour or attitude. • Providing authentic opportunities for peers and the teacher to build relationships.

The teacher scaffolded students' interaction in an ongoing manner through the social circles, class meetings, as well as in discussions with individual children and small groups. Examples of teacher scaffolds include:

It's OK to repeat an idea, you say I like that idea about..., and say your idea on top of it.

We need to be listening. How do we show that we are listening?

Being a leader is very challenging... [You could say] I'd rather be a team member. On the other hand, [you could say] it's been tough the last few weeks, I'm going to try harder and ...

Research methods

In line with the multidimensional nature of this research within a sociocultural framework, the researchers used multiple methods with data collection tools including: classroom observation; stimulated recall of classroom video segments; interviews/informal dialogue with children; reflective accounts of children, teachers, researcher and parents; sociometric surveys; school records of behaviour and documents related to school policies and classroom instructional practices.

In order to examine the leadership development, data from the 'Y' charts were used to document students' community knowledge of leadership skills initially, and student survey findings to detail the characteristics of leaders and team members several months later. The activities and processes of the classroom community over the year are described through tracking the changing participation of three students: Lindsay and Judy (School 1, 2004) and Anna (School 2, 2007).

Community knowledge of leadership skills

During the phase of the study where leadership skills were promoted, students' understandings of what a good leader 'looks like, sounds like and feels like' were sought. Table 2 lists words/phrases from the two research classes (2004, 2007) where these baseline understandings became the students' shared knowledge and was permanently displayed in the classroom for future reference during class meetings, particularly when students were selecting new Tribe leaders.

There were common values that students repeatedly discussed and reinforced as being important to create a safe, caring and inclusive classroom community, such as being 'fair, honest, caring, persistent, respectful of self and others, cooperative and using common courtesies and manners'. The importance of having self control and being a good role model are embedded in these values for both groups. These 'Y' charts were the starting point for the classroom teacher to connect with students' prior knowledge and to be strategic to improve student interaction and participation by teaching and promoting leadership skills. When student leadership surveys were collated (see Table 3) the evidence confirmed that peers wanted leaders who could lead the group but who were also kind and friendly. Both classes were unanimous that they wanted fewer arguments so smaller group sizes were popular.

Table 2 Knowledge of what a good leader ‘looks like, sounds like and feels like’ from ‘Y’ charts for two class groups in 2004 and 2007

‘Y’ Charts	2004 Year 4/5	2007 Year 3
Looks like	Fair Good role model Self control Finishes work Caring person Listens to team Doing personal best	Being fair Good role model Having self control Finishes work Encourages and helps others Working together Being calm Good attitude towards work
Sounds like	Tells the truth Asks everybody’s opinion Negotiating Encouraging others Enthusiastic	Honest words What do you think? Negotiating with others Using ‘lift ups’ How do you feel? That’s a good idea! Speaking respectfully Using manners Using people’s names
Feels like	Supported by team United Teamwork Respected by group members Takes responsibility	Supported United Happy Safe Listens to others first because they feel respect Takes pride in one’s own achievements

Table 3 Summary of student views about their leaders and tribes from student surveys for two class groups in 2004 and 2007

STUDENT SURVEYS	REASONS to vote for leaders	REASONS not to vote for the leaders	How I helped the leader	Size of Tribe
2004 (8.7.04) Year 4/5 27 students completed surveys	They are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> kind and friendly able to do the job 	They are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mean not responsible 	Both groups helped their leaders by : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperating Helping with jobs Listening Giving ideas Helping others with their work 	8 - 7 votes 6 - 15 votes 4-6 -4 votes Don’t care - 1 vote
2007 (7.5.07) Year 3 21 students completed surveys	They are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible caring 	All but one student agreed with their leadership choice and they were happy with their leaders.	The Year 3 class had a greater emphasis on Self Control and Self Responsibility.	4-6 – all students

The sociograms and teacher observations were used to create social groupings that catered for students’ differential social, emotional and academic needs. The two research classes (2004, 2007) had very different baseline starting points in their communication skills, social networks and their level of commitment to pro social values. The teacher allowed the 2007 class to select all leadership roles because their baseline

communication and interpersonal skills were more developed and they had stronger established social networks, with little evidence of bullying. The 2004 class was formed with students who came from *nine* previous classes, in contrast to the 2007 class, which was formed from *two* previous classes, so one could argue this could account for the variation in number of friendships that were already formed and how well the students cooperated. The teacher chose the first four leaders for Tribes 1 (2004) and peers selected their leaders for the rest of the year for Tribes 2, 3, 4 & 5 and vice leaders for Tribes 4 & 5. The students from the 2007 class chose their own leaders and vice leaders when the first tribes were formed. 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.

