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Editorial

It is now 2010 and there is still much debate about how schooling should be responding to the 21st century – how schools can be made better and learning (or levels of achievement) improved. Sir Ken Robinson (2010) argues for a transformation from an industrial model of education, based on linearity, conformity and standardisation, to a 21st century organic and diverse model that recognises the importance of creativity and 'a much higher standard of provision based on the principles of personalized learning for every child and of schools customizing their cultures to meet local circumstances' (2010, para 5).

On the other side of the debate, attention is focused on improving existing models of schooling. A key factor in this is a firm belief in the effectiveness of standards based reform and accountability based on system wide testing of students. Testing policies focus on teaching important skills and curriculum content and provide the means of tracking the progress of individuals and cohorts of students. There is a paradox inherent in high-stakes testing, however (Madaus & Russell, 2010). It is paradoxical that that testing is carried out with good intentions but with unexpected, often negative, effects. Sounding a cautionary note, Wagner (2009) warns that the world is now so changed that new 'survival' skills are needed in the 21st century and even the schools that score the best in standardised tests may be seen as obsolescent, not preparing students for life in a global knowledge economy.

In different ways, the articles in this issue have something to contribute to this 21st century education debate. Clear links can be drawn to some and there is more subtle resonance with others. Taken together they throw light on the complexity and contention that characterises our time.

Two of the articles in this issue focus specifically on aspects of high-stakes testing and its impact on schools. In the first article, Smeed raises the question of high-stakes testing in the context of the Year 12 Queensland Core Skills (QSC) test, the results of which have been published since 2008. Smeed reports on a case study of three principals. All three of the principals acknowledged they were responding to the pressure of the testing by changing curriculum to more closely meet the requirements of the QCS test. The implications of this, both positive and negative, are considered.

It was also in 2008 that the Australian National Assessment Program (NAPLAN) was introduced to provide a measure of how students are performing in literacy and numeracy at different junctures in their schooling. In his article (later in the issue), Pettit reports on a study that explored how the experience of external NAPLAN testing and data utilisation affected attitudes to tests, teaching practice and school leadership in 55 Diocesan Catholic schools. Pettit reports that there was no common understanding of the value of this external testing across the schools and, within schools, teachers and school leaders had different understandings of the effectiveness and use of the external test data. Pettit further argues that the connection between external literacy and numeracy test data and changing teaching practice is strengthened by *data leadership*, an important aspect of the evidence based leadership of the principal.

Standards based testing, in one form or another, is clearly a significant part of the education policy of many governments – both state and federal. It is interesting, then, to consider this in the light of the next article, where Cranston and Kimber identify complexities and challenges within the educational policy process. The 'common sense' view that policy needs to be evidence-based does not take into account the complexity and the contested nature of the policy process. The authors draw on Head (2008) arguing that the evidence-based approach can be better understood if viewed through the three different lenses of political knowledge, research knowledge and technical knowledge. As illustrated by Pettit, all lenses need to be taken into consideration if the policy process is to be successful.

In the next two articles attention returns to aspects of school leadership. In the first, Jackson and Bezzina propose the concept of *leadership engagement* as a way of understanding how principals can use their influence to achieve positive outcomes. In the study reported, the principals of four high schools were all able to engage in ways that contributed to successfully providing for the learning needs of students with disabilities. A number of different forms of leadership engagement were identified as the principals took different approaches to the issue. The authors suggest that the concept of principal leadership engagement may have broader application across different educational contexts.

Following this, De Nobile presents the results of two studies carried out in Australian Catholic primary schools – looking at the relationship between open communication (characterised by honesty of interaction, freedom of expression and high levels of trust among staff members) and both job satisfaction and stress. As may be expected, openness was found to be associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and lower stress levels, both important aspects of school morale which can have a significant impact on school effectiveness. De Nobile highlights the importance of these findings for school leaders – the benefits that flow from open communication – while recognising that this can be quite complex to develop and maintain.

In the final two articles, attention is turned first to parents and then to students. Raihani and Gurr report on a study of an Australian Islamic school's strategies to involve parents in their children's education process. The study explores the beliefs and understanding of the principal, teachers and parents in relation to home-school partnership, the school's efforts to increase parental involvement and parental response. One of the strategies identified for increasing parental involvement in their children's learning is the development of a shared vision of the desired parent-school relationship. Other strategies include more effective two-way communication between home and school along with related professional learning for teachers. Raihani and Gurr note the importance of extending this and other research into other Islamic schools. It is interesting to note the growth in the number of Islamic schools in the opening decade of the 21st century. This is in response to the growing Muslim community in Australia, itself a reflection of the global movement of people that characterises out time

Finally, we turn to young people – to an investigation of 40 young people's understanding of leadership in school and sporting club contexts. In the study reported by Dempster et al., the 14-16 year old participants explored their conceptions of leadership – both good and bad – using a range of discussion methods in focus groups. The young people were collaborators and co-researchers in the project. This, and the discussion methods used, gave the young people a direct voice. This research is a recognition of the value of listening to the views of young people who are well able

to honestly articulate and analyse their first hand experiences – and who want to have a genuine say in what they do (Burke & Grosvenor, 2003).

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The Contributions of Research Design and Process Facilitation in Accessing Adolescent Views of Leadership

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ABSTRACT: This article reports an investigation into young people's understanding of 'good' and 'bad' leadership in school and sporting club contexts. Four discussion methods (open ended or structured discussions of either a person or situation based scenario) were trialled by 40 adolescents (aged 14 to 16) in a structured focus group format. Particular attention was given to positioning participants as collaborators and establishing trusting and open communication in the focus groups. Both qualitative and quantitative evaluation supported the efficacy of all discussion methods. Importantly, participants attributed the efficacy of the research process less to the use of specific research designs and more to the engaging and respectful quality of the interpersonal and group processes established for the discussions in which the students acted as co-researchers. Preliminary findings on the content of young people's leadership conceptions are also presented. Considerable consistency in young people's ideas was evident across context (school or sporting club) and gender. From a methodological perspective, the findings have implications for the design and conduct of research seeking a valid understanding of young people's experiences of leadership. From an educational perspective, the findings indicate the key engagement processes that should be incorporated into adolescent leadership programs.

Introduction

What do adolescents regard as 'leadership'? It is sometimes tempting to see young people's experience as simply an extension of our adult worldview and to adopt universal leadership frameworks across the whole span of life. To a considerable extent, such simplifying assumptions are evident in the literature with much current theorising about 'youth leadership' being primarily based on notions of leadership developed in adult contexts (an 'outside-in' view of youth leadership) (Holdsworth, 2005; Mitra, 2005; Ricketts & Dudd, 2002; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). The lack of empirically based youth-originated perspectives on leadership in school and community contexts (Dial, 2006; Komives et al., 2006; Posner, 2004) has implications not only for a nuanced understanding of the construct, but also for the development of engaging, relevant and contextually-appropriate methods for adolescent leadership development. There is a strengthening consensus that youth leadership needs not only to be conceptualised differently from adult leadership (Roach et al., 1999) but that it must be investigated differently (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007; Whitehead, 2009).

How then do we investigate young people's conceptions of leadership? How do we optimise our chances of accessing young people's authentic voice and understanding young people's views about leadership and the situations in which they experience it? We argue that answering these questions presents both methodological and theoretical challenges and that investigators need to make their design choices more explicit. Leadership studies of young people in sporting clubs and schools predominantly use questionnaires or structured interviews as preferred methods of data collection (see, for example, Eley & Kirk, 2002; Kay & Bradbury, 2009; Moran & Weiss, 2006; Ricketts, Bruce & Ewing, 2008; and Walker, 2009). These methods do yield useful and valid insights and are relatively effective approaches to collecting data. Much less common are methodologies which take as their starting point the identification of processes which may better enable young people to talk freely about leadership in their lives. This is not to say that seeing adolescents as the 'object' of study is not a legitimate approach to leadership research. Rather it suggests to us that recognising adolescent subjectivity as a starting point may enable us to shed a different light on the methods best able to draw out tacit or unconscious leadership understandings from a group of young people on whom 'leadership development' is increasingly focused. After all, as Carter, Bennetts and Carter (2003) argue, these young people may well reject the applicability of adult constructs of 'leadership' as inapplicable in the adolescent social order. It should not be surprising then that Whitehead (2009), in a review of literature on adolescent leadership development, concluded that youth leadership remains largely theoretical with few empirical data open to scrutiny.

How might researchers bring adolescent views into the foreground? Some studies employ visual stimuli as the preferred method to elicit young people's experiences and perceptions. For example, O'Grady (2008) employed a process of 'photovoice' which involved young people taking photographs of aspects of their daily lives which were then used as stimuli for interviews and small group discussions. Similarly, Marquez-Zenkov et al. (2007) in their 'Through Students' Eyes' project utilised photographs taken by students (as well as the students' written descriptions of the photographs) to seek their ideas about 'quality' teachers. Leitch and Mitchell (2007) also

found that image-based methods (in this case impromptu drawings) were effective for revealing students' experiences of their school's culture that might not otherwise be so easily articulated, while Leitch, Gardner et al. (2007) successfully employed a variety of methods including image-based pupil activities (student drawings and co-interpreting video-taped classroom observations) in their efforts to consult students on their experiences of learning and assessment. A second approach has employed the narrative method to more directly sample students' experiences. Thus, Albert and Valda (2009) had students construct stories about themselves and other individuals or groups of students as a means of developing an authentic leadership voice. Finally, some researchers have employed interview methods to engage students in the recall and reflection of relevant 'critical incidents' in their daily lives. The value of these direct conversation methods is evidenced by unexpected findings such as young people rejecting adult notions of adolescent peer leaders (Carter, Bennetts & Carter, 2003).

What can we learn from these innovative approaches? There appear to be a number of key design features that contribute to 'getting closer to the student voice' when investigating young people's perceptions and conceptions of leadership. Firstly and fundamentally, these studies position young people as 'co-researchers' more than 'objects of study' in the research process. Thus, young people are empowered through both having some measure of control in the process of the study (*What are we investigating?*) and in the interpretation of the findings (*What might it mean?*). Secondly, these studies minimise assumptions about what is important to study and are disciplined in excluding adult conceptions of the topic under investigation (*Who has a legitimate voice?*). Thirdly, the studies are purposely engaging in both their content focus on the direct experience of young people (*What is your experience?*) and the multi-sensory process (e.g. by taking a photo, drawing a picture, telling a story) (*How would you like to approach this?*). Finally, and perhaps most critically, these methods are deeply respectful of young people and their experiences. They are predicated on building 'cultures of listening' in the research process (Leitch & Mitchell, 2007) and in doing so explicitly establishing levels of trust that facilitate young people's sharing of deeper views of the question at hand (*How can we help you to share what you really think and feel and not just tell us what you think we want to hear?*).

What does prior research indicate about young people's views of leadership and what methodological implications might this have? While there is still considerable work to be done in this regard, there is some emerging consensus that young people's conceptions of leadership are firmly grounded in the personal and relational more than the systemic or task aspects of their lives (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007). In other words, young people understand leadership as a situated personal experience (Conner & Strobel, 2007; Zeldin & Camino, 1999). This is reinforced by findings that the quality of peer relationships between high school students is the key facilitator of their willingness to identify with and engage pro-socially in their school community (Lizzio, Dempster & Neumann, 2010). These findings would suggest that there is greater potential to access young people's authentic understandings of leadership through inviting them to actively reflect on their lived experience.

What are the design choices we face in accessing young people's views of leadership? Clearly the primary design choice concerns how to operationalise a methodology that would effectively and efficiently access conceptions of leadership that were most likely to emphasise personal qualities and relational and situational processes. This is consistent with the emphasis on peer

group or network based conceptions of youth leadership emerging from case study based research (Roach et al., 1999). The clear emphasis for young people is less on the vertical and positional and more on the horizontal and relational dimensions of leadership (Lizzio, Dempster & Neumann, 2010). Initially, the methodological choice involves clarifying the most productive 'focus of reflection' – either a situation or a peer that young people had experienced or observed. However, young people do not just experience leadership as a neutral process, but rather are acutely aware that peer influence can have both positive and negative motivations and behaviours. Thus peers can influence each other towards antisocial (Schuster, 1999) or prosocial (Da Silva et al., 2004) outcomes. From a methodological perspective, the necessity of distinguishing between negative and positive critical incidents in deriving a fuller understanding of a respondent's experience has been well-noted (Edvardson & Roos, 2001). Thus, beyond just descriptive recall and reflection there is also a need to extend the research process to incorporate an evaluative dimension. Thus in this study, we asked young people to reflect on their experiences of 'good and bad leadership' (situational dimensions) and 'good and bad leaders' (personal dimensions).

A related design choice concerns the degree of structure or scaffolding that may assist young people's explorations. On the one hand an 'open-ended' or relatively unstructured approach optimises young people's opportunities to 'take the conversation in any direction' and thus enhance the authenticity of the data. On the other hand, too high a level of conversational freedom may simply be experienced as confusing ambiguity and consequentially be counterproductive.

In the present study, the above methodological considerations resulted in the design of four processes to engage students in conversations about their experiences and perceptions of leadership. The four approaches resulted from systematically combining two foci of reflection (person-focused or situation-focused) and two levels of conversational scaffolding (open-ended or structured) (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: APPROACHES TO ACCESSING YOUNG PEOPLE'S UNDERSTANDING OF LEADERSHIP

A. Open-ended Situation Focused Discussion	B. Open-ended Person Focused Discussion
1. Please describe a situation at school where, in your opinion, a student(s) showed *good leadership*. What was the situation? What did he/she say or do? What happened then? Why do you think this was good leadership? 2. Please describe a situation at school where, in your opinion, a student(s) showed *bad leadership*. What was the situation? What did he/she say or do? What happened then? Why do you think this was bad leadership?	1. Think of someone around your age in your school who you think shows 'good leadership' or 'bad leadership'. 2. Now, without mentioning their name, tell us what they do/don't do or how they behave/act, and why you think they show good or bad leadership.

C. Structured Situation Focused Discussion	**D. Structured Person Focused Discussion**
1. Here is a common or everyday situation involving young people your age: *Scenario Insert* 2. After you have read the scenario, please discuss: What do you think is going on here? Who shows good leadership in this situation? Why? Who shows bad leadership in this situation? Why?	1. Think of people your age in your school or club. On the whiteboard are some sentences about the leadership of young people your age. Please complete these in your own words. Good leaders in my age group try to ……..……… Bad leaders in my age group try to ……..……… Good leaders in my age group think that ...…….... Bad leaders in my age group think that……….... Good leaders in my age group make me feel ...... Bad leaders in my age group make me feel ….... 2. Now let's talk about your ideas.

We were particularly interested to compare these methods across three dimensions: the quantity and quality of data about young people's conceptions of leadership (content data); how they were differentially experienced and evaluated by young people (process data); and young people's recommendations as to their wider use (contextual appropriateness). We were also interested to understand if gender or context influenced young people's accounts. Thus we trialled these methods in mixed and single gender groups with adolescents in both school and sporting club contexts.

Method

Participants

Participants were 40 young people (14 boys and 26 girls) aged 14, 15 and 16 in schools and sporting clubs. Four structured focus group discussions were conducted. The groups were composed of from 6 to 14 young people. These variations reflected the availability of numbers, particularly in the sporting clubs. Each group however, contained representatives from each of the three age groups. Two groups were designed as single gender conversations (viz. boys in one, and girls in the other) and two groups were designed to access young people's conceptions of leadership in different contexts (viz. two groups were in schools and two in sporting clubs).

Procedure

The conversational methods used were systematically varied across four focus groups in order to control for potential interactions between methods and group composition and setting (i.e. in each group, one of each type of stimulus (person or situation centred) and each type of structure (structured or open-ended) was used, viz. methods A & D, or B & C). The open-ended situation-focused discussion method (A) was operationalised in accord with the critical incident discussion

method (Flanagan, 1954) (viz. situation description (*What was the situation?*), behaviour description (*What did he/she say or do?*), identification of consequences (*What happened then?*) and evaluative rationale (*Why do you think this was good/bad leadership?*)). The structured situation focused discussion method (C) provided participants with a written vignette of a likely situation (viz. one member of a friendship group deciding not to go to the school or club camp because of family financial constraints, and others in the group deliberating about if and how to help) as the starting point. The open-ended person focused discussion method (B) simply invited young people to recall a stimulus (*Think of someone around your age who shows 'good' or 'bad' leadership*) and then to identify relevant characteristics (*what they do/don't do or how they behave/act*) and the basis for their judgements (*Why do you think they show good/bad leadership?*). The structured person focused discussion method (D) also invited participants to focus on their age peers and used the projective technique of sentence-completion (Catterall & Ibbotson, 2000) to sample the behavioural (*Good/bad leaders in my age group try to…*), cognitive (*Good/bad leaders in my age group think that…*) and affective (*Good/bad leaders in my age group make me feel…*) aspects of leadership.

The four methods were trialled using a structured qualitative focus group technique (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). The focus groups incorporated two processes designed to enhance participants' trust and openness. Firstly, participants established discussion ground rules to facilitate safe and respectful communication. Secondly, to ensure that discussions optimised young people's perspectives and to minimise response bias (telling adults what they wanted to hear), we engaged and trained 'student facilitators and scribes' drawn from University degree programs to manage the focus group discussions. A Facilitators' Guide was produced for each of the four methods following the general protocol approved by the University Research Ethics Committee.

Data were collected from a number of sources. During the focus group discussions, the ideas raised by participants (content data) were recorded by scribes and observers. Following each discussion method, participants individually completed evaluation sheets which asked them to rate their experience (process data) (1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree) of each method on a number of dimensions (viz. productivity, engagement, voice and generalisability of method for peers). Observers also made notes on the processes of each group.

Results and Discussion

In this section we present our quantitative and qualitative findings regarding young people's comparative experience of the four methods and we present preliminary findings regarding their ideas of leadership.

Participants' individual quantitative evaluations were summarised in terms of their positive and negative perceptions of the four conversational methods (A, B, C & D) across seven statements (see Figures 1 and 2). Firstly, in terms of *outcomes* participants agreed that all four methods produced valid ideas about their views of leadership. They reported however, learning more about leadership from the structured person focus discussion (method D) using the sentence completion format. In terms of *engagement*, young people reported that the open ended person focused discussion (method B) was most interesting (least boring) and the structured person focus

discussion (method D) least interesting (most boring). In terms of opportunities for *participation and voice*, participants reported that while all methods and the focus group process as a whole provided adequate scope to have their say, methods A and D were most effective in this regard. In terms of *task process*, participants found both open ended methods (A and B) more confusing but the situation focused discussion (A) to be most confusing. Similarly, in terms of *generalisability*, participants agreed that all methods would work with young people in their age group. Two conclusions are evident from the above: firstly, all of our discussion designs are acceptable to young people as vehicles for collaboratively exploring their perceptions of leadership; secondly, each method has relative strengths and limitations and their effective use will depend on the requirements of particular research contexts.

In order to take account of the variations in numbers in the focus groups, we have used a scale of 30 and adjusted the response rates accordingly. We present the responses in two figures (see Figures 1 and 2), the first showing ratings of agreement with positive statements, and the second showing ratings of disagreement with negative statements.

Participants' open-ended feedback on each method was collated and clustered via a process of emergent theme analysis. Generally, consistent with the quantitative findings, participants did not express a clear preference for one method over the others. Overall, the positive comments for all methods were more numerous and detailed than any negative comments.

## FIGURE 1: COMPARATIVE RATINGS OF AGREEMENT WITH THE 4 METHODS
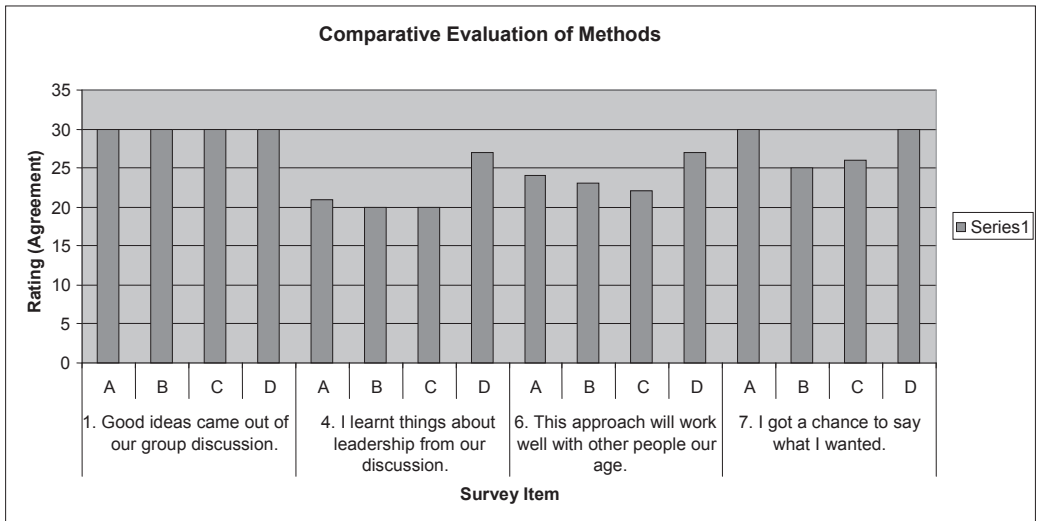
FIGURE 2: COMPARATIVE RATINGS OF DISAGREEMENT WITH THE 4 METHODS
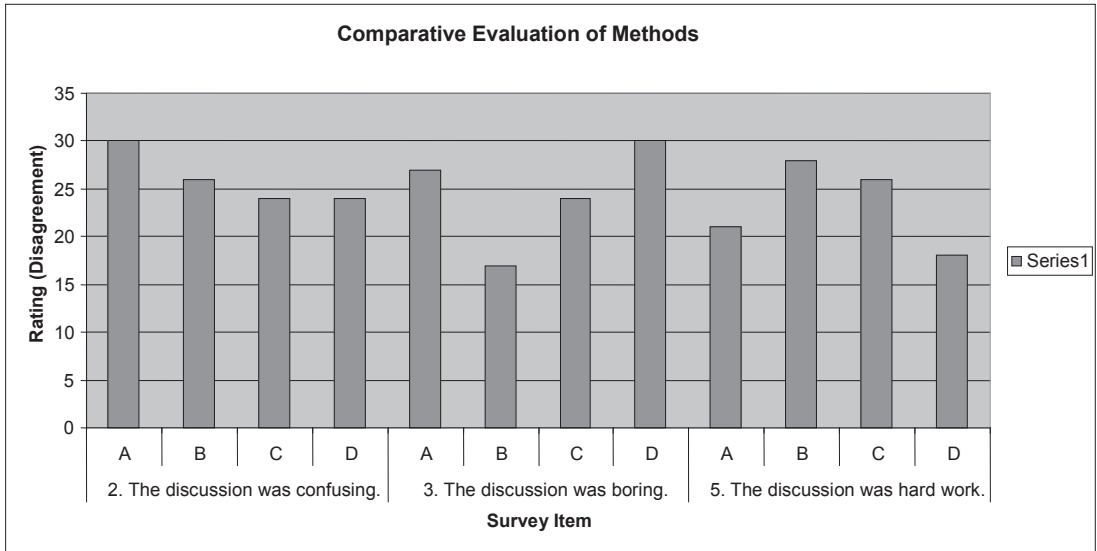
What did participants' qualitative comments reveal about their comparative experiences across the four methods? Interestingly and importantly, young people reported that it was the underlying process of the focus group that impacted most on their experience. Young people in this study identified several task and relationship process dimensions that facilitated their authentic engagement with and contribution to the reflective exercise, namely: creating an environment of respect; trust; providing structure to remain on task; stimulating provocations that maintained their interest and participation; and ensuring variety of participation modalities.

Respectful treatment by persons in positions of responsibility (the facilitators) was central in participants' accounts and explanations. Young people experienced respect through a range of related behaviours and attitudes: they believed their opinions were valued; that the facilitators were listening carefully to them; and that the facilitators were not being patronising in their questions or comments. The clear message for researchers is that for young people the process of 'being taken seriously' is clearly a prerequisite to 'making a serious contribution' to the question at hand. In the present study, participants' accounts reflect the critical contribution of perceptions of interactional justice (viz. fair and respectful treatment) (Lizzio, Wilson & Hadaway, 2007; Tyler & Blader, 2000) to their engagement. Young participants are telling us that in a very real sense the medium is the message. As researchers, we need to scrutinise more stringently our attitudes and methods with young people's experiences of 'fair treatment' in mind.

Participants attributed their motivation to accept the challenge of honestly and thoughtfully engaging in each method to a number of related process factors: enabling discussion ground rules (*an opinion was put out and not rejected, no one felt intimidated so you could say what you want without being judged*); non-judgemental and inclusive facilitation styles (*we were able to just say our ideas, we weren't told to be quiet or wait or that we were wrong, everyone had a chance to say something and you knew it was heard and that people were actually listening*); and positive

group climate (*people gave intelligent answers because of the atmosphere, it's open and you feel open to discuss your thoughts*). This group of young participants wanted to reflect on diverse opinions from their peers and they expected these opinions to be heard in a mature and responsive manner.

It is clear that collaboratively establishing and maintaining discussion ground rules is a fundamental group beginning process for ensuring the exchange and flow of information and personal opinion (Dick, 1991; Lizzio & Wilson, 2001). This may be particularly important for young participants who may require the additional safety and support that such frameworks supply. Fielding (2004) and Cook-Sather (2006) argue that peer influence and the pressures of group dynamics are particularly salient and inhibit young people 'saying it like it is'. Although the participants overwhelmingly claimed that the process enabled them 'to say what they liked and believed' about the topic, they were particularly sensitive, when commenting on the generalisability of these processes to their age peers, of the need to encourage confident participation (*Some people might have been too nervous to voice an opinion, and an open forum such as this encourages debate which might frighten people*), reduce social loafing (*While there was a chance for everyone to speak someone could easily sit back and let others do everything*), and manage peer approval (*Someone might be scared about what their peers would say*).

An interesting finding was that group proxemics played a role in engaging these young participants who reported enjoying the intimacy of seeing each other's faces in the groups (*It was good because we could all see each other unlike in the classroom*) and claimed this was much better than the traditional discussion of engaging topics in the classroom where they could only see the backs of other students (*can't tell what they are thinking*). In this regard, participants are making the distinction between sociofugal environments which facilitate interaction and bring people together (e.g. a circle of chairs) and sociopetal environments which push people apart (e.g. traditional classrooms) (Burgoon, Buller & Woodall, 1989).

What did young participants say about the relative merits of the four approaches as means of eliciting their views? While young people reported positive aspects for all methods (consistent with their quantitative ratings), they did differentiate between them. In particular, the structured situation focused discussion (method C) was regarded as an effective balance of initial structure to focus the discussion (*There was a stimulus which got us all thinking and really trying to understand the leadership used in the story*) and a realistic and engaging topic (*We were given an actual situation that many of us were able to relate to therefore we had many ideas*). On the other hand, young people were aware that their explorations about the nature of leadership were constrained by the stimulus vignette (*Why limit it to just one scenario? There are so many other points that could have been brought up. It limited what we could say*). The continued validity of the underlying design choices, indeed tension, between open-ended exploration and structured discussion that informed this study are clearly affirmed by young people's comments.

There was also evidence to support the purposeful combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in investigating this topic. For example, although the sentence completion format (method D) rated as well as other methods in terms of outcomes, students' comments revealed that, to some extent, this was seen as a 'thesaurus exercise' (*You heard some words you wouldn't from day to day*) in which students attempted to outdo each other. This indicates that some

methods may be less robust and require more skilful facilitation if their potential is to be achieved with adolescent participants.

A number of young people suggested that their engagement would be considerably enhanced through using visual media (e.g. a DVD demonstrating good and bad leadership action, a series of photographs or a role play). It perhaps should not be surprising that a more visually literate generation would nominate such methods. Approaches which are experientially involving (*Have a problem solving game then ask the participants how the leader of their group acted*), active (*People acting out good and bad leadership*) or realistic (*Going and observing leadership in action and asking people why is the leader good/bad*) were also nominated as potentially more engaging and therefore more likely to deliver deeper understanding of 'how we feel and what we think'. The clear take-away message here is that 'engagement' is a prerequisite to 'contribution'.

Initial Findings on Youth Leadership

While the primary focus of this study is the validity and utility of processes for accessing young people's views of leadership, some preliminary comments are also able to be made regarding the content of their views. The ideas shared by the participants about their perspectives on leadership were aggregated and analysed for both repeated themes and unique perspectives. Although still in the early stages of investigation, in general, young people in this study identified clusters of leadership attributes with a high degree of consistency across method, gender and context (school or sporting club setting).

What did young people consider to be good and bad leadership? Young people's ideas of 'good' leadership covered a broad domain of personality factors, ethical or moral considerations, responsibility, respect, and autonomy or initiative. Thus to be considered a good leader by their peers an adolescent must demonstrate care and consideration for his/her colleagues. Prosocial qualities (viz. *inclusive, understanding, helpful, optimistic, selfless, patient and friendly*) were particularly emphasised. This reinforces the relational and personal aspects identified as particularly salient to young people's conceptions of leadership (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009). Interestingly, young people's comments reflect the argument by Roach et al. (1999) that youth leadership models need to move toward conceptualisations that account for collective action, and the finding by Zeldin and Camino (1999) that youth leadership has confident communication and teamwork at its core constructs (*Good leader is not scared to have a go—he can relate to everyone—sticks his hand up—really relates to everyone in the school—the sort of person people will follow—even in primary school he was always like front and centre*). Thus young people described leaders who would make all members of the team feel valued, yet still unique (*Make you feel like you belong, they'll come up to you and make sure (make you feel) you're alright, Make you feel included, help you out in training—don't have a go at you*).

From an ethical perspective, the good leader would be able to make decisions based on a sense of equality and moral principle (*knows what is right and what is wrong*). They would know each person and see each situation in a non-judgemental way (*accept that everyone was different but they were all on the same team or working towards the same goals*).

From a social influence perspective, the good leader also has a shared sense of authority and works towards the group's common interests, often adopting an advocacy role (*When people stand up for others as well as themselves*). The leader models participative and cooperative behaviour for all members of the team. They are able to make their own fair decisions and are autonomous, responsible and independent. Similarly, the good leader also shows initiative and completes tasks without being told. In essence, the young people believed that the good leader could be anyone within the ranks of the group as long as they respected themselves, their elders, individuals and the nature or purpose of the group.

In contrast, it is interesting to note the alternative attributes suggested for the 'bad' leader. According to the young people in this study, the bad leader is also confident and strong. Unfortunately, the bad leader is also egocentric, bossy and omnipotent. He/she makes the other team members feel degraded, stupid and isolated (*Bad leaders don't listen to others—they think they're right—they're quite rude to others who object*). Young people's conceptions of 'bad leadership' appear to closely parallel the construct of relational aggression (Rose, Swenson & Waller, 2004). The importance placed on fair treatment and interpersonal justice (Tyler & Blader, 2000) that was evident in young people's process evaluations of the methods of the present study is also very salient to their content descriptions of leadership. Clearly, fair treatment is core to adolescents' evaluations of each other's attempts at social influence.

Conclusion

This study has systematically evaluated a range of methods for eliciting young people's conceptions of leadership and reported preliminary findings on the content of their conceptions.

In terms of effective processes, young people identify the conduct of discussions as equally, if not more important, than specific methods in facilitating their engagement and contribution. Approaches to research that are based on a 'respectful partnership' and a 'clear ethic of care' with young people and give prominence to their direct voice would seem to be designs of choice. Adolescents strongly confirm that it is particularly important to engage them meaningfully in choices about the methods researchers use in gathering their views.

From a methodological perspective, participants regarded the methods used in this study as effective, and the quality of their responses confirmed this. Thus they can be used with confidence. However, there was also evidence that young people's engagement with the task of explicating their underlying ideas and privately held opinions might be better facilitated by more active or visually engaging stimuli. For example, as various researchers have attested, 'photo-speak' or other image-based methods are likely to give students more autonomy in the research process than traditional methods such as questionnaires and interviews (Leitch & Mitchell, 2007; Marquez-Zenkov et al., 2007; O'Grady, 2008). Capturing visually, the leadership actions of peers and the situations in which young people see them in playgrounds or sporting clubs, has the capacity to personalise their perspectives and the capacity to make their tacit knowledge explicit. However, methods such as these carry with them significant problems when it comes to ethical clearance from Research Ethics Committees concerned with children's privacy and matters of informed

consent. One approach to balancing engaging stimuli and ethical safety may be to construct enacted video vignettes based on young people's accounts.

Our preliminary content findings suggest that young people construct leadership in personal and relational terms and that cooperative and prosocial characteristics are central to their views of 'good leadership'. In this regard, young people attached considerable importance to advocacy behaviours such as speaking up for their peers or on behalf of others less able to do so. Contrastingly, adolescents recognised the negative potential power in self-interested and manipulative 'bad leadership', reflecting their heightened consciousness about justice and a sense of fair play for all.

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