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Parent-teacher interactions: A study of the dynamics of social influence

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was to explore the nature of parent-teacher interactions and to find evidence of social influence strategies used within their interactions. The literature showed that schools, internationally, nationally, and locally, have implemented parental involvement programs advocated by their respective governments. These programs are designed to encourage parents to interact more with the school and the teachers, forming parent-teacher partnerships to enhance student achievement levels. However, in practice, previous research has also signalled that there are underlying tensions in these parent-teacher partnerships that impact on parent-teacher interactions. This study sought to identify factors that parents and teachers describe as impacting on their interactions.

Four low fee, independent, Protestant, metropolitan Perth primary schools participated in the study. Sixty-seven parents and teachers shared their lived experiences of positive and less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions. Data were collected through the use of individual in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions. Reading and interpreting these transcripts aided in uncovering patterns of meaning, given by parents and teachers, into the nature of their interactions and their use of social influence strategies.

The key finding from this study revealed that the nature of parent-teacher interactions was either collaborative or non-collaborative. The research concluded that parents and teachers held similar views on what practices made their interactions collaborative; however, they had different perspectives on what constituted non-collaborative practices. Secondly, six social influence strategies: *authorities/experts, discussion, evidence, passive resistance, pressure,* and *relational* were identified as being used by both parents and teachers during these interactions. These social influence strategies were used to persuade, manipulate, coerce, and/or negate the other person into sharing, adopting, obtaining or ignoring a person's perspective. The outcomes of parents and teachers using social influence strategies were to obtain a course of action, level of care, and/or support for the student. Finally, these social influence strategies were utilised during various contexts and purposes for parent-

teacher interactions. The findings revealed that parents and teachers had a preference for using the *discussion, evidence,* and *relational* strategies during their interactions, irrespective of the context or purpose.

Overall, this research identified that five social influence strategies resulted in satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions affording positive outcomes for students. Conversely, one social influence strategy, *passive resistance*, resulted in less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions deriving less than satisfactory outcomes for students.

Based on the findings from this research, a number of recommendations are suggested that include professional learning opportunities for teachers (and members of the school's leadership team) on: the collaborative and non-collaborative practices of parents and teachers; the use and occasions for social influence strategies being implemented during particular parent-teacher interactions; and, customer service and public relations skills (in particular for early career teachers). These recommendations are viewed, in light of the findings identified in this present study, as enhancing parent-teacher communication, parent-teacher relationships and parental involvement in schools. In addition, these recommendations support the Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership's *National Professional Standards for Teachers* which aims to improve teacher quality and positively enhance student achievement levels in our Australian schools.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i)   incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii)   contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii)   contain any defamatory material.

Signed:

Date:

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Teachers are not only involved in educating students, but increasingly they are involved in working with parents to improve educational outcomes. Crozier and Davies (2007), Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson (1980), Vickers and Minke (1995), Vincent (1996), and Wolfendale (1992) have suggested that for schools to make a difference in enhancing student learning, a team effort involving teachers, students, and parents is required. However, the relationship that exists between parents and teachers can be described as both rewarding and challenging (Lasky, 2000). Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie (1987) stated that this partnership between students, teachers, and parents is significant for students' academic success. Consequently, a focus for schools (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989) has been to nurture and promote parental involvement, as parents can form the nexus of this team approach, and they are recognised as being a valuable resource to education, creating partnerships between the home and school. Educational authorities, schools, and governments have encouraged greater levels of parental involvement in schools; however, previous research (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Dickinson, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Lareau, 1987; Lasky, 2000; Levin, 2006; Miretzky, 2004) has identified some associated problems. This current investigation sought to identify various aspects that contribute to this team effort between parents and teachers in local primary schools, as well as factors that hinder this partnership.

The introductory section of this thesis sets out to provide an outline of factors that were viewed as impacting on the partnership between parents and teachers. This section begins with an explanation on the background to this research, followed by a discussion of the rationale and significance, leading to the purpose of this research, which examines parental involvement (and parent-teacher interactions) in order to understand parent-teacher interactions (and parental involvement). In addition, guiding questions are also provided.

Finally, this research is considered timely, as the current Australian government through its *Building the Education Revolution* (Department of Education

Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2011a) and *National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality* (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2008) has developed several initiatives to enhance parental involvement in Australian schools.

Background

"When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life" (Henderson & Berla, 1997, p. 1). Many studies have identified the positive influence that parental involvement has on student achievement: academically (Driessen, Smit, & Sleegers, 2005; Ertl, 2000; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Reynolds, 1992), socially (Driessen, et al., 2005; Marcon, 1999; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001), and behaviourally (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Reynolds, et al., 2001). In addition, studies have found that teachers recognise the importance of parental involvement as being associated with improved student performance levels (Driessen, et al., 2005).

Furthermore, government initiatives in both the United Kingdom (UK) in 1994, and the United States of America (USA) in 2001, included parental involvement policies and programs derived at providing parents with greater accessibility to schools. Australia followed this approach in 2007-2011. In the UK, the 1994 *Parent's Charter* established parents in the role of a consumer within the education system enabling "parents to monitor their child's progress and compare schools" (Vincent, 1996, p. 52). In the USA, the *No Child Left Behind* Act (2001), was mandated linking funding to parental involvement programs in schools (United States Department of Education, 2008). These government directed parental involvement policies sought to provide parents with greater accessibility to schools and therefore foster greater parent participation (Australian Council State Schools Organisation (ACSSO), 2008a; Dom & Verhoeven, 2006; United States Department of Education, 2008).

In Australia, in 2008, in response to a government report on *Family-School and Community Partnerships*, a bureau was developed to "build bridges between families, communities and schools" (Australian Council State Schools Organisation (ACSSO), 2008a, p. 1). The rationale was that effective partnerships between the home and school have been found to lead to improvements in the quality of schooling, with

students having a more satisfying educational experience (Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau, 2008). These government programs such as *Parental and Community Engagement Program*, as well as *Family-School Partnerships,* were established in Australian schools, receiving recognition through the *Excellence in Family-School Partnerships* awards (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2010) for providing successful programs engaging parents, families, and community members within schools.

In Western Australia, the former Department of Education and Training (now Department of Education Western Australia) developed a *Family Links Program* (Department of Education Western Australia, 2013). In 2008, several selected Perth primary schools were part of a pilot program that provided examples of their practice of getting parents involved in schools. The results from the pilot study revealed that schools could increase parental involvement by employing parent liaison officers in the primary schools. The role of these parent liaison officers was to "encourage parents to come into the school, providing hospitality, generating ideas and being a voice for parents" (G. Dewhurst, personal communication, April 10, 2008). State and federal educational agencies are promoting parental involvement and supporting schools to engage their parents in the educational process.

Educational reforms have seen the implementation of policies that are linked to government funding fostering partnership programs between the home and school. The roles of parents and teachers in schools are changing with parents being encouraged to be much more involved in their children's school and educational process. The reason for encouraging parental involvement is that it has been linked to student achievement (Porter, 2008).

Rationale and Significance

As a result of the Australian government's initiatives, parents are considered in some schools as consumers of education who are now in receipt of information outlining the performance of their child in relation to their peers, and the performance of their school in relation to their local area, state, and/or country (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2010; Porter, 2008; Vincent, 1996). Schools are now working in an era of greater public accountability (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2008c).

The impact of this accountability upon Australian schools is yet to be reported. However, parents are taking these performance reports into consideration, and some students have been moved from schools that perform poorly by parents who regard this as a consumer decision (Vincent, 2000).

The Australian government, through its *Building Education Revolution*, announced several initiatives that are designed to improve the quality of education in Australian schools (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2011a). One of the Australian government's aims is for all students to gain a better education with a focus on greater attendance and academic achievement (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2008b). Furthermore, the Australian government has developed the *MySchool* website (Australian Curriculum Reporting and Assessment Authority (ACARA), 2011) providing school-based information in an open and transparent format. Standards in education are now being monitored more closely through this website, and schools have to respond to and publish school and student results, as well as other information such as staff training, teachers' professional status, and the schools' finances are orchestrated. The Australian government has also extended the national assessment scheme so that parents will know how their child is performing in relation to their peers across the nation through the *National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy* (NAPLAN) testing in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2011b). These initiatives have made schools more accountable to all stakeholders, including parents as consumers of education.

Therefore, as the focus of education in Australia changes, parents are being encouraged to take a more significant role in schools. Government programs in Australia are being developed to bring groups of parents and families back into the school environment (Muller & Saulwick, 2006). Epstein and Becker's (1982) empirical work investigated parental involvement in schools by revealing techniques used by teachers to encourage parents into schools. Furthermore, Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders and Simon (1997) developed the *Parental Involvement Framework* which is a model for schools to foster these home-school links. Epstein and Becker (1982), however, commented that teacher attitudes towards parents impacted on this partnership. Furthermore, Munn (1985, 1993), Toomey (1996), and Moore and Lasky

(1999) recognised that some government initiatives could possibly hamper the partnership between parents and teachers with the reasons being that parents could be more interfering, thereby pressuring teachers to retreat from their partnership. In addition, barriers have been noted from both the parents' and teachers' perspectives, as well as professional boundaries erected by teachers (Crozier, 1999). Any misunderstandings can limit the parental involvement in a school.

This study aims to identify emerging concepts from the experiences of parents and teachers by investigating the nature of parent-teacher interactions, as well as determining if social influence strategies are evident within their interactions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe factors that led to both successful and unsuccessful parent-teacher interactions. This was achieved through eliciting parent and teacher stories of their experiences of working together, thus obtaining an understanding of the partnership process in a specific school context. It is anticipated that an outcome of this study can assist in the facilitation of enhanced parent-teacher communication, parent-teacher relationships, parental involvement in schools, and student achievement levels.

The focus for schools is to promote parental involvement in order to enhance student achievement. The degree to which parents can be involved in a school, whilst being encouraged at the school level, however, is generally left up to the teacher (Crozier, 1999). Research has highlighted that tension often exists in parent-teacher interactions (Moore & Lasky, 1999). Furthermore, some teachers, whilst they value parental involvement, are known to be fearful of parents and, therefore, limit parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2001, p. 844). Lasky (2000) and Crozier (1999) have suggested that parents and teachers need to foster good communication to strengthen their relationships. Other studies highlight the need for both parents and teachers to work together in order for the student to receive an academic benefit (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987).

Lasky (2000) noted that "few empirical studies focused on parent-teacher interactions" (p. 844). Previous research in this field includes partnership programs of parents and schools (Dom & Verhoeven, 2006), parental involvement programs and the contributing influences to its implementation (Borg & Mayo, 2001; Comer &

Haynes, 1991; Epstein, 1995; Epstein, et al., 1997; Keyes, 2002; Lareau, 1987), and the roles of parents in schools from the parents' and teachers' perspectives (Crozier, 1999; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987; Moore & Lasky, 1999; Vincent, 1996). This study focuses on the factors that parents and teachers have identified as contributing to their positive and/or less than satisfactory experience of their interactions.

An integral aspect of parent-teacher interactions is the use of social influence during their interactions. Social influence is defined as a "change in the belief, attitude and/or behaviour of one person (the target of social influence) that can be attributed to another person (the influencing agent)" (French & Raven, 1959, p.118). Moreover, this change of belief, attitude and/or behaviour evolves from the use of various pressure strategies as methods to obtain compliance to a request (Cialdini, 1984; Hewstone & Martin, 2008). Leary (1957, cited in Erchul, Raven, & Ray, 2001, p. 583) also stated that "power and social influence are intrinsic to all human relationships". Social psychologists such as Cartwright (1959), Raven and Rubin (1976), Erchul and Raven (1997), and Erchul, Raven and Ray (2001) have undertaken research in the area of social influence in dyadic relationships in order to understand compliance strategies. They identified various forms of social influence used by managers that were directed at their bosses, peers, and/or subordinates within an organisation. The emphasis within this study viewed parents and teachers as peers (co-equals), and focused on their use of compliance strategies within their interactions in a specific school environment. The information from this study could be used to foster more positive parent-teacher communication, parent-teacher interactions, parental involvement in schools, and parent-teacher relationships in order to enhance student achievement levels.

Research Questions

This study investigated the nature of parent-teacher interactions in selected low fee, independent, Protestant primary schools in the Perth metropolitan region. The research has also centred its investigation into the use of social influence strategies within these parent-teacher interactions and highlights the associated contexts and particular purposes for the use of these social influence strategies.

1. What is the nature of parents' and teachers' experiences of their interactions?

2. What evidence is there of sources of social influence employed in parent teacher interactions?

    2.1   Is the use of social influence associated with particular contexts?

    2.2   Is the use of social influence associated with particular purposes for the interaction?

Definition of Term

In this study, the following definition was applied:

<u>Social Influence</u> is defined as a "change in the belief, attitude and/or behaviour of one person (the target of social influence) that can be attributed to another person (the influencing agent)" (French & Raven, 1959, p.118). In addition, the change in belief, attitude, or behaviour was found to be associated with the use of persuasion, manipulation and/or coercion pressure strategies (Cialdini, 1984; Hewstone & Martin, 2008).