Student leadership development

The student leadership stories chosen for this paper exemplify leadership skills 'in action' within the complex social nature of relationships that evolved as the year progressed. Leaders such as Lindsay and Judy (2004), and Anna (2007) were not always confident or academically and socially able but, with peer support, they would develop these skills. They had other qualities which were also valued by their peers such as persistence, a sense of humour, a caring and compassionate nature and being a good listener. This was evident in the writings of their peers in their reflection logs. Lindsay was an academically able student from year 5 who was underachieving at school; did not value his talents and was part of a social group that bullied and intimidated other students. Judy was a quiet, mature year 4 student who lacked confidence in her abilities; had few friends and was mainly on the fringes of the year 4 female students who often argued with her and excluded her from their group. Anna was a polite and caring student, who was a good listener but lacked confidence in her abilities and was not perceived by her mother to be 'leadership material' in term 1. Table 4 shows the timeline of the significant social connections that scaffolded the changes in these students' behaviour and confidence in their abilities. Evidence came mainly from researchers', peers' and parents' observations of behaviour and students' self reflections about how they felt as a leader.

Lindsay's story

Before leadership

Lindsay was a year 5 student (10 years old) who had friendships in peer groups who participated in both anti and pro social behaviours. At the beginning of the year he had more friends in the former group who bullied and intimidated a smaller group of peers in the same class. Lindsay was very competitive, motivated to win and made new friends during the first round of Tribes who did not participate in anti social behaviour. Friendships with Dean and Daren in Tribes 1 and Eileen in Tribes 2 provided peer scaffolds, which would have a lasting influence on his attitudes and values throughout the year and impact on his behaviour.

Table 4 Timeline of the critical social connections for Lindsay, Judy and Anna

	LINDSAY (2004, year4/5 class) Year 5 student	JUDY (2004, year 4/5 class) Year 4 student	ANNA (2007 year 3 class)
Term 1 Tribes 1	Lindsay's first three new friends were pro social students who were good role models. Eileen was the leader of his tribe who was selected by the teacher. Outside his tribe Lindsay made new friends with Dean and Daren who were also leaders and socially well connected. Lindsay's behaviour in the playground was anti social with Denis who was not in his tribe.	Judy and Wendy were in this tribe but were not friends because Wendy tended to be bossy. Judy had friends in other classes with whom she socialised in the playground.	Anna was a caring and hardworking student. John was often off task and uncooperative in the same tribe.
Term 2 Tribes 2	Lindsay was selected by his peers, Eileen (most popular girl in the class with both genders) and Daren to be the leader. Wendy , a year 4 student, was also in this tribe and they often argued. Outside his tribe Lindsay continued to develop his friendship with Dean . Lindsay's behaviour in the playground was more pro social.	Judy started to develop new friendships in her tribe, with two year 5 girls who were also Eileen's friends (outside this tribe). These girls displayed more mature behaviours. These friendships widened Judy's social circle.	Anna was leader (selected by peers). She was patient and a good listener. She was challenged with the behaviour of John , who did not show her respect.
Term 3 Tribes 3 Tribes 4	Lindsay and Daren voted for Jack as their leader but did not support his leadership. Lindsay did not participate in anti social behaviour in the playground but was uncooperative in the classroom when Jack tried to lead the group. <u>Before</u> Tribes 4 Lindsay requested to be in the same tribe as Dean . Denis was also in this tribe and continued to behave in an anti social manner. Lindsay did not participate with him.	In Tribes 3 Judy made another new year 5 friend, Claire , who did not have too many friends herself but was caring and hardworking. Judy was selected by Lindsay and Dean , to be the leader. Wendy and Denis were also in this tribe. <i>Wendy became Judy's friend.</i> Denis reconsidered his anti social behaviour.	For the rest of the year Anna did not take on another leadership role but supported her peers throughout their processes. She participated regularly in class meetings and gave ideas to assist her peers.
Term 4 Tribes 5	Lindsay was elected leader by his peers, which included his friends Daren and Judy . Judy's friend, from Tribes 3, Claire became vice leader.	Judy's parent surveys document a shift in parental perception about Judy's abilities.	

Tribes 1 (term 1), was a positive experience for Lindsay who received compliments and social rewards from his peers and the tribe leader, Eileen, who valued his academic ability and sense of humour. Comments such as those from Henry (year 4) and Eileen

(year 5) reflect their recognition of Lindsay's sporting and academic abilities, but also the initial challenges faced by Eileen in Tribes 1 when Lindsay was part of her team.

You are a nice friend. You are good at getting people out by underarm at cricket. (Henry, 'lift up' card, 22.11.04)

I have been leader (Tribes 1) and it was hard to get Lindsay and Michael to do things because they took their time on purpose to get the tribe annoyed. They don't do that anymore. I like Lindsay. He's funny. (Student interview, Eileen, 10.11.04)

One could argue that Lindsay may not have valued such feedback if it was not given to him by peers whom he respected but were also his friends. The fact that Lindsay's social circle now included students who were effective leaders, respected by their wide circle of friends and became his friend too was the catalyst for Lindsay's change in attitude and behaviour. He examined his behaviour and understood that there were pro social means of being noticed by peers, which maintained positive relationships and friendships. The importance of developing these friendships is illustrated in the first round of tribes where Lindsay joined the social circles of two of the most popular members of the class, Dean and Eileen (year 4 and year 5 students respectively), early in the year which had the potential to widen his circle of friends if he chose to change his anti social behaviours. Dean and Eileen received many nominations from peers, as evidenced in the sociograms, and they were both positive role models. They were both chosen by the teacher to be leaders in the first round of tribes. Eileen had a major influence on all relationships in the classroom with both genders during Tribes 1 and for the rest of the study in 2004.

During leadership

The social connections formed in Tribes 1 between two leaders Eileen (who was now in Tribes 2 with Lindsay) and Dean (who was still outside his tribe), continued to have a positive influence on Lindsay's perceptions of peers such as Wendy, who was also in Tribes 2 with him. Wendy displayed annoying behaviours which challenged Lindsay, as the leader, to address peer social difficulties with empathy and tolerance and taught him what effective leadership entailed. When Lindsay was voted leader during Tribes 2 he had the full support of his team, which included high status students such as Daren and Eileen, which resulted in an increase in his friendship circle. He worked hard with Daren, and gained the respect and friendship of Eileen, who was happy to scaffold Lindsay in how to be an effective leader.

After leadership

Cooperation did not follow a linear process because the new tribes created new contexts and opportunities for new partnerships and alliances. The sociograms provided evidence of Lindsay's continuing friendships with class members who bullied others, such as Denis and Michael, as well as a trend of increasing his social circle beyond this group. Lindsay's dilemma became one of choosing his friendships groups that would maintain his increased social status and peer respect while not alienating his old friends. During Tribes 3 Lindsay and Daren (Lindsay's new friend this year) both chose to behave in an antisocial and disruptive manner and Jack (who wanted to be Daren's friend and was chosen as the leader by Lindsay and Daren), all risked being ostracised by the larger pro social group in the class. 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 (Teacher observations,

Term 1 & 2, 2004). Daren and Lindsay did not support Jack's leadership and Jack stated he did not want to be the leader anymore because it was too challenging and he did not enjoy it. In contrast to Jack's leadership, the other three tribes supported their leaders, who were mainly shy and unassertive students.

Lindsay - changing patterns of participation

The experience of Tribes 3 motivated Lindsay to re-evaluate his position for Tribes 4 (Teacher observations, Term 2, 2004). Lindsay's self awareness had developed to such an extent that he recognised the difficulties of trying to be a part of a social group that had not adopted the pro social values promoted in the classroom. If he was away from this group in the classroom he could remain friends with them and continue to stay on task and work hard, which was valued by him and his new friends. Lindsay made a private verbal request to the teacher that he was placed with Dean in Tribes 4 because he would behave and help Dean with his work. Dean was a friendly and caring student who had a sense of humour and did not take life too seriously. Dean's qualities were recognised and respected by peers from both genders, including Lindsay who wrote this card to Dean at the end of the year.

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, 6.12.04)

The teacher's 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. He was voted twice by his peers to be a leader. He proved to be a responsible and empathetic leader and other observers such as peers, school staff and his parent noted changes in Lindsay's behaviour as his mother commented on how he had 'kept his nose clean' and his academic work was excellent (Teacher observations, Term 4). Lindsay refined his understandings of leadership as he interacted and reflected on his actions and those of his peers in another leadership role in Tribes 5, where he was supported by Judy, who was his leader in Tribes 4. Lindsay came to understand that effective leadership was more about the 'self responsibility' than being in 'control' of others.

A good leader is kind, not bossy, doesn't get into trouble and leads with a good example (Student leadership survey, Lindsay, 25.11.04)

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. (Student interview, Lindsay, 10.11.04)

He also maintained his social connections with Denis but did not participate in his anti social behaviour. He sent this card to Denis at the end of the year.

You're a good friend and you have a good sense of humour. You are very protective to your friends and you are fun to play boxing and other games.
(‘Lift-up’ card from Lindsay to Denis, 3.12.04)

Judy's story

Before leadership

Judy expressed leadership aspirations early in the year (Student reflection log, 29.4.04), which were not realised until Tribes 4, term 3, later in the year, when she was voted leader by Lindsay, Dean, Wendy, Denis and Joey. She was a responsible student who did not participate in anti social or uncooperative behaviour. She had limited friendships and lingered on the fringes of her peer group, whose behaviour was immature and uncooperative on many occasions. She often chose to disconnect from this behaviour and be alone as she stated that it was just 'too difficult to handle at times'.

During leadership

Judy had realised that leadership is not about 'power' but responsibility. She stated that she wanted to experience the 'responsibility' of being a leader and realised that you do not have much more power than the other people in the tribe (Student reflection log, 18.11.04). Judy's leadership coincided with Lindsay requested to be with Dean because he was aware of changes he needed to make to align himself with the positive values held by the majority of the class. Lindsay and Wendy had not cooperated in past tribes together because Lindsay had experienced her 'annoying behaviours'; Wendy was also changing and decided to cooperate and became friends with Judy in this tribe. At the point when both Lindsay and Wendy decided to cooperate; Denis persisted with bullying behaviours and Judy had the support of her vice leader Joey, who wanted the tribe to cooperate. It is interesting to note that Judy did not receive any nominations from her peers for Tribes 4 but the other tribe members 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 'neglected' students such as Judy. Judy's peers were astute enough to recognise her leadership qualities, such as a caring nature and a willingness to listen to others. Judy also reflected that she played the role of a 'helper' in groups and tried to 'listen and think and put it into my words so people will understand' (Student reflection log, 30.11.04).

Judy's found her leadership role was increasingly challenging, as she reflected each week in her reflection log with her tribe and made the following comments. She persisted and formed an effective working relationship with Joey, her vice leader, who was also a low status student. During weeks 1, 2 & 3 she stated 'things are going well' but as Denis, a student with a reputation for bullying challenged her, she reflected in week 4 'I am not doing the best with my group'. She tried to 'reason' with Denis and was perceived by Lindsay and Daren as being 'bossy' and Judy stated in week 5 'I am trying to please them but I can't and I don't know how'. By the end of week 6 Judy reflected on the improvements in her tribe and her increase in self-confidence: 'we don't talk as much and our work is good. I think being a leader has made me more confident'.

After leadership

Judy's development of leadership skills and confidence are also reflected in the three surveys her mother completed throughout the year. There was a growing trend of parental interest in the value of their child having the opportunity to be a leader, to develop skills which improved their relationships and translated into harmonious relationships with their siblings at home. The positive parental responses increased in number from '22 to 25 to 27' respectively over the three parent surveys for their children

to be a leader, which was simultaneously supported by students requesting leadership opportunities. Parent responses indicated that their children enjoyed the challenges of leadership and it gave them insight into how difficult it can be. There was also a trend in the parent surveys to give more feedback as the year progressed because their children provided more information about how they were participating at school as in the examples of Judy's mother which follows.

Judy has not talked about school or the classroom activity at home as she seems to keep school and home completely separate (Parent survey 1, Judy's mother, April 2004).

Judy is enjoying being a leader very much. Throughout the holidays she discussed problems she might encounter and said she would probably need her 2nd in charge to assist with them. In many ways she is a very logical thinker and quite often has a good grasp of the 'bigger picture' although she is no academic. She often surprises us with thinking through about how situations affect people – without any prompting. (Parent survey 2, Judy's mother, August 2004)

Judy has achieved more academically this year and gives me a little more feedback on school/people than she used to. She has always been mature but has been willing to take on responsibilities that she may not have considered in the past. (Parent survey 3, Judy's mother, November 2004)

Judy and Lindsay - changing patterns of participation

The teacher noted the mature approach Judy demonstrated in her leadership role, which was supported by Lindsay and Dean, who tried to ease the tension created when Denis would not cooperate. One could argue that Lindsay was wrestling with the dilemma of helping Dean academically as a means of avoiding 'managing' or 'confronting' Denis's uncooperative behaviour that was left for Judy and Joey to manage. They both voted for Judy as leader and trusted that she would try her best to create a harmonious group.

During Tribes 4 Lindsay started to cooperate with Wendy, as he got to know her better and developed empathy for her as a friend and he noticed these changes in her behaviour.

She makes burping noises and I can't do my work. She sucks her hair.
(Student reflection log, 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. (Student reflection log, 11.3.04, Lindsay)

In the first two Tribes I didn't get along with Wendy 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... 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. (Student interview, Lindsay, 10.11.04)

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 and realised the effect of her behaviours which annoyed her peers.

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. (Student interview, Wendy, 8.11.05)

Tribes 4 had ongoing problems for Judy, which took the Term to resolve, but Judy's personal growth is reflected in her mother's comments on parent survey 3, which also provide evidence that she was interacting with her mother to solve her leadership challenges.

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 leadership entails, which I think, is a valuable experience in itself. (Parent survey 3, Judy's mother, November 2004)

Lindsay and Judy are two students who provide evidence 'leadership for all' students with teacher and peer support increased student empathy, discouraged bullying and antisocial behaviours and transformed attitudes, leading to improved interaction and participation. Wendy was a critical social connection for both Lindsay and Judy in their leadership roles in Tribes 2 and 4 respectively. As Wendy changed her behaviours friendships developed amongst herself, Lindsay and Judy, which did not happen earlier in the year. Claire was a critical social connection Judy made in Tribes 3 and when Claire was leader in Tribes 5, she had Lindsay and Judy's support because of their prior leadership experiences and developing friendship.

Anna's story

Before leadership

In contrast to the 2004, the 2007 class had better baseline pro social skills and seemed 'ready' to learn how to be effective leaders. The challenges that Judy and Lindsay faced throughout the year are also evident much earlier in the 2007 class but there is a greater 'feeling' of positive cohesion in the 2007 class and more student control during class meetings. Peer selected leaders in the first round of tribes (2007) who were not all effective leaders and some groups held raffles, as they could not agree. The social networks for leadership have evolved much earlier as evidenced in class meetings during Tribes 2 where students who are shy and struggle academically, have spoken openly to address their concerns in a positive manner. The momentum of support for the leaders has allowed spaces in the classroom where leaders can state 'I feel frustrated because two group members continue to break our class agreements; I don't feel respected as a leader because some group members do not do what I ask'. In response, other leaders from Tribes 1 show their support with their comments such as, 'I understand how you feel

because I had a similar situation with my group' and then offer suggestions. This is powerfully emotive language that is making students re evaluate their behaviour in their tribe as in Anna's leadership role in semester one.

During leadership

Anna's mother did not initially perceive that her daughter had the skills necessary for leadership but Anna quickly demonstrated patience and negotiation skills during the group discussions which she led. She used peers' names as she addressed each person individually. She used 'wait time' effectively and would ask if they needed more time and then she would come back to them. During class meetings she was polite and assertive and did not name individuals and modelled, as the teacher had previously scaffolded to all students, how to talk about issues in general terms. She acknowledged the positive changes in her tribe and sought assistance from her peers to address issues she could not answer herself during class meetings. Anna became frustrated with two boys in her tribe, Sean and James, during the 5th week of Tribes 2 and her mother stated that Anna was 'grumpy' at home which was out of character for her. Both boys recognised their problems, took responsibility for their behaviour and were willing to change, as evidence in what they wrote *before* the class meeting took place in week 5. Sean wrote:

I feel very unhappy the way our group talks so much when we are in a whole group...sometimes we can be quiet and very responsible. My ideas are to be as far apart as possible from James so then we can be a good and helpful group and hopefully be very responsible (Student reflection log, Sean, 25.5.07).

James stated that he was feeling frustrated but also recognised his problem:

Things that I could improve are to try and not talk to Sean only when it is appropriate. I feel frustrated because I just do sometimes. My ideas are we could have a 'chill out zone' when we could read 'Indian in the cupboard' (Student reflection log, James, 25.5.07).

After leadership

Anna needed teacher and peer support and feedback to understand that she was an effective leader and encouragement that her patience would result in positive changes once Sean and James took responsibility for their behaviour. Sean's changing pattern of behaviour was noted by his peers when he was nominated and elected 'team member of the week'. The tribe recognised that Sean was trying to have self control; be cooperative and not talk unnecessarily to James. Anna's leadership qualities were also recognised by her tribe when she was also nominated and elected 'team member of the week' on another occasion. Even though Anna did not have another leadership role during the year she continued to participate in a supportive role for her peers in her new tribes and during class meetings.

Changing patterns of participation – significance for improving interaction

The student vignettes illustrate how interaction and participation was improved through the strategic development of stronger social networks and leadership skills. Wendy's social networks overlapped and influenced both Lindsay and Judy's relationships and

their perceptions of acceptable behaviour. Judy's friendship with Claire in Tribes 3 was later reignited when they were together in Tribes 5, and Lindsay was their leader. Anna's initial relationship with John in Tribes 1 did not affect her to the same degree until she became a caring leader in Tribes 2 and wanted her tribe to cooperate. Anna's friendship with her leader in Tribes 1 became a source of support as she understood Anna's frustrations with James, which she articulated to Anna during class meetings. Then other tribe leaders would follow and say that they understood how Anna felt because they felt the same way when members would not cooperate. One could argue that the 2007 class developed empathy and support for each other at a much earlier stage in the tribes process because more students wanted to cooperate and there was little anti social behaviour amongst the students. Alison who had been a talkative student in Tribes 1 (2007) also changed to become a hard working student in Tribes 2 and made comments that she felt she deserved to be voted 'team leader of the week' because she had maintained such behaviour for some months. Just as Lindsay could misbehave with certain students, Alison has similar tendencies but changing social groups created new spaces and opportunities for change.

Conclusion

The journeys of Lindsay, Judy and Anna illustrate the complexity of 'leadership in action' and the importance of developing positive relationships and support networks to facilitate the development of effective leadership skills within the context of a collaborative classroom. Goos, Galbraith & Renshaw (2002) discuss collaboration in the context of Mathematical learning and metacognitive processes and state that there is likely to be disagreement during the processes, which was the case for the students described in this paper.

Collaborative interaction need not be based purely upon agreement and cooperation, but may also include disagreement and conflict. Thus the process of co-constructing understanding is more complex than simply reaching consensus... (Goos *et al*, 2002, p. 196)

Students experienced both the positive and negative aspects of leadership responsibility and the complex, dynamic and interactive social networks created mediated spaces for changes in student behaviour and the development of leadership skills. Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) provided a coherent rationale for classroom practices that developed a collaborative classroom based on values that promoted democratic decision making. The teacher and more able peers supported these students in a dynamic and authentic process where students continually reflected on their values and behaviour within their social groups and within the classroom context.

The outcomes of leadership development in the collaborative classroom improved interaction and participation and the social networks promoted and supported student leadership for the 'individual' as well as the 'group'. These students' stories also extend our views about the stereotypes of leadership, which is often focused on socially and academically able students. Most students had successful leadership experiences in these classes because they respected each other and the teacher immersed students in activities such as the weekly class meetings that modelled language that was saturated in values based on 'mutual respect' which provided sociocultural scaffolds for all students.

The closing comments support that the prerequisites for improving interaction and participation lie in further understanding how to scaffold student development of communicative processes, interpersonal skills and community membership into school cultures that support student leadership for all students.

Students have developed very sophisticated understandings of friends and how friendship groups work. Leadership skills have developed which have facilitated group work...All students are happy to be at school because it is a safe and supportive environment...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. (Teacher's observations, Critical friend and deputy principal, 7.12.04)

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Correspondence. For further information please contact the authors Veronica Morcom veronicamorcom@yahoo.com or Judith MacCallum J.MacCallum@murdoch.edu.au.