<u>Partnership</u> is defined as the way parents and teachers operate together within the school creating "a welcoming environment and engaging families in activities that contribute to students' readiness for school, academic success, and positive attitudes and behavio[u]rs" (Epstein & Rodriguez-Jansorn, 2004, p. 19).

<u>Parental involvement</u> constitutes school-related activities, attitudes, and/or behaviours which occur at home (homework), in the school (volunteering) or within the community (support) that positively impact on a child's educational outcome (Epstein, et al., 1997; Ertl, 2000; Porter, 2008).

<u>Parent-teacher interaction</u> is any meeting between a parent and a teacher during which information is shared about the child/student regarding school related and/or family matters (Lasky, 2000; Walker, 1998).

Thesis Structure

The focus of this study was to explore the nature of parent-teacher interactions and to find evidence of social influence strategies used during their interactions. Chapter One highlighted the background, rationale, significance, and purpose for this study. Furthermore, two research questions guided this study, with two sub-questions exploring the associations of social influence strategies with particular types of parent-teacher interactions.

Chapter Two reviews the literature associated with parental involvement in schools, highlighting the positive impact this has on student achievement levels. In addition, barriers to parental involvement are presented from both the parents' and teachers' perspectives. An examination of the literature on the differing roles that parents (and teachers) adopt in schools in relation to teachers (and parents) is also explored; this assists with understanding parent-teacher relationships. Moreover, research on the various forms of face-to-face parent-teacher communication is also presented, with a secondary study highlighting the formal nature of parent-teacher meetings with comparisons drawn to primary schools. Subsequently, government policies that influence parental involvement in schools are investigated including the funding for parental involvement programs locally, nationally, and internationally. For the purpose of this study, schools are viewed as organisations with selected principles of organisational behaviour drawn from the literature, including the use of social influence strategies as a method used to obtain compliance with requests.

Chapter Three discusses the theoretical and conceptual frameworks adopted for this study. Firstly, the perspective of constructivism is discussed; this was used as the theoretical lens to help understand the experiences of parents and teachers from both of their perspectives. Secondly, a conceptual framework is presented which outlines the main concepts that were utilised to investigate the nature of parent-teacher interactions, and also outlines evidence of social influence. Finally, the model is explained illustrating the key constructs used for this investigation.

Chapter Four discusses the methodology utilised in the study. Through the use of qualitative methods, this research sought to capture parents' and teachers' experiences of their interactions. In addition, an interpretive approach was adopted, which facilitated the researcher to understand how parents' and teachers' interpreted their interactions. Data were collected via focus group sessions and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. Therefore, a qualitative interpretative research paradigm was utilised for this study to understand the subjective lived experiences of parents and teachers.

The findings from this research are presented in Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight. In response to the first research question, Chapter Five explains that the nature of parent-teacher interactions was either collaborative or non-collaborative. In addition, specific activities underpinned these practices which determined whether

these interactions were satisfactory or less than satisfactory. Chapter Six addresses the second research question, and highlights six social influences strategies that were employed by both parents and teachers during their interactions. These strategies were identified as obtaining particular outcomes impacting on the students. Furthermore, these social influence strategies were associated with particular contexts, as elaborated upon in Chapter Seven, with the particular purposes explicated in Chapter Eight. The findings from this study have been specifically interpreted as the lived experiences of parents and teachers in low fee, independent, Protestant, metropolitan Perth primary schools.

Chapter Nine discusses the findings obtained from this study in relation to previous research. Four key findings are provided, which explain the nature of parent-teacher interactions, and the ways in which six social influence strategies were employed during these interactions. Overall, collaborative practices resulted in higher levels of student support and/or pastoral care for the student, whilst non-collaborative practices furnished limited or no support/pastoral care for the student. Furthermore, five social influence strategies provided courses of action, pastoral care, and/or support for the student, whilst one strategy afforded limited or no action or support for the student. The findings from this study can, therefore, inform parent-teacher communications, parent-teacher relationships, and parental involvement in schools, as well as the use of social influence strategies in co-status dyadic relationships. Finally, comparisons are drawn between the findings and previous studies with specific identification of gaps that exist in the literature.

Chapter Ten provides a conclusion for this study on parent-teacher interactions with the presentation of a conceptual model (see Figure 10.1) and a summary of the findings. Two conclusions can be drawn from the model: firstly, satisfactory parent-teacher interactions employed collaborative practices and five social influence strategies that obtained positive outcomes for students; and secondly, less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions utilised non-collaborative practices and one form of social influence that resulted in less than satisfactory outcomes for students. With this new knowledge, recommendations have been made to enhance parent-teacher communications, parent-teacher relationships, and parental involvement in schools. These align with the Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership's (AITSL) *National Professional Standards for Teachers (2011)*. Finally, suggestions

for future research that were developed from the findings and the gaps in the literature are presented.

The next chapter begins with a review of the literature associated with parental involvement in schools, parent-teacher relationships, student achievement, and parent-teacher communication, as well as social influence strategies employed in organisational settings.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature from Australia and overseas suggests that parental involvement in schools enhances student performance levels. Various studies since the 1980s (Driessen, et al., 2005; Epstein, 1984, April; Epstein, et al., 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987; Marcon, 1999; Porter, 2008; Reynolds, 1992; Vincent, 1996) have explored parental involvement from early childhood through to the secondary years of schooling across different cultural and social settings, and have shown that parental involvement positively influences student achievement.

This literature review begins by examining schools as organisations, which provides the context for the first part of this study into the nature of parent-teacher interactions. This is followed by an investigation into the literature on parental involvement in schools, including an outline of Epstein, et al.'s (1997) *Parental Involvement Framework*. In addition, barriers to parental involvement from both the parents' and teachers' perspectives are highlighted from the literature. Further, examinations of parent typologies found in schools, as well as styles of parent-teacher relationships, are outlined. Subsequently, the positive impacts that parental involvement has on student achievement are reviewed. Government policies, both in Australia and overseas, aimed at implementing parent participation programs in schools, are considered next. In the penultimate part of this chapter, the literature on parent-teacher communication is discussed, emphasising the various forms of communication experienced by parents and teachers in schools.

The final section of this literature review explores studies on social influence, which forms the second part of this present investigation. Parallels are firstly drawn between business organisations and school structures, highlighting the potential for social influence being evident in schools. This is followed by an examination of the types of social influence used primarily by individuals in organisations. In addition, this section provides an analysis of empirical studies on social influence strategies found in organisational settings. Any gaps in the research on parental involvement, parent-teacher interactions, and social influence are also identified throughout the chapter.

Schools as Organisations

This section discusses schools as organisations. A brief outline of the definition of an organisation is provided, as well as the structure of organisations and an explanation of organisational behaviour, drawing similarities to schools. Furthermore, this literature review explains social influence strategies that are utilised in organisational settings, which are linked to supervisor and supervisee relationships. By considering schools as organisations, an examination of the various activities found among their members can be undertaken.

First, a work organisation can be defined as a "socially designed unit, ... that engages in activities to accomplish a goal or set of objectives, has an identifiable boundary, and is linked to the external society" (Callinan, Forshaw, & Sawchuk, 2007, p. 5). Within such organisations, people adopt roles and identities depending on how they perceive themselves, as well as how others perceive them (Callinan, et al., 2007). Schools match these criteria and therefore, they can be viewed as organisations.

Furthermore, "organisations are made up of people, and they form relationships with each other and perform tasks that help attain the organisation's goals" (Callinan, et al., 2007, p. 5). Similarly, schools encompass students, parents, teachers, and non-teaching staff who form relationships and interact with each other. In addition, schools are hierarchical, with defined purposes and established activities that are common to the people of the school. Subsequently, schools, as organisations, have formal and informal social structures (Callinan, et al., 2007). Formal social structures refer to the norms and standards for interactions, relationships, and behaviours, whilst informal social structures refer to the unwritten rules for interactions, relationships, and behaviours. It is these informal social structures that are of interest to this present study.

A second characteristic of organisations is that human activity is goal orientated (Callinan, et al., 2007). Schools, too, have clearly defined goals and expectations, which have been established by the school and government policy. It is expected that students, parents, teachers, and school staff members work towards and achieve their defined goals. In essence, schools, as organisations, are designed to accomplish their goals.

Callinan et al. (2007) explained how organisations have identifiable boundaries that are inclusive of its membership group. Schools have a membership group based on their employees such as students, teachers, and non-teaching staff. However, a conundrum seems to exist with the membership of parents in schools. Parents are considered to be part of the school community, yet research (Crozier, 1999; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Lareau, 1987; Lasky, 2000; Miretzky, 2004; Moore & Lasky, 1999) has identified that barriers exist that at times exclude the parents as members of this community. This exclusion of parents from schools forms part of this current study through identifying the nature of parent-teacher interactions.

A final aspect of organisations is the connectivity and influence on their external community (Callinan, et al., 2007). Schools operate and make connections with their local community such as their students, parents, as well as other affiliated external educational bodies. Callinan et al. (2007) also stated that a consequence of organisational activities is customer satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction. These consequences in terms of customer satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction form part of this study through identifying the nature of parent-teacher interactions, as well as determining whether social influence strategies are evident within their interactions.

A further factor is the behaviour of the members within the organisation (Callinan, et al., 2007). Sociologists, such as Weber (cited in Haralambos & Heald, 1985) described organisations as being hierarchical in nature, with policies and guidelines to follow, whilst Ball (1987) defined schools as a place of micro-political activity. Therefore, schools, as organisations, could encounter various behaviours of their membership groups including micro-political activity. From the literature, behaviours of membership groups include the use of social influence strategies. These strategies were found to be used by organisational members to obtain compliance to a request (Erchul, et al., 2001; Kipnis, et al., 1980).

Studies on the dynamics of social influence are often cited in the organisational literature as occurring in hierarchical relationships (Erchul & Raven, 1997; Kipnis, et al., 1980; Raven, 1993; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Yukl & Falbe, 1990). Kipnis et al.'s (1980) empirical research on social influence noted the methods employed by managers in an upward, downward and lateral direction within organisations. Social psychological research suggest that schools, as organisations, may also find evidence

of social influence strategies being used (Erchul, et al., 2001; Koslowsky & Stasevsky, 2005; Raven, 1993). This present research sought to determine whether social influence strategies are evident during parent-teacher interactions within a primary school setting.

Schools have been classified as organisations that are comprised of parents, teachers, and students whose dynamics and behaviours impact on their interactions. It is these interactions, particularly between parents and teachers, which are of interest to this study in understanding how one person's activities can impact on the other. The next section explores parental involvement within schools, as well as barriers that can impact on parent involvement.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement constitutes the school-related activities, attitudes, and/or behaviours which occur at home (homework), in the school (meetings, support and/or volunteering) or within the community (assistance and/or volunteering), that positively impact on a child's educational outcome (Epstein, et al., 1997; Ertl, 2000; Porter, 2008). Researchers (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Epstein, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987; Keyes, 2002; Lareau, 1987) identified the significance of parental involvement including recommendations for schools to realise the full potential of parental involvement. Comer and Haynes (1991) stated, "parents can contribute insights and knowledge that complement the professional skills of the school staff in ways that strengthen academic and social programs" (p. 271). Furthermore, parents can be a source of information and make relevant contributions that can enhance the academic program and further support the students (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987; Lareau, 1987). Keyes (2002) also noted that greater levels of communication between home and school enables a child to perform better academically. According to Epstein (1995), when parents communicated with the school, participate in the classroom, connect with the school community including other parents, are part of the decision-making process through various roles, and establish links between school knowledge and home knowledge, it can be claimed the school has excellent parental involvement and this affords positive benefits to students

This section on parental involvement begins with a discussion on research conducted by Epstein and Becker (1982) including their definition of parental

involvement; followed by a review of Epstein et al.'s (1997) *Parental Involvement Framework*. Furthermore, barriers to parental involvement are highlighted, as they can also impact on parent-teacher interactions. The complex nature of schools is discussed with consideration given to the different types of parents and teachers found in educational settings. In addition, this is a discussion of several studies which emphasise the positive impact that parental involvement has on student achievement. This section concludes with an examination of government policy and its influence on parental involvement in schools.

Empirical research into parental involvement by Epstein and Becker (1982) identified different ways that parents can be involved in schools. To examine the activities, attitudes, and behaviours of teachers who involved parents in their classroom, Epstein and Becker (1982) interviewed 3700 teachers from 600 different schools in the United States of America (USA). The authors found that teacher practices in which the parents were involved consisted of parents volunteering to help in class, supporting the learning at home, and meeting with teachers to discuss student progress (Epstein & Becker, 1982). The study concluded that when parents are involved with the school's learning program in the classroom, at school or at home, the students develop better basic skills and had greater positive behaviours.

From Epstein and Becker's (1982) original work, the *Parental Involvement Framework* was developed by Epstein et al. (1997). A key component of parent involvement is the encouragement of parents into the classrooms (Epstein, 1985), and with the *Parental Involvement Framework* six broad directions were developed for schools to adopt offering parents, teachers, students, and schools various opportunities to connect and build relationships (Epstein, et al., 1997). The *Parental Involvement Framework* can be summarised as:

1. Parenting - parenting skills are promoted and supported.

2. Communication - effective home to school and school to home communication on school activities and student progress.

3. Volunteering - parents are made welcome at the school, and their support and assistance are sought.

4. Learning at home - involves parents in the school and helps them to understand their role in supporting their child's learning in the home.

5. School decision-making and advocacy - parents are partners in the decisions that affect children and families through school councils, committees, and other parent organisations.

6. Collaboration with the community - community resources used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

(Epstein, et al., 1997, p. 8)

McWayne et al. (2004) commented that other countries have employed this framework, including Australia, where Muller (2006) in his research developed the *Family Schools Partnership Program* to foster higher levels of parental involvement in schools. Although the *Parental Involvement Framework* highlighted six directions for schools to foster parent involvement, only four of the directions in the framework were relevant to the purpose of this study: *parenting, communication, volunteering,* and *learning at home*. The other two directions: *school decision-making and advocacy*, as well as *collaboration with the community* are viewed as whole school approaches to parental involvement and are not directly related to the specific nature of parent-teacher interactions.

From the above, it can be seen that the significance of Epstein et al.'s (1997) *Parental Involvement Framework* was that it provided methods that schools could employ to promote positive parent-teacher interactions. Furthermore, schools have been encouraged to utilise these directions in order to enhance student achievement levels. However, whilst the literature highlights activities that schools could undertake to foster greater parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement have also been identified. The following section explores the various factors that inhibit parental involvement in schools and, therefore, parent-teacher interactions.

Barriers to parental involvement

Barriers to parental involvement were highlighted in the literature as being family and/or school barriers. Family barriers include social class (Lareau, 1987), socio-economic scores (Hughes & Kwok, 2007), and cultural factors (Crozier & Davies, 2007). School barriers such as the teacher's lack of time (Lasky, 2000; Miretzky, 2004) and self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987) were also identified as impacting on parental involvement. Furthermore, Crozier (1999) and Moore and Lasky (1999) have noted that the balance of power between parents and teachers can have a bearing on the type of relationship that develops. Although parents and teachers

have a shared interest in educating the child, they viewed their relationships differently and this has been noted as "causing tension" (Lewis & Forman, 2002, p. 61). Subsequently this has, on occasions, transformed into work-related violence against teachers. Vickers and Minke (1995) suggested that exploring parent-teacher interactions can assist in identifying strategies that connect parents and teachers and, thus, further enhance student achievement in schools.

Firstly, Lareau's (1987) research focused on social class as impacting on parent-teacher interactions. She carried out studies in the UK using in-depth interviews of parents, teachers and principals and conducted participant observation of year two students. The results from her research found working class parents rarely made contact with their teachers, and demonstrated signs of discomfort in parent-teacher meetings. In addition, these parents raised non-academic questions, had access to fewer resources to comply with teachers' requests, and were more formal and serious during their interactions (Lareau, 1987). It was also noted that working class families seemed to allocate the responsibility of educating their child to the teacher, because the parents saw their responsibility as providing support to the child at home, thus emphasising a separation of roles (Lareau, 1987). She also stated that the interactions between middle class parents and teachers were more frequent than interactions between working class parents and teachers. Middle class parents discussed their academic concerns with the teacher often and were less formal during their meetings. These parents also demonstrated signs of confidence; were found to make requests of the teacher for additional resources; were more apt to interfere; and monitored school performance through the schools' publications. Lareau (1987) also found that middle class parents described their relationships with teachers, as "being equal, as they believed that they possessed similar or better skills than the teacher" (p. 80). In other studies, middle class parents were also found to have different attitudes towards school through being more visible and self-confident, compared with working class parents (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett, 1982; Crozier, 1999; Raey 1998, cited in Dom & Verhoeven, 2006). In summary, social class was a significant factor in parental involvement and impacted on parent-teacher interactions.

Another aspect that influences parent-teacher interactions include a family's socio-economic score (SES). Hughes and Kwok (2007) considered firstly, a family's SES and secondly, background variables such as gender and ethnicity as barriers to

parental involvement. According to Eagle (1989), "SES is a composite of mother's education, father's education, family income, father's occupational status, and number of ... possessions" (p. 59). Participants in Hughes and Kwok's (2007) study included 443 year one students and 133 teachers. Data were obtained through district-administered tests providing demographic information, student reading and mathematics achievement tests, teacher reports on child engagement, and a teacher report on home-school relationships. The results suggested that the SES of parents had a significant effect on parent-teacher relationships. Hughes and Kwok (2007) suggested, "Parents with high SES were noted as having more positive relations with their teachers than lower income parents" (p. 39). Furthermore, the associations of family background variables and the quality of school relationships among African-American, Hispanic, and Caucasian families and the teachers were investigated by Hughes and Kwok (2007). Their study showed that background variables such as gender and race/ethnicity impacted on parent-teacher interactions for these low SES families. Eagle (1989) further concluded that while high SES families perform better than low SES families, "parents from any social class" (p. 60) can contribute to their child's academic achievement when they are involved in their child's schooling. Hughes and Kwok (2007) suggested that students of the families from higher SES received greater levels of support that benefitted student achievement; however, Eagle (1989) purports that this seems to be dependent on the quality of the relationship between the parents and the teachers.

A further factor that can impact on parental involvement in schools is cultural background. Cultural elements such as language and misplaced trust were identified as barriers by Crozier and Davies (2007) in their study of South Asian families. Their study used both semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews with teachers and parents of children from year six, as well as secondary and post compulsory education. Results from the study indicated that the South Asian parents felt there was no need to visit the school or attend parent-teacher meetings as any problems in the school would be directed to them by the school or by their local community member (Crozier & Davies, 2007). The families saw their role as providing a supportive home environment and giving encouragement to their children; therefore, interactions with the teacher were not considered a priority. Furthermore, their study also found that the school itself established barriers for these parents, which impacted on parent-teacher

interactions: for example, using formal systems of communication; a lack of consistency concerning the teachers' and schools' relationships with ethnic minorities; and enculturalisation programs that seemed unsuccessful (Crozier & Davies, 2007). Their findings indicated that South Asian families held the cultural belief that the teachers were the experts in educational matters and overlooked the importance of their own role as educators. Thereby, Australian schools that have students from various cultural backgrounds, including South Asian families, may have similar views o parental involvement as described by Crozier and Davies (2007) in their study.

Studies indicate that family barriers such as social class, SES, and cultural factors impact on parental involvement, so do school barriers such as the teachers' lack of time and their levels of self-efficacy. According to Epstein and Becker's (1982) and Plevyak and Heaston's (2001) research, teachers acknowledged the importance of parental involvement, yet cited some problems with parental involvement practices. These include the time taken in dealing with parents, training parents to support learning, lack of ongoing support from administration and/or parents, the differing abilities of parents to undertake various tasks, and the teachers' attitudes on what role parents should play in the learning process.

Lasky (2000) also identified time as a school barrier to parental involvement. Fifty-three primary and secondary teachers from 15 schools in the USA were interviewed representing different population demographics. Teachers were asked to describe an interaction with a parent that elicited a "positive emotion and one that elicited a negative emotion" (Lasky, 2000, p. 846). The results indicated that teachers seem to lack the time needed to develop positive parent-teacher relationships due to episodic interactions and the focus being on student progress and/or behaviour (Lasky, 2000, p. 857). She suggested that when conversations do occur between parents and teachers, they are usually limited to school matters and, therefore, provide fewer opportunities for parents and teachers to find out more about each other and their respective worldviews; a finding supported by Miretzky (2004).

Miretzky (2004), in her study, examined the perceptions and assumptions that parents and teachers have of each other and found that both groups wanted more opportunities to communicate. She concluded that for parents and teachers "time to talk to one another, time to connect, time to understand each other and time spent face to face could break down potential barriers" (Miretzky, 2004, p. 841). To understand

the culture of the schools, observations were undertaken in three schools with students from year's four to eight. This was followed by semi-structured individual interviews with 17 parents and 21 teachers. Interviews were used to investigate the parents' and teachers' deeper understanding of the dynamics of their interactions. "Comfort level, perceived differences, less opportunities as the students moved up the years, indirect communication, and time" were influences that parents and teachers highlighted as impacting on their relationship (Miretzky, 2004, p. 827). Next, the participants from the three schools were mixed into two groups. Two focus group sessions were held which included one group of parents and one group of teachers. From these focus group discussions two factors emerged: the defensiveness of both parents and teachers, and obstacles such as time for effective communication. Key findings from Miretzky's (2004) study revealed that parents and teachers wanted "stronger, better relationships with more opportunities for connections and to feel appreciated by the other person" (p. 828). This finding could assist parents and teachers to understand each other and their worldviews. A limitation to this study, as identified by Miretzky (2004), was that participants who volunteered were more than likely already engaged with the school and that the perspectives of parents who were disengaged from the school were unlikely to be captured. This is an aspect that is being considered for this present research.

In other studies, confidence was also considered to be a barrier to parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1987) described self-efficacy as an important factor in influencing the teachers' styles of interactions with parents. Their research investigated teachers' sense of self-efficacy and principals' perception of the teachers' self-efficacy as having an impact on parent-teacher interactions. Teacher self-efficacy was defined as "the confidence in one's teaching and instructional program" (p. 429) and suggested that a teacher's belief about his/her self-efficacy would be related to the confidence he/she had in interacting with parents. Over 1000 kindergarten to year four teachers and their respective principals from 66 urban, rural, and suburban USA schools of mixed size and population participated in the study. The teachers answered questions on their background, classroom practices, parental involvement, and their perception of themselves as a teacher in a Teacher Information Questionnaire. Principals responded to a questionnaire containing similar items to those on the Teacher Information Questionnaire. The results consistently showed that teachers with

stronger self-efficacy ratings experienced more parents participating in parent-teacher conferences, volunteering in the classroom, and helping at home (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987). Further, Lightfoot (1978, cited in Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987) found that the perception of parents threatening the teachers' expertise was of less concern to teachers with higher self-efficacy.

Other forms of constraints to parental involvement exist in the form of a power imbalance in favour of the teacher. Lareau (1987), in these studies on social class, highlighted the power imbalance between working class families and middle class families with their children's teachers. Professional boundaries were raised by teachers, limiting their relationship with parents (Crozier, 1999). However, along with educational reforms and government policy, many parents (including the working class families) were able to redress the balance of power. Increasing accountability demands being placed on schools encouraged parents to be more "questioning and critical about issues of curriculum, quality of instruction and practices used to assess and evaluate their children" (Moore & Lasky, 1999, p. 13). These factors are considered to have created new tensions in parent-teacher interactions. This has opened up potential avenues for social influence and, therefore, ideas for research in this field.

Crozier (1999) described the relationship between parents and schools as "power struggles instead of partnerships" (p. 324). In a three-year long research study, 58 working class parents and 15 secondary school teachers in the USA were interviewed and it was noted in the research that teachers can position themselves, as "powerful professionals" in schools (p. 323). She also found that some teachers behaved towards parents in a manner that reinforces the notion that it is not the parents' role to participate in schooling. Teachers were found to understand the benefits of having greater levels of parental involvement in schools, but stated that there was a tension between seeking to involve parents and at the same time controlling their interference or maintaining the professional boundary (Crozier 1998, cited in Crozier, 1999). Australian schools were found to be implementing parental involvement and home school links programs through government endorsed educational reforms (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), Australian Council State Schools Organisation (ACSSO), & Australian

Parents Council (APC), 2007; Muller & Saulwick, 2006). However, this requires some caution because of possible tensions that could arise (Crozier, 1999).

In addition to power struggles is the increasing level of reported work-related violence in schools. Research shows that school-related violence is known between students and other students, and between students and teachers, but it can extend to parents threatening and assaulting teachers (Levin, 2006). Dickinson (2007) stated that whilst research has focused on student violence in schools, attacks by students and parents on teachers are seemingly neglected. Nonetheless, the seriousness of these threats and assaults on teachers was recognised in Ontario, Canada. In 2000, the Canadian government proclaimed its *Access to School Premises Regulation* as part of their reform into safety in schools (Dickinson, 2007). Principals were given discretionary powers to ban parents from their school if the parent's presence posed a threat to the safety of students and staff.

In Western Australia, a report written in 2005 on the *Wellbeing of the Professions: Policing, Nursing and Teaching in Western Australia*, identified the presence of bullying of teachers by students and/or parents (Institute for Service Professions Edith Cowan University, 2005). The report showed that just over "ten percent of teachers experienced bullying by students or parents" (p. 27) within their schools. The report also stated that assaults on teachers by parents occurred less often; however, these assaults were significant. The bullying of teachers by students, and in particular by parents, impacted on parent-teacher relationships and acted as a barrier to their interactions.

Many studies seem to focus predominantly on student assaults of teachers; newspaper articles however, have provided some significant reports of individual experiences of parents attacking teachers. The Sunday Times newspaper (Phillips, 2011) reported for the first time that bans have been imposed on students and parents in some public schools in Perth (Western Australia). Figures released in the article show that between 2008 and 2011, 180 prohibition orders were issued to students and parents who were aggressive towards teachers. A breakdown of these figures indicate, in 2011, 19 parents were banned from school grounds for threatening behaviours against teachers; in 2010, 39 parents were issued with prohibition orders; and in 2009, 36 parents were banned from schools for violence shown toward staff (Phillips, 2011).

Work-related violence in a school setting seems to be under-reported and limited in the literature.

Teacher attitudes towards parents impact on how the teachers deal with parents, and therefore, how they fashion their relationships (Epstein & Becker, 1982). Crozier (1999), Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994), Moore and Lasky (1999), and Vickers and Minke (1995) suggested further training for both parents and teachers to foster more positive parent-teacher relationships. Similarly, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) and Moore and Lasky (1999) stated that both parents' and teachers' attitudes can be changed through professional development led by the principals. Crozier (1999), on the other hand, suggested that changing teacher attitudes towards their relationships with parents can be achieved through teacher training at the university level. She suggested that universities should provide pre-service teachers with coursework on how they can positively influence parent-teacher interactions. This present study sets out to understand the experiences, and therefore, the attitudes, of parents and teachers that afford various types of parent-teacher relationships.

The nature of parent-teacher partnerships has been highlighted by Vickers and Minke (1995). Their research, based in USA primary schools, identified key principles to the successful partnering of parents and teachers. Two hundred and twelve parents (mainly Caucasians) and 213 experienced teachers (mainly Caucasians) participated in the study. 'Joining' and 'Communication to the Other' were two factors that were shown to be important to parent-teacher interactions. The first factor, 'Joining' included a "sense of affiliation and support (including mutual trust and respect, sensitivity, and cooperation), dependability and availability when there are problems to be solved, and shared expectations and beliefs about each other and the child" (Vickers & Minke, 1995, p. 144). Sixty percent of parents, and 52 percent of teachers reported a positive relationship based on these 'Joining' factors (Vickers & Minke, 1995, p. 143). The second factor identified in their research was 'Communication to the Other'. This includes, "communication from the other person; sharing of emotions and information" (Vickers & Minke, 1995, p.139). Both parents and teachers viewed 'Communication to the Other' as important in fulfilling their roles in their relationships with each other. Vickers and Minke's (1995) research is of relevance to this present study as it conceptualises factors that impact directly on parent-teacher interactions.

In summary, parental involvement is being encouraged in schools, partnering parents and teachers into sharing the role of educator. However, several factors relating to both the family and the school have been identified as barriers to the successful relationship between parents and teachers. One concern is that less confident teachers actually reduce the opportunities for parent-teacher interactions and requests for parents to help with the teaching program than more confident teachers (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987). Training has been suggested at the school and university level to assist in developing the skills of both parents and teachers in order to realise the potential of each other's role, which in turn should enhance student performance levels.

Parental involvement has been considered a factor in developing positive parent-teacher interactions in schools. However, barriers to parents involving themselves in schools have also had a significant impact on parent-teacher interactions. Research has highlighted power struggles and professional boundaries as obstacles to parents and teachers fostering a partnership. The next section explores the various types of parents that have been identified as existing in schools and discusses their relationships with the teacher and the school. Parent typologies highlight the differing roles adopted by parents and the teachers in their partnerships, further explaining parent-teacher perceptions and the impact on their involvement in schools.

Parent-Teacher Relationships

People who work in organisations have been found to adopt different roles or identities when they interact (Callinan, et al., 2007). In schools, the roles of the parents and teachers have been found to also differ according to their perceptions of how they should interact with each other and the school (Porter, 2008; Vincent, 1996). In this section on parent-teacher relationships, different types of parents found in schools are discussed in terms of their relationship with the school, followed by an examination of the different styles of relationships between these parents and teachers. Vincent (1996) identified four different types of parents that operated in the UK schools, whilst Porter (2008) highlighted the different relationship styles of parents and teachers, placing them on a continuum in an Australian context. These studies are discussed separately below as they highlight factors that can impact on the parent-teacher relationships and parent-teacher interactions.

Vincent (1996) developed four typologies of parents who operated within the school environment. These were "Independent Parent"; "Supporter/Learner"; "Parents as Consumer"; and "Participant Parent" (p. 44). Depending on which category they were grouped into parents they were identified as being active or passive participants of the school. In addition, Crozier and Davies (2007) noted that Vincent's typology has been used by other researchers to describe the types of parents often found in schools.

The first parent typology is the *Independent Parent*, which describes parents as having minimal contact with teachers and the school. Vincent (1996) suggested that these parents have a passive role and, either deliberately choose to stay away from the school, or have personal reasons or circumstances that prevent them from interacting with teachers.

The second passive parental type suggested by Vincent (1996) was the *Supporter/Learner*. In this role, teachers are viewed as the professional or expert and, therefore, the parents learn from the teachers by assimilating their values and adopting their behaviours. Parents often act as aides to the teachers, and provide educational support to the students as suggested by the teachers. This form of interaction, according to Vincent (1996), involves one-way communication directed by the teacher to the parent.

The third typology describes parents as *Consumers of Education* as they are more actively involved in the school. Parents as *Consumers of Education* was first identified with the emergence of the UK's "Parent's Charter act in 1991 updated in 1994" (Vincent, 1996, p. 52). Parents were viewed as consumers of education because schools provided reports on school performance and governance, as well as student progress to the parents and the wider community. These accountability measures enabled parents to make informed choices when selecting a school. Vincent (1996) highlighted that these parents were active participants who provide the necessary resources for their children and were more involved at the classroom or school level. This parental type found in schools has influenced the criteria used in the current study to select the participant schools.

Finally, the fourth grouping is the *Participant Parents* who were characterised by their active involvement with the education of their child, and the governance of the school (Vincent, 1996). These parents have more contact with the teachers and

principals, as well as with local educational authorities and governing bodies. They are well informed and see themselves as full and equitable participants of the schooling process; communication is two-way with the parent playing an active role in education. In summary, Vincent's (1996) typology moves from the absent, independent parent to the fully engaged, participative parent and highlights the active and passive roles of parents in schools.

Porter's (2008) research examined a different aspect: the typical styles of relationships that exist between parents and teachers in schools. She offers a continuum of the various styles of contact found to occur between parents and teachers. The first style identified on her continuum is the "Professional-driven interaction" (Porter, 2008, p. 5). In this category, the teacher tends to dominate the interaction, communication flows one-way (from the teacher to the parent), and the parents' role is to seek the expertise of the teacher. The teacher's purpose is to advise parents of their child's needs, thereby placing parents in a passive role. This style was noted by Porter (2008) to be more apparent in secondary schools.

The second style is the "Family-allied relationships" (Porter, 2008, p. 6) found mainly in primary schools, where the parents have a more active role. In this style, parents are found to act as agents to the teacher by providing assistance with the learning program. Porter (2008) also noted that both parties seem to have a more balanced relationship, in terms of active/passive roles, and that communication is two-way, but is specifically about the child. This current study was situated in primary schools with active parents and the researcher noted whether any of the parent-teacher alliance characteristics were present.

The third and fourth styles identified by Porter (2008) occur mainly in a non-school learning environment where parents adopted an active role. The third style is termed "Family-centred philosophy" (Porter, 2008, p. 7) and is typically found in early intervention centres. Here, parents and teachers operate as a team, both having input into decisions and an opportunity to share responsibilities for the child. This style could be described as parents and teachers being equal in their relationship because they both contribute to the educational process of the child. Thus, parent-teacher partnerships could be of interest to this current study.

The final dimension "Parent-driven model" (Porter, 2008, p. 9) was identified as the style in which parents are found to drive their child's education, setting their

own goals and using private practitioners to support their views on education. Communication is generally one-way from the parents expressing their needs and concerns, to the practitioner, such as a tutor or therapist, who finds ways to accommodate the parents' requests. This places the parent in an active role because the tutor or private practitioner meets the parents' requests.

There seem to be various roles that parents and teachers can assume in relation to each other in a school setting. Vincent (1996) and Porter (2008) have highlighted the active and passive roles of parents and teachers within their relationships, as well as the communication styles as being one-way or two-way between both parents and teachers. This literature emphasises the multifaceted nature of parent-teacher interactions in schools and their relationships.

Parental involvement and parent typologies have been identified as factors that can influence the types of parent-teacher interactions. A further consideration is the impact that parent-teacher relationships, parent-teacher communications, and parent-teacher interactions have on student achievement. Improved student achievement has been linked with the level of parental involvement found in schools (Driessen, et al., 2005; Epstein, 1984, April, 1987; Henderson & Berla, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987; Marcon, 1999). The following section will examine the impact of parental involvement on student achievement from the cognitive, social/emotional, and behavioural aspects.

Student Achievement

This section begins by reviewing the research that supports the positive influence of parental involvement on student achievement: academically, socially, and behaviourally. However, some researchers (Epstein & Becker, 1982; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; McWayne, et al., 2004; Reynolds, et al., 2001) questioned these findings due to factors such as data collection methods, research design, and population demographics as positively influencing the results. Keeping within the framework of this study, the discussion will concentrate on early childhood and primary years of schooling; however, there is a brief mention of a relevant study that was conducted in a secondary school.

The overall importance of positive and effective parental involvement has been highlighted in the recent research undertaken by Driessen et al. (2005) in The

Netherlands. Their study identified two aspects: school-initiated parental involvement and parent-initiated parental involvement, and the positive influence these had on student performance. These researchers examined biannual data from school directorates involving questionnaires and school-based tests of 500 Dutch primary schools, their parents, pupils, and teachers from rural and urban areas. In this study, special attention was given to the data from the less educated, ethnic minority parents. Driessen et al. (2005) noted that three quarters of the schools' teachers suggested that parental involvement was associated with "improved student achievement, better social and emotional happiness of the child, and improved understanding of the child" (p. 515). This related to schools that had predominantly ethnic minority students, and who gave extra attention to involving these parents in their program. Their study concluded that ethnic minority students and socially disadvantaged students received the greatest positive effects when parents were involved in schools.

Studies on the positive impact of parental involvement on student achievement concluded their involvement enhanced student academic achievement (Driessen, et al., 2005; Ertl, 2000; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Reynolds, 1992), improved the students' social skills (Driessen, et al., 2005; Marcon, 1999; McWayne, et al., 2004; Reynolds, et al., 2001), and produced positive changes in student behaviour (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Reynolds, et al., 2001). More recent research indicated that student achievement has been shown to increase when parents and teachers worked together and shared information (Porter, 2008), with student academic achievement being noted in increased levels of reading and mathematics scores (Ertl, 2000; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Reynolds, 1992). Reynolds' (1992) study of low income, ethnic minority, year two students also showed positive results in the students' reading and mathematics scores in relation to their parents being involved in the educational process. His study emphasised the difference between 'at-school' support and 'at-home' support. Students whose parents were more involved in the school obtained higher levels of academic achievement compared to students whose parents only provided at-home support (Reynolds, 1992).

Similarly, Ertl (2000) found a positive association between parental involvement and students' mathematics scores. Using the original results from the National Longitudinal Study of Canadian Youth (NLSCY) (1994-1995), 5822 and 22 students aged between six and 11 years of age were studied. One aspect that Ertl

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(2000) examined, which is relevant to this study, was the teachers' perceptions of direct parent participation activities such as: parent-teacher conferences used to discuss student progress, behaviour, or homework, and parent-teacher communication in person or by telephone. The teachers' reports indicated that students whose parents participated in these direct activities were ranked near the top of the class. Conversely, students whose parents were not involved in the school ranked near the bottom of the class (Ertl, 2000, p. 36).

Building on previous research on academic ability, Hughes and Kwok (2007) investigated the associations between student backgrounds, the quality of teacher relationships with students and parents, and academic changes over two years. Four hundred and forty-three low achieving reading students of mixed ethnic backgrounds participated in the study. Data for this study were obtained from the schools' existing demographic information, teacher questionnaires, yearly-administered reading and mathematics test scores, as well as peer socio-metric ratings. A four-part questionnaire was given to 133 teachers, seeking information on parent-teacher and student-teacher relationships. The first section asked for "teachers' perceptions of student-teacher support; the second section investigated teachers' perceptions of parent-teacher alliance; the third section examined teachers' perceptions about parental involvement in school; and the fourth section asked about the student's academic ability" (Hughes & Kwok, 2007, p. 43). The teachers' perceptions of parent-teacher alliance and parental involvement in schools were relevant to this present study, as they provided information about the teachers' perceptions of parent-teacher interactions. Parental involvement in Hughes and Kwok's (2007) study included parents "communicating with the teachers, volunteering in the class, assisting with homework and attending school functions" (p. 41). Once more, these emphasise the opportunities available for parents to involve themselves within schools. The results indicated that parental involvement contributed to student engagement and student success, particularly with their reading scores. Their findings further concluded that when students and parents were in a supportive relationship with the teacher, improved student academic achievement scores occurred. Overall, Hughes and Kwok's (2007) study found positive influences on student achievement and the connection to parental involvement. Students whose parents were involved in the school attained higher levels of academic achievement than students whose parents only provided at-home

support (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). These three studies (Ertl, 2000; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Reynolds, 1992) highlight the enhanced academic achievement scores of students that were associated with parental involvement.

Improved social skills of students resulting from parental involvement was noted by Marcon (1999) and McWayne et al. (2004). Marcon (1999) compared low parent involvement groups with high parent involvement groups and the connection with student achievement levels. At the end of the school year, parental involvement information was gathered from teachers by "indicating: parent attendance at parent-teacher conferences, home visits conducted with the teacher, extended class visits by the parent and parent volunteers for class activities" (Marcon, 1999, p. 398). Her three-year longitudinal USA study involved 708, four year old children and 62 teachers across 42 schools. Three measures were used for collection of data: teacher reports of parents being involved; teacher-completed Student Adaptive Behaviour Scales (standardised development and normative behaviours for the age group); and teacher assessment using The Early Childhood Report Card. Marcon's (1999) results indicated that pre-schoolers in high parental involvement groups had better communication, daily living skills (personal skills), socialisation, and motor skills. Her research clearly supports the argument for parental involvement in schools, as her study concluded that when parents participated in their child's education through activities both at home and at school, coupled with positive parent-teacher relationships, students achieved higher levels of language, social, motor, and behaviour development (Marcon, 1999).

Parent-teacher interactions were also found to positively influence the students' social and academic competence (McWayne, et al., 2004). An examination of parental involvement with children who had similar levels of social and academic competence in urban, low income kindergarten environments were undertaken by McWayne et al. (2004). This study utilised 307 ethnic minority kindergarten students aged five to seven years from seven USA primary schools. Three aspects from their study were found to be related to having an impact on parental involvement and enhancing student achievement levels: "supportive home-learning environment; direct school contact; inhibited involvement" (McWayne, et al., 2004, p. 368). The first aspect, a supportive home-learning environment, included talking with the child about their learning and providing resources that fostered continuous home-to-school

communication. The second aspect was maintaining direct school contact, which involved parent-teacher meetings, progress reports, volunteering in the classroom, and a relationship with the teacher. These two aspects were identified as positively impacting on student achievement. Inhibiting factors related to parental involvement included the parents' time, other responsibilities, and their interest levels. McWayne et al.'s (2004) research indicated that parents who supported learning at home and had direct contact with the school, had children with higher levels of social skills and peer relationships, as well as higher academic skills than those whose parents did not support their child's learning in these ways. It can be seen that the more a parent assists with the learning process the greater the rewards for the student.

A third outcome of the links between parental involvement and student achievement was improved student behaviour. Reynolds et al.'s (2001) study noted that regular school attendance and higher levels of school completion to the final certificate level were attributed to parental involvement. They investigated the long-term effectiveness of the Chicago Child Parent Centre (CPC) kindergarten and preschool intervention program for low income, mostly African-American children. The program (CPC) provided education, family, and health services to low income families in the district. Reynolds et al. (2001) suggested that previous studies highlighted the positive impact of parental involvement on student achievement, but not the school completion level of these students. Furthermore, the results indicated that students who participated in this CPC program, coupled with family and teacher support, had lower rates of attendance at special education classes and grade retention (remaining in their year level until they satisfactorily passed their exams) (Reynolds, et al., 2001, p. 2343). The study indicated that when parents and teachers worked together with these designated programs student behaviour was enhanced.

Researchers (Ertl, 2000; Grolnick, et al., 1997; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Marcon, 1999; McWayne, et al., 2004; Reynolds, 1992; Reynolds, et al., 2001) have indicated that parental involvement has a positive impact on student achievement. However, other variables in the research design may have been contributing factors for the positive influence on student achievement levels. Examples include the issue of population bias (Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002), the data collection processes used (Mattingly, et al., 2002), and the research design itself (Mattingly, et al., 2002; Reynolds, 1992).

Furthermore, Grolnick et al. (1997) stated that in their study, variables such as students from two-parent families and the attitudes of teachers can also account for improved levels of student performance. These studies suggest that 'other factors' may need to be considered as being associated with enhanced levels of student achievement. These will be discussed in turn in the following paragraphs.

Mattingly et al. (2002) suggested the use of discrete populations provided a bias to studies connecting student achievement to parental involvement. They searched for parental involvement articles with a particular focus on 'parent' and 'evaluation' in K-12, USA public schools published since 1960, and 41 studies which had provided relevant information on evaluation and intervention methods. Mattingly et al. (2002) stated that the demographics for most of the participants in these studies showed they were mainly from "ethnic minority, low income populations, or were female" (p. 564). They also concluded that most of the parental involvement programs focused on changing parent behaviour rather than teaching practices, and that parental involvement meant improved parenting skills, as well as at-home support (Mattingly, et al., 2002).

Furthermore, Mattingly et al. (2002) questioned the data collection processes used in these 41 studies on parental involvement. In their view, the collection method required the teachers to provide their interpretation of how parents were involved in the schooling process. They felt that the responses given by the teachers in the questionnaires may not have realised the school-based activities that were carried out by parents in the home (Mattingly, et al., 2002). Also, they suggested that parent and teacher participants might over-report or under-report their perspective in a way that could suit the researcher's purpose.

Reynolds (1992) and Mattingly et al. (2002) also noted that the definition of 'parental involvement' seemed to differ in the various studies. Reynolds (1992) found that it was difficult to separate 'intervention' from 'parental involvement' because the two were similar in design. His examination of such studies purported that 'intervention' included those activities carried out by the parents at home that supported the special needs of the child, and 'parental involvement' was usually volunteering in a more general capacity, but still supporting the needs of a child (Reynolds, 1992). Therefore, he commented that it was difficult to clearly articulate that student achievement was a direct result of parental involvement as, parent

intervention had similar activities (Reynolds, 1992). Mattingly et al. (2002) concluded that variables such as "inconsistent definitions of parental involvement, the understanding of what constitutes the home learning environment, how parents are actually involved in school activities and the diversity of population were possibly misrepresented in the results" (p. 571).

Grolnick et al.'s (1997) research examined parental involvement at the individual, family, and school level in primary schools. They identified 'other factors' as having an impact on student achievement. Participants in this study included 28 teachers and 209 mothers with their children from years three and five. Interviews, questionnaires, and reports were used to collect the data. At the school level, teacher attitudes to parental involvement were measured on an eight-point scale relating to parent-teacher interactions. This included how often teachers would seek parent assistance, ask for parent volunteers in the classroom or obtain the parents' view on different classroom activities. Parental involvement was measured through teacher perceptions of how often parents attended school activities, parent-teacher meetings, and/or how often teachers talked with parents. Grolnick et al.'s (1997) results indicated that there were complex factors associated with parental involvement at the individual, family, and school level. Firstly, higher levels of parental involvement were associated with families who had high SES; secondly, households who had two parents were found to be more involved in schooling; and attitudes of teachers to parental involvement impacted on the type of relationship that occurred between these parents and teachers (Grolnick, et al., 1997). These researchers also noted that parents with high SES were found to have higher levels of self-efficacy and would, therefore, be more involved in the school. In addition, Grolnick et al. (1997) found that parents who assisted in the school generally saw themselves as 'teachers', creating the view of having an equal partnership with the teachers.

In summary, the studies of Epstein and Becker (1982), Ertl (2000), Hughes and Kwok (2007) and Reynolds (1992) connected parents and teachers working together with positive benefits to a student's school performance level. However, some of these studies considered 'other variables' in the research design as being associated with positive student performance (Grolnick, et al., 1997; Mattingly, et al., 2002; Reynolds, 1992). Research suggests that parents who are involved in their child's schooling assist in improving their child's academic achievement and social skills, as well as

fostering positive changes in their behaviour. Furthermore, any assistance given to students by parents positively impacts on the level of student achievement, even if only marginal progress is made (Epstein, 1985; Henderson & Berla, 1997).

Parental involvement is one factor that can enhance student achievement. This literature review also found that governments who provided funding and support to schools in order to promote parental involvement also positively impacted on student performance levels. These policies, which have been derived for schools by governments, positively enhanced parental involvement. The following section outlines government policies and linked funding programs, as well as examples of their impact on parental involvement in schools.

Government Policies

Internationally and nationally, parents are being recognised as 'customers of education' with educational reforms being attributed to influencing parental involvement in schools (Dom & Verhoeven, 2006; Epstein, 2005; Moore & Lasky, 1999; Muller & Saulwick, 2006; Munn, 1993). Parental involvement programs have been implemented through government policies, including the USA's 2001, *No Child Left Behind Act*, which developed *Head Start* (Epstein, 2005); and the UK's 1992, *White Paper* that implemented the *Home-School Contract of Partnership* (Munn, 1993) and then in 1994, the *Parent's Charter* (Vincent, 1996). Currently, Australia's *Building the Education Revolution* has resulted in programs such as the *Building Better Partnerships between Schools, Parents and the Community* (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2008a).

Initiatives such as *Parental Involvement* (USA), *Parent Participation* (UK), and *Home and School Links* (Australia) were designed to encourage stronger communication and positive relationships between home and school, parents and school, and/or parents and teachers in a bid to enhance student learning (Driessen, et al., 2005; Epstein & Rodriguez-Jansorn, 2004; Muller & Saulwick, 2006; Porter, 2008; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004; Vincent, 2000). In Australia, the government established the *Family-Schools and Community Partnership Bureau* targeting the benefits afforded to students through involving parents in schools:

> Partnerships between families and schools, and between schools and their communities, emerge in many ways. Research has shown that where effective partnerships exist, the quality of schooling improves,

students enjoy more satisfying educational experiences, and communities are strengthened. The Family-Schools and Community Partnerships Bureau has been set up to help schools, families and communities build sustainable, collaborative, productive relationships. (Australian Council State Schools Organisation (ACSSO), 2008b, p. 1)

The impact of parental involvement on student achievement through government programs has been investigated by Munn (1985, 1993) in the UK; Toomey (1996) in Australia, and Moore and Lasky (1999) in Canada. Munn (1993) suggested that governments seem to be interested in improving student achievement and have identified parental involvement as an area that they can target. Toomey (1996) discussed the consequences of parental involvement programs in Australia, specifically the 'at-home' literacy strategies, whilst Moore and Lasky (1999) found teachers "retreating from parents to protect themselves" (p. 17) because the base of power is being shifted from the teachers due to greater accountability measures introduced by the Canadian government funded educational reforms.

Munn (1985, 1993) examined the changes in UK government policy that offered parents the role of "customers of the education service" (p. 2). The UK *Education Act (No. 2)* of 1986 saw parents gain "choice, voice and partnership" in schools (Munn, 1993, p. 6). New school accountability measures were enacted requiring schools to provide "general school information, public examination records, subjects offered and staffing" (Munn, 1985, p. 105). Parents, as customers, could now choose the school they wanted their child to attend, resulting in schools competing for enrolments (Munn, 1985, 1993). Parents were provided with information on school performance such as "league tables, open enrolment procedures and the receipt of detailed information about their students and the school" (Vincent, 2000, p. 3). It would seem that in the UK, parental involvement was strongly encouraged through changes in the government's educational policies (Munn, 1993). Similar reforms are currently being experienced in Australia through the current government's *Education Revolution* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008).

Furthermore, Munn (1985, 1993) reviewed different types of school information available to parents and the implications this has for parent-teacher communication. In her 1985 study, three Scottish schools revealed that parents wanted to be informed about their child's performance, receive student progress information on a regular basis, and to hear both good and bad reports. In 1993, she noted that

schools, in relation to changed government policy, also had to provide parents with school information including league tables and school performance reports. This changed the nature of parent-teacher communication because it allowed parents to choose where to enrol their child (Munn, 1993). She also commented that a consequence of the parents having a customer role in schools could lead to parents interfering with classroom practices, hampering any real positive change to school parental involvement policies (Munn, 1993). Australia, with its current school performance accountability measures, may also find that this could impact on parent-teacher relationships.

During the 1980s and 1990s in Australia, state based school literacy programs focused on the at-home educational role of the parent. Toomey (1996) examined school based programs across Australia that encouraged parental involvement. *Parents as Teachers* (NSW, NT), *Parents as Tutors* (Victoria), and *First Steps* (WA) were literacy-based programs "inviting parents to assist learning at-home and at-school" (Toomey, 1996, p. 61). His results recognised that parental involvement led to an increase in literacy levels; however, students with parents who were weak in literacy were disadvantaged by this practice (Toomey, 1996). An example of this educational inequality was Victoria's *Parents as Tutors* program, which held "instructional sessions for parents at the school on how to help their child with learning [which] presumed parents to be able to read and write" (Toomey, 1996, p. 62). Toomey suggested that the results of parental involvement like home literacy programs were examples of the failure of school policy and action to include some of the "hardest to reach parents" (p. 61).

Moore and Lasky (1999) noted the changing nature of traditional parent-teacher relationships in their global review of literature on parental involvement, and in their Canadian study into parental involvement practices. In some parent-teacher relationships, the "balance of power" was held in favour of the teachers (Moore & Lasky, 1999, p. 13). However, they suggested that parent-teacher relations were changing due to government policies, but also population, family structures, school choice, and greater parental involvement in schools. Nevertheless, with the changing nature of parental involvement through government policy, parents were found to be more questioning and critical of school practices, which resulted in some teachers retreating from their relationship (Moore & Lasky, 1999). They reasoned that "parents

and teachers have different expectations and understanding of schools as an institution and perspective on education" (p. 13). According to Wolfendale (1992), some teachers held the view that parents who volunteered to help in the classroom led to parents undermining the teacher, signifying that an invitation to parents to be more active in schools threatens the balance of power. Crozier (1999), Moore and Lasky (1999), and Wolfendale (1992) seem to support Ball's (1987) argument that "schools are an arena of struggle" (p. 19) and West's (1999) point that "conflict ... between its members is to be expected" (p. 189). The challenge then, is to develop strategies to assist parents and teachers to understand their roles in relationships in an attempt to decrease tension (Moore & Lasky, 1999).

Government policies, both nationally and internationally, identified methods to improve student performance. One area is the positive influence that parental involvement has on student achievement. However, Munn (1985, 1993), Toomey (1996), and Moore and Lasky (1999) identified some aspects of these government initiatives and school policy potentially hampered the relationship between parents, teachers, and schools. Crozier's (1999) research supported these findings suggesting that teachers felt disempowered with educational reforms because they gave parents a greater voice, leaving teachers feeling criticised and accountable. This present investigation into parent-teacher interactions is, therefore, timely in Australia, as this country embarks on the promotion of parental involvement in our schools through government initiatives.

Parent-Teacher Communication

The basis of good parent-teacher relationships has been identified as frequent and open communication (Katz, 1996); however, different styles of parent-teacher communication have been recognised by Lasky (2000), Thompson (2008), and Walker (1998). They described effective communication between the home and school as being regular, two-way, and meaningful, while Porter (2008), together with Vickers and Minke (1995), highlighted that both one-way and two-way communication can occur. It has also been found that communication occurring between parents and teachers is usually focused around school related matters such as student progress (Epstein, 1995; Porter, 2008). The following section on parent-teacher communication will examine face-to-face communication through a study about secondary parent-

teacher evenings (Walker, 1998); followed by an investigation into formal and informal communication between parents and teachers (Lasky, 2000), and subsequently, the use of technology (emails) in parent-teacher communication (Thompson, 2008).

Face-to-face communication between parents and teachers occurs in settings such as parent-teacher meetings or parent-teacher evenings (Walker, 1998). Formal avenues of communication such as parent-teacher evenings were usually organised to provide parents and teachers with an opportunity to meet and discuss student issues such as academic progress, or other social, and/or behavioural matters (Walker, 1998). However, both parents and teachers bring different perspectives to these meetings, as highlighted in Walker's (1998) UK study of parent-teacher evenings in secondary schools. Observations, case studies, and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews of 12 teachers, 13 parents, and 11 students were undertaken in four secondary schools. From the parents' perspectives, parent-teacher evenings resulted in a number of frustrations: the evening was the only real time and opportunity for parents to discuss their child's school performance; various teachers often presented differing views of their child's ability; there was a lack of privacy to discuss serious matters; and the short time frame given to the meetings. According to Walker (1998), the parents felt that these factors added to the tension of the evening and contributed to parental dissatisfaction .

From the teachers' perspectives, the evenings were valued for three main reasons. They were firstly, an opportunity to discuss student progress and/or to seek parental support; secondly, an opportunity to meet the parents and get a sense of the student's family and/or to meet the family socially; and finally, the evening was a public relations exercise to fulfil school obligations of accountability (Walker, 1998). The study concluded that parents and teachers perceived the value of parent-teacher evenings differently and that both parents and teachers felt potentially exposed, thus posing a threat to any real communication during these meetings. Parents stated that they experienced criticism of their parenting skills; they were frustrated by the logistics of the evening; and that they needed to defend their child with the different teachers. In addition, teachers also found the evening exhausting and felt exposed to being accountable for their teaching practices.

In another study relating to parent-teacher communication, Lasky (2000) conducted 53 interviews with primary and secondary teachers, from 15 schools, who described their communication with parents. She explored the communication processes between Canadian parents and teachers and concluded that parent-teacher communication can be classified as formal or informal. Formal communications between parents and teachers were generally organised and purposeful, such as parent-teacher meetings, as well as school newsletters, notes or emails from the school to home, or from the home to school. Informal communications were generally less organised between parents and teachers with no set purpose. These occurred at pick-up or drop-off times, when parents were volunteering in the classroom, or through school events such as sporting carnivals and fund raising activities (Lasky, 2000). The results indicated that parents and teachers had limited contact with each other, and that most of the interactions that occurred in the primary schools occurred informally. One primary teacher did describe that some conversations held with parents actually extended beyond the world of school (Lasky, 2000). Thus, while formal and informal opportunities for communication existed for parents and teachers, such communication was sporadic and rarely extended beyond student related matters. Lasky's (2000) research highlighted limited contact between parents and teachers. She found this result surprising, as parental involvement programs have been implemented in Canadian and USA schools since the 1990s, encouraging greater levels of communication between parents and teachers (Lasky, 2000). While this current research does not specifically examine communication between parents and teachers, it is interesting to assess whether there are any similarities between it and Lasky's (2000) results.

It would seem that communication avenues between parents and teachers, and teachers and parents are currently changing with the advent of technology. Thompson's (2008) study into the use of electronic communication found that email exchange between parents and teachers has increased in frequency in both primary and secondary schools. The study also states that parent-teacher emails "made teachers more accessible and communication more convenient, leading to an increase in parent-teacher communication" (Thompson, 2008, p. 202). Thirty parents and teachers were interviewed and 341 emails were analysed. A number of purposes were identified; however, emails were mainly used for specific information. Parents and teachers used

emails to comment about student grades; scheduling of meetings; discussions regarding health; minor behavioural concerns, and/or student social issues (Thompson, 2008). There was evidence, however, that verbal communication was preferred over emails when discussing more serious concerns, because "parents and teachers could regulate the tone and explain the issue in more detail" (Thompson, 2008, p. 217). Overall, the results of this research found that parents who emailed the teachers were of high socio-economic status, and, thus, these parents had access to information, which resulted in a positive impact on student performance. In addition, Thompson (2008) found that teachers preferred the use of emails, as they were time efficient and a non-intrusive method of communication with parents. Thus, advances in technology can provide opportunities for more frequent and convenient communication between parents and teachers.

Walker's (1998), Lasky's (2000) and Thompson's (2008) research on parent-teacher communication highlighted that parents and teachers had different ideological perspectives and expectations about their meetings. On the one hand, one-way communication, as well as the limited range of topics discussed, meant that parents and teachers were distant in their relationship. Two-way communication, on the other hand, was found to be more meaningful and fostered positive parent-teacher relationships. The present research on the nature of parent-teacher interactions attempts to determine if any other factors can be identified as impacting on parent-teacher communication and, therefore, on their relationship.

Social Influence

The first section of this literature review examined schools as organisations; the importance of parental involvement in schools; and associated factors that impact on parent-teacher interactions. The literature review will now discuss social influence in the context of bureaucratic organisations and develop links between interpersonal influence, schools and parent-teacher interactions.

Social influence is defined as "change in the belief, attitude and/or behaviour of one person (the target of social influence) that can be attributed to another person (the influencing agent)" (French & Raven, 1959, p. 118). Furthermore, deliberate social influence techniques used to change a person's belief, attitude or behaviour can be attributed to various forms of pressure that persuade, coerce or manipulate a person

into complying with a request (Cialdini, 1984; Hewstone & Martin, 2008). This review begins by recognising schools as organisations where people interact, suggesting that there is a potential for the use of social influence within schools operating as organisations (Ball, 1987; Crozier, 1999; Moore & Lasky, 1999; West, 1999; Wolfendale, 1992). This section finishes with an investigation of the various types of social influence strategies found in hierarchical structures (Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Kipnis, et al., 1980; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl, Guinan, & Sottolano, 1995; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). This present study examines the potential for social influence to be utilised in schools.

As discussed previously, schools are viewed as organisations. Ball (1987) described "schools as an 'arena of struggle', a place where different ideological perspectives and differing ambitions and expectations are inevitable" (p. 19). Schools have a leadership team, or hierarchy, coupled with school policies and governmental guidelines to follow, which could be seen to provide an environment for such micro-political activity. West (1999) agreed with Ball's comments and stated that schools are places "where conflict, actual and latent, between members is to be expected" (p. 189).

Previously, Moore and Lasky (1999), Crozier (1999) and Wolfendale (1992) acknowledged the power differentials in the relationship between parents and teachers. West (1999) stated that "approaches that offer us explanations of how power and influence are used within the organisation to precipitate, resolve or even avoid conflict are useful conceptual tools" (p. 189). Furthermore, Schmidt (personal communication, 2009) stated that the phenomenon of social influence between parents and teachers as dyadic partners has not yet been explored. This investigation into the nature of parent-teacher interactions determined whether social influence was evident and if so, in what context and for what purpose.

A study of social influence was undertaken by Kipnis et al. (1980) with post graduate university students who held positions of lower level managers (agents of influence) within a business. Kipnis et al.'s (1980) empirical research explored the methods used by these managers (as agents) to obtain compliance to requests from their peers (targets of influence) in an upward, downward or lateral direction. The post graduate students were asked to write about their experiences of, "How I get my way" with bosses, co-workers, and/or subordinates (Kipnis, et al., 1980). From the data, "assertiveness, ingratiation, rationality, sanctions, exchange, upward appeals,

blocking, and coalitions" (Kipnis, et al., 1980, pp. 447-448) were found to be strategies that these students used as managers (agents) on their work colleagues (targets). Furthermore, the methods of persuasion, manipulation, and coercion underpinned these social influence strategies (Kipnis, et al., 1980). The data collected from the students' writings were then developed into a questionnaire that addressed these eight influence strategies. These questionnaires were then given to these middle managers (agents), and their colleagues (targets) who were asked to rate the frequency of use of these social influence strategies on the Likert scale. The findings from Kipnis et al.'s (1980) research showed that the agent's position in the organisational hierarchy affected their choice of influence strategy, and their frequency of use. Furthermore, managers predominantly used the rationality strategy (use of logic and facts), whilst targets primarily used the ingratiation strategy (empathy, praise, and positive commentary) (Kipnis, et al., 1980).

Kipnis et al. (1980) also explained that the reasons for using social influence strategies were to obtain "assistance on own job", "assign work", "obtain benefits", "improve performance", and/or "initiate change" (p. 441). Similarly, Yukl and Falbe's (1990) research, identified influence objectives as to "assign task", "request better performance", "request change in plans", "request advice", "request resources", "request approval", "request proposal support", "request information" (p. 138). This did, however, vary by directionality and that of the subordinate, peer or boss (Yukl, et al., 1995). Individuals typically used a variety of influence strategies depending on the hierarchical position of the target (boss, co-worker or subordinate) and the agent (manager), within an organisation (Erchul & Raven, 1997; Kipnis, et al., 1980; Raven, 1993; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Yukl & Falbe, 1990).

Kipnis et al.'s (1980) empirical research on social influence led to further studies on the behaviours of managers. Research included the identification of different types of influence strategies used by managers in an upward, downward or lateral direction (Yukl & Falbe, 1990), and the effectiveness of these influence strategies (Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Schriesheim and Hinkin (1990) and Yukl and Falbe (1990) replicated and extended Kipnis et al.'s (1980) study on social influence strategies. Schriesheim and Hinkin (1990) stated that Kipnis et al.'s eight social influence strategies were widely used in research on interpersonal influence in organisations and that their research aimed to explore and improve upon

this previous study. Schriesheim and Hinkin's (1990) study reported six influence strategies: "Ingratiation, exchange, rationality, assertiveness, upward appeal and coalition" (p. 251). 'Blocking' and 'sanctions' were weak and, therefore, omitted from their findings. Similarly, Yukl and Falbe (1990) using agent and target reports, produced a typology with eight social influence strategies: "Pressure tactics, upward appeal, exchange, coalition, ingratiation, rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, consultation" (p. 132). They also added 'inspirational appeals' and 'consultation' as strategies. In spite of this, Bruins (1999) commented that there are a range of strategies used by people in organisations to influence a target person. In addition, research also suggests that there is little agreement about the exact labels for each strategy, highlighting that there are possibilities for further social influence strategies to be identified (Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003).

The work by Kipnis et al. (1980), Yukl and Falbe (1990), and Schriesheim and Hinkin (1990) identified influencing behaviours of people in organisational settings where roles are usually defined, the status of the employees varies, and people understand their position within the organisation. As discussed previously, the roles of parents and teachers as educators are becoming less rigid and precise with the advent of parental involvement programs. Government policies, educational reforms, and research on the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement have led to the differences between parents' and teachers' involvement in schools narrowing. This present study is designed to understand and explain the experiences of parent-teacher interactions in primary school settings and how they impact on each other, with a particular interest in determining whether social influence is evident during their interactions.

Recent studies by Quiamzade and Mugny (2009) also stated, "there are few investigations that have studied influence processes in contexts in which both source and target levels have been taken into account simultaneously" (p. 652). This current investigation was conceptualised to identify social influence strategies used by parents and teachers, from similar socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, who could act as agents and/or targets in their co-status dyadic relationships.

Summary

The literature review considered schools as places with "policies and guidelines" to follow (Weber cited in Haralambos & Heald, 1985, p. 279), and because aspects of micro-political activity might be evident (Ball, 1987). Schools provide an opportunity for this present study to understand the behaviours of parents and teachers as members of an organisation and how these members interact with one another (Callinan, et al., 2007).

The *Parental Involvement Framework* (Epstein, et al., 1997) provided directions in which schools could develop parental involvement programs in their schools, thereby enhancing parent-teacher interactions. Four directions: "parenting, communication, volunteering, and learning at home" (Epstein, et al., 1997, p. 8) were identified as methods that schools could adopt to encourage parent-teacher partnerships.

The literature highlighted that there are barriers to parental involvement that impact on parent-teacher interactions. Family barriers such as social class, socio-economic scores, and cultural factors hampered parents being involved in the school. In addition, school barriers such as a teacher's lack of time and the self-efficacy of teachers were also perceived as impeding teachers involving parents in the school. Vickers and Minke (1995) suggested that research into parents' and teachers' perceptions of their interactions would be beneficial to break down some of these barriers. This was a focus of the present study.

Vincent (1996) and Porter (2008) singled out the complexity of parent-teacher interactions by identifying the different types of parents found in schools and the styles of parent-teacher relationships. Parents ranged from being attending to absent, and from having active to passive roles. Similarly, the types of relationships between parents and teachers can be described as varying from having minimal contact to full contact. Vincent (1996) and Porter (2008) suggested that the balance of power falls to either the parent or the teacher in their relationship depending on how they were influenced by each other's roles. These studies demonstrate the multifaceted nature of relationships between parents and teachers.

Overall, the literature on parental involvement established that when parents and teachers work together and support the student (both at home and at school) this

positively influences student achievement levels (Driessen, et al., 2005; Epstein, 1984, April, 1987; Henderson & Berla, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987; Marcon, 1999). Studies on parental involvement found that students achieve more academically (Ertl, 2000; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Reynolds, 1992), socially (Marcon, 1999; McWayne, et al., 2004; Reynolds, et al., 2001), and behaviourally (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Reynolds, et al., 2001) when parents and teachers work together. These results have further encouraged schools to adopt parental involvement practices.

In addition, government departments have been found to undertake parental involvement initiatives in schools to boost student performance, making this study timely. The current Australian government has released several project ideas developed from their 2008, *Education Revolution in Schools* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008) reform. Furthermore, transparent measures of schools have been initiated, for example, via the *MySchool* website (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2008c) where schools have to publish financial information, as well as their results from the national testing program. While these government projects are promoting parents being involved in schooling, Moore and Lasky (1999) noted that the changing roles of parents and teachers in schools have resulted, in some cases, in "teachers retreating from parents" (p. 17). This present study allows for a description of the nature of parents' and teachers' interactions by revealing current day experiences and methods used by parents or teachers who are either engaging and/or retreating from the other.

Good parent-teacher relationships are dependent on frequent and open communication (Katz, 1996). Furthermore, communication was described as being regular, meaningful, and two-way, with one-way communication occurring at times (Porter, 2008; Vickers & Minke, 1995). Consideration needs to be given to parents and teachers, however, as they have different ideological perspectives and expectations in regards to communication practices, as well as limited opportunities to understand each other's worldviews (Lasky, 2000). Discovering the nature of parent-teacher interactions can highlight communication experiences of both the parents and teachers.

Barriers to parental involvement, the imbalance of power experienced between parents and teachers, and an environment of greater accountability in schools have been highlighted in this review. Schools are considered as organisations with aspects of micro-political activity (Weber cited in Haralambos & Heald, 1985), and constitute

a place of power and influence (West, 1999). Therefore, using the definition of social influence, "the change in belief, attitude and/or behaviour of the other person" (French & Raven, 1959, p. 118), this research determined whether parents and teachers used social influence strategies during their interactions.

In conclusion, the literature review defined parental involvement, as well as noting barriers to parental involvement from the perspectives of parents and teachers. This was followed by a discussion on the different types of parents found in schools, and the different styles of parent-teacher relationships emphasising the quality and quantity of parent-teacher interactions. Moreover, the positive impact that parental involvement has on student achievement was highlighted where students were found to benefit academically, socially, and behaviourally. In addition, international and national government policies were considered as they encourage greater parent participation in schools. Furthermore, research into social influence explained how people 'got their own way' with others in their hierarchical organisation using their interpersonal influence (Kipnis, et al., 1980). Evidence of the use of interpersonal strategies is important to this study, as it is possible that parents and teachers use social influence strategies when interacting.

Having completed the literature review, the next chapter will consider the theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning this investigation.

CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

A theoretical perspective provides a set of guidelines that can be used to conduct research. It is the ideas, rules, techniques, and approaches used to carry out research (Neuman, 2007). On the other hand, a conceptual framework is a collection of interrelated concepts that highlight topics associated with the study. Punch (2001) describes this as "a representation ... of the main concepts or variables, and their presumed relationship with each other" (p. 56). This chapter outlines the theoretical and philosophical assumptions that underpin this present study, as well as the concepts that informed this investigation into the nature of parent-teacher interactions, and the use of social influence during their interactions.

The first section discusses the role of a theoretical perspective which is followed by an explanation of the two dominant views associated with educational research. This leads to an explanation of constructivism, which was selected as the theoretical lens for this study. Subsequently, the conceptual frameworks along with key constructs developed from the literature that inform this study are also presented.

The Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective is a standpoint from which the world is viewed and imposes the method of inquiry. This in turn has an influence on the structure of the research questions, methodological procedures, analysis, and the interpretation of the findings (Bell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Kuhn, 1970). Kuhn (1970) described various methods of inquiry as paradigms: a "model or pattern" (p. viii) with a guiding set of "beliefs, values, techniques ... " (p. 175) that can be used to conduct research. Choosing a method of inquiry or paradigm requires a focus on which reality or realities the research was trying to capture.

Hittleman and Simon (2006) suggested that there are two dominant theoretical perspectives in educational research: positivism and constructivism. Positivism is concerned with one reality, seeking facts or causes of social phenomena. It is usually associated with experiments, surveys, and/or correlational studies. Constructivism on the other hand, is concerned with multiple realities, where the participants and the researcher co-construct their understandings and is usually associated with

interpretations, observations, and/or narratives (Hatch, 2002; Mertens, 2005; Patton, 1990). Furthermore, studies of the natural and physical world differ from studies of people and, therefore, the "constructivist paradigm provides the best 'fit' whenever it is human inquiry that is being considered" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 82).

This study sought to collect and interpret the multiple realities of interactions between parents and teachers, and has, therefore, adopted the constructivist paradigm. The theory underpinning constructivism, is that "humans do not find or discover knowledge ... they invent concepts and schemes to make sense of the experience ... and continually test and modify these constructions in light of new experience" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 125). In this study, constructivism assists with making sense of the realities of parents and teachers in light of their experiences, which has been interpreted as their reality.

Constructivism

"Constructivism seeks to explain how persons adjust and adapt their communicative strategies by means of such cognitive assessment as perspective takings" (Lindlof, 1995, p. 45). The constructivist perspective views knowledge as being active and ever-changing, which is constructed and reconstructed through new experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt, 1994). This study sought to understand the reality of parent-teacher interactions, from their own perspectives, with the researcher interpreting these as their truths eliciting detailed descriptions of their lived experiences (Neuman, 2007). Constructivism also recognises that these interactions represent one point in time.

The basic tenets of the constructivist paradigm are "relativist ontology, a subjectivist epistemology and a hermeneutic methodology" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 85). The following section will explore the ontological, epistemological, and methodological principles of constructivism, which influenced the design of the research questions, the methodological procedures, and the interpretation of the data during this research.

The key ontological belief of the constructivist paradigm is a relativistic view of the world. This means that for parents and teachers reality is not objective, studied in isolation or from a distance; it is the subjective truth of their experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 1990). The reality of interactions between parents and teachers

differ with each individual, because their experiences are defined and redefined in light of new experiences. Therefore, there are infinite individual constructions and co-constructions of reality, which are relative to the person (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Hittleman & Simon, 2006; Patton, 1990; Schwandt, 1994).

The epistemological view of constructivism adopts an inter-subjective nature. Qualitative constructivist studies "are interactively linked so that the 'findings' are *literally created* [*sic*] as the investigation proceeds" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), and this means that the investigator along with the participants often find themselves sharing perspectives (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This study investigates the participants' experiences that transpired through shared understanding with the researcher. The constructivist paradigm also recognises that it is these "interactions that create the data that will emerge from the inquiry" and that the researcher "cannot ... set aside their own subjectivities" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 88). Schwandt (1994) and Guba and Lincoln (1989) therefore, suggested that the investigator explain how the participants made meaning of their lived experiences, as well as clarifying how these meanings were interpreted from the embodied text given. This was undertaken through reflexive practice of maintaining a journal of ideas, observations, and expressions to limit opportunities for bias whilst interpreting the research data.

The methodological procedures adopted in this constructivist paradigm sought to reveal the constructions made by the parents and teachers; to provide opportunities for them to critique the interpretations in terms of new experiences; and to allow for revised or new meanings to emerge (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Therefore, a hermeneutic methodology was implemented, thus allowing greater understanding of the data as the elicited information was referred back to the participants for approval (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This facilitated a truthful representation of their experiences.

In summary, the aim of this study was to, "describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world" (Gergen, 1993, p. 135) of parents' and teachers' experiences of their interactions. The constructivist paradigm accepts that parents and teachers have individualistic, and at times conflicting, views of their interactions. Inter-subjectivities are made apparent through exchanges made by the investigator and the participants,

and the hermeneutic process involved reconstructions of the previously held constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

In the next section, the conceptual framework outlines aspects that were derived from the literature, which influenced the design of this study, as well as a model that illustrates the key concepts that impacted on this research.

The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is a representation of the main concepts associated with this study and their relationship to each other (Punch, 2001). This section will distinguish the key constructs and concepts that have impacted on this research, as well as present a model (Figure 3.1) which outlines the links made from the literature leading to the development of the research questions.

The overarching concept for this study was parent-teacher interactions. From the literature, factors that can impact on parent-teacher interactions included government policy, as well as the levels of parental involvement in schools. These, in turn, were found to impact on student achievement levels. Social influence has been identified in business organisations as impacting on employer/employee interpersonal relationships. This study sought to understand the nature of parent-teacher interactions and determine whether social influence was evident during their interactions. Each of these concepts is illustrated in the conceptual framework and discussed in turn. From the literature, other factors such as the student's relationship with the teacher and/or the parent, as well as the role of power, were investigated as being potential forces on parent-teacher interactions. However, these were discounted as preference was given to topics that featured more in the literature concerning parent-teacher interactions with an immediate impact on parental involvement and improved student performance levels.
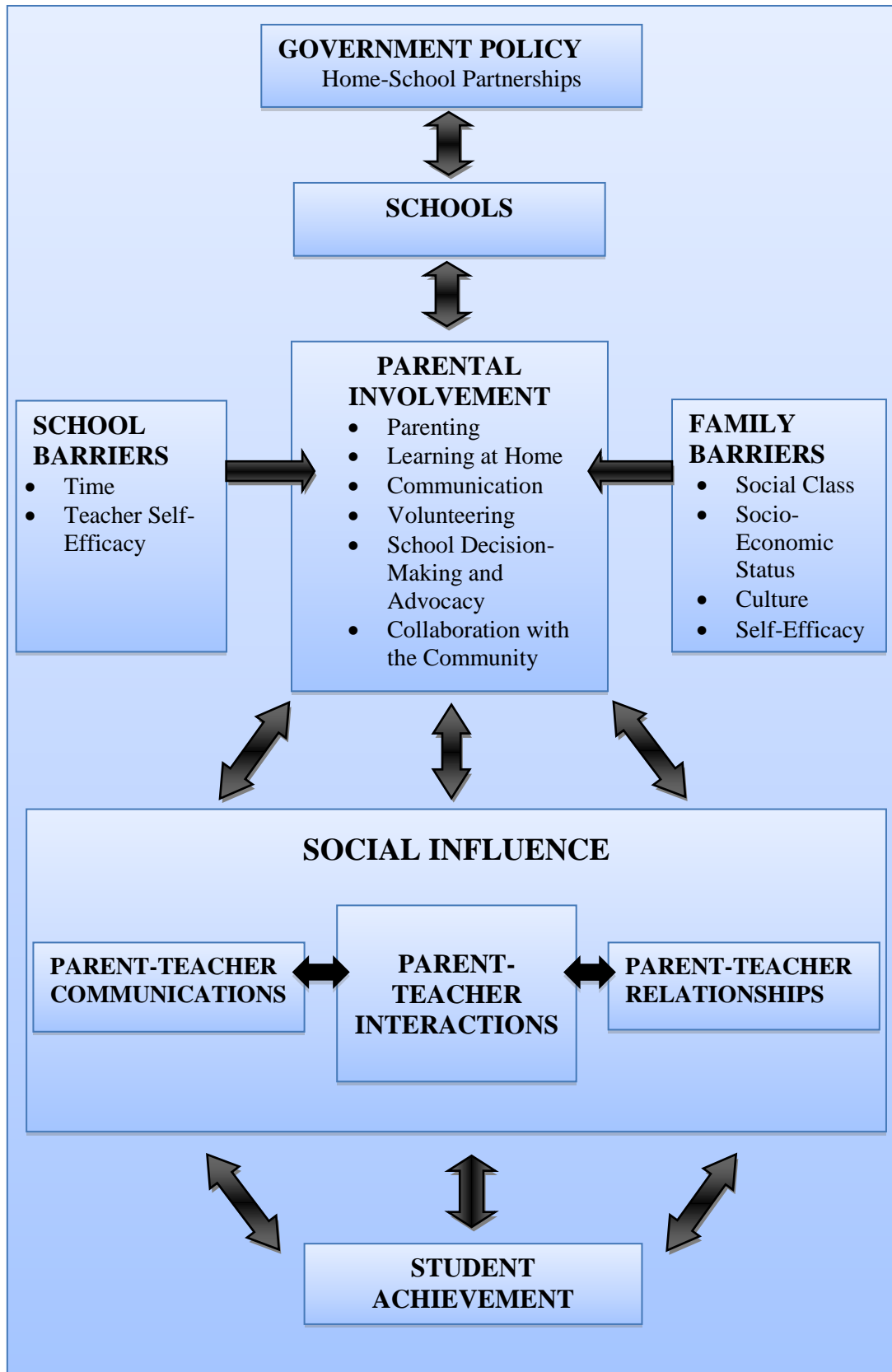
Figure 3.1   The Conceptual Framework

Governments in Australia, and internationally, have influenced their educational systems to include programs that encourage parental involvement in schools. One reason for this shift in thinking is the influence of empirical research highlighting the positive impact parental involvement has on student achievement. In Australia, a review on the literature into home-school partnerships was undertaken for the period 2006-2008 (Muller & Saulwick, 2006). This resulted in similar findings to those of previous research undertaken by Epstein and Becker (1982) where parental involvement positively enhanced student performance levels. Following this review, the Australian government proposed several projects aimed at encouraging parental involvement in schools. In 2008, the *Family-School and Community Partnership Bureau* (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2008a) was established with the government providing money over four years to assist with programs that fostered home-school associations. In Western Australia, the *Family Links program* was adopted in most government schools (Department of Education Western Australia, 2013). In 2008, the government also developed the *Building the Educational Revolution in Our Schools* program (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008). This was followed by the implementation of the *Parent and Community Engagement* project (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2010) followed by, the *Smarter Schools National Partnerships* program that included the *Parent Engagement in Schooling in Low Socio-Economic Status Communities Project*. The Federal Minister for Education stated that this was "to engage parents in the education of their children" (Garrett, 2010). Government departments have supported these programs fostering greater home-school links in an attempt to enhance student performance levels. However, whilst these government initiatives focus on fostering greater parent-teacher interactions, Crozier (1999) and Lareau (1987) commented that teachers were retreating from parents due to the changing status of parents in schools as a result of these government parental involvement programs.

Parent involvement is a key construct that underpins this research. Epstein, et al. (1997) developed the *Parental Involvement Framework* which provided six key directions that schools (and government departments) could implement to positively promote home-school links and parent-teacher partnerships. Of the six directions, *parenting, communication, volunteering*, and *learning at home* are of interest to this

study. The other two directions, *school decision-making and advocacy*, and *collaboration with the community*, have been omitted because they are deemed whole school approaches and are not directly related to face-to-face parent-teacher interactions. Henderson and Berla (1997) in summarising the results of several studies stated that families and schools working together resulted in children being successful "not just in school, but throughout life" (p. 1).

From the literature, parental involvement has been developed in different ways within schools and is often constructed through peoples' experiences and perceptions of its value in schooling (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At one end of the spectrum, parental involvement is encouraged in schools and at the other end of the spectrum barriers exist, limiting parental involvement (Lareau, 1987; Moore & Lasky, 1999). Researchers (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Lareau, 1987; Lasky, 2000; Miretzky, 2004) however, have identified some barriers to parental involvement in schools. Family barriers such as social class (Lareau, 1987), socio-economic status (Hughes & Kwok, 2007), and culture (Crozier & Davies, 2007), as well as, school barriers such as the teachers' availability due to time (Lasky, 2000; Miretzky, 2004), and self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1987). These discouraged parents and teachers from working together, thereby inhibiting parental involvement.

The strength of parental involvement, however, lies in parents and teachers working together, forming partnerships with good communication and relations positively impacting on student achievement levels (Epstein, 1985). The notion of working together, partnerships, communication, and relations represent the concept parent-teacher interactions, which forms the nexus of this research focussing on the nature of parents' and teachers' experiences of their interactions.

Parent-teacher interactions have been described by Driessen et al. (2005) as being either parent initiated or teacher initiated. Parent initiated refers to parents helping with student homework, student progress, assisting the class on field excursions, and volunteering to help in the classroom (Driessen, et al., 2005). Teacher initiated refers to discussions on homework, mandatory parent-teacher interviews, parent information evenings, parent-teacher meetings about student problems, and/or parents volunteering in the classroom (Driessen, et al., 2005). Furthermore, parents and teachers can interact both formally and informally within the school environment,

but it is usually with regard to child related topics (Crozier, 1999; Lasky, 2000; Moore & Lasky, 1999). In addition, parents and teachers have a shared interest, the child/student, and view their relationships differently. This has been noted as "causing tension" (Lewis & Forman, 2002, p. 61) to their interactions.

Adopting a constructivist perspective, schools were viewed as complex systems and include people comprising different perspectives and views on education (Ball, 1987). Crozier (1999) and Moore and Lasky (1999) cited that power struggles have been identified as being typical in these types of environments. It is being hypothesised in this study that the rising tension and power struggles that impact on parental involvement may occur and consequently, social influence strategies may be implemented. This hypothesis has been developed from researchers such as Leary (1957, cited in Erchul, et al., 2001, p. 583) who stated that "power and social influence are intrinsic to all human relationships".

Social influence is defined as a "change in the belief, attitude and/or behaviour of one person (the target of social influence) that can be attributed to another person (the influencing agent)" (French & Raven, 1959, p.118). Kipnis et al. (1980) explored social influence strategies used in business organisations. They reported six influence strategies used in employer/employee hierarchical relationships. This study, however, examined two different groups of people whose status and relationship were considered as being relatively equal within their school community.

The conceptual framework provides the basis from which this study investigated parent-teacher interactions and determined if social influence was evident in their interactions. The conceptual framework (see Figure 3.1) is framed around parent-teacher interactions stemming from schools implementing parental involvement programs that have been influenced by government policy. Parental involvement encourages parents and teachers to work together fostering home-school partnerships in a bid to enhance student achievement. However, barriers have been noted to impact on parental involvement from both the parents' and teachers' perspectives. This study into parent-teacher interactions examines the different ways in which parents and teachers communicate and foster their relationships through suggested key directions from the *Parental Involvement Framework* (Epstein, et al., 1997). Furthermore, research suggests that tensions exist between parents and teachers, and this study purports to understand this 'tension'. By exploring the use of social influence

strategies during parent-teacher interactions, this study attempted to obtain an insight into the nature of parent-teacher interactions in a bid to promote more positive parent-teacher communication, parent-teacher relationships, and parental involvement in schools.

Summary

This study investigated parent-teacher interactions as the strength of their interactions can influence the levels of parental involvement. The constructivist principles applied to this study sought to understand the experiences of parent-teacher interactions from both of their perspectives. This study realises that information gained from the multiple perspectives is limited to this point in time and can change in any future studies. However, through the analysis of their stories, a consensus was derived providing their constructions of truth about their parent-teacher interactions. The theoretical lens and the conceptual frameworks assisted with the design for this present study.

In the next chapter, the research methodology is presented together with a description of the methods used for the collection of data and data analysis, as well as a discussion on the limitations to the study.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In selecting a methodology that is appropriate for this research, consideration has been given to the reality that is being captured, the subjective nature of the research questions, resources available, and the skills of the researcher (Morse, 1994). After some deliberation, a qualitative interpretive research methodology was favoured, as it captures the essence of this present investigation, describing the subjective lived experiences of parents and teachers.

Chapter Four begins with the methodological background adopted for the research, drawing attention to the procedures for this qualitative approach. This is followed by a description of the interpretive research methods employed, justifying the data collection approach. The subsequent section examines the research design and procedures including participant information, ethics and phases of data collection, followed by the data analysis process. In the concluding section, limitations to the study are explored, followed by a discussion of the ethical considerations associated with this investigation.

Methodological Background

Social research can be undertaken quantitatively or qualitatively with a focus on "learn[ing] something new about the social world ... and how it works" (Neuman, 2007, p. 2). Quantitative research is described as being objective, focusing on the collection of facts, whilst qualitative research is defined as being subjective, focusing on capturing the perspectives of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Quantitative methods include questionnaires, tests, and scales, whereas qualitative methods use a wide range of interpretive practices in a bid to obtain rich descriptions and a better understanding of the subject matter using emic and idiographic forms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Evaluating the different approaches available for social research, the different strategies available, research questions, and the type of results sought (Morse, 1994), a qualitative interpretive research method was identified as being appropriate for this study.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a field found in the social sciences that Denzin and Lincoln (1994) define as being "concerned with the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, ... and seeks to answer questions related to how social experiences are created and given meaning" (p. 4). Bogdan and Biklen (2007), Denzin and Lincoln (2003), Hatch (2002) and Mertens (2005) have suggested that there are guiding principles that influence qualitative research. The subsequent discussion explores these guiding principles that influence qualitative research in relation to the current investigation.

The guiding principles of qualitative research include firstly, the view that reality is subjective and is socially constructed by people; secondly, rich descriptions of people's experiences are sought; thirdly, the role of the qualitative researcher is reflexive in nature; fourthly, the research is undertaken in a natural setting; and finally, analytic inductive methods for data analysis are used preventing wider generalisations. Each of these guiding principles will be discussed in turn.

First, reality in a qualitative paradigm is viewed as being subjective as it is socially constructed by the individual (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As individuals encounter new experiences, reality is being constructed (in their local context) and then reconstructed (within their lived context) so they can make sense of the new information (Gall, et al., 2007). Therefore, the nature of the reality is relative to the individual's perspective and experiences, thereby making it subjective in nature. The qualitative approach used in this study provided an opportunity to collect subjective, lived experiences of parents and teachers and to view them from their individual perspectives.

Second, rich descriptions given by parents and teachers were collected using emic and idiographic accounts of their interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Hatch, 2002). Parents and teachers provided emic accounts of their experiences in a way that was meaningful to them. The rich descriptions obtained for this study are the shared stories obtained from the participants of their "inner states as outer expressions" (Hatch, 2002, p. 9) rather than numbers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This was achieved through focus group sessions and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Third, qualitative research highlights that the role of the researcher should be reflexive in nature, as the researcher and the participants often share the world being studied (Hatch, 2002). Frequently, the role of the qualitative researcher includes getting close to the participant, sometimes sharing perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Gall, et al., 2007). The researcher, therefore, has to suspend personal judgements by bracketing previous experiences, in order for the reality of the participants to emerge (Creswell, 1998). Separating personal past experiences allows a researcher to connect with the participants' stories (Bednall, 2006); this assisted with the interpretation of the parents' and teachers' worlds in this current study. In addition, Hatch (2002) suggests that the researcher practise the act of reflexivity, that is "to keep track of one's influence on a setting" (p. 10), therefore reducing the potential for bias. Through the maintenance of a reflexive journal, the researcher documented information, observations, opinions, and relevant experiences to assist with this study being reflexive in nature. Furthermore, bracketing (Bednall, 2006) was undertaken through the collection and review of data, member checks, and the use of field notes about how parents and teachers perceived their interactions. This was referred to during the data analysis process.

Fourth, the objective of the present study was to understand the inter-subjective experiences of real people in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Hatch, 2002). The qualitative approach allows data to be collected in the field. This present study resided in the context of low fee, independent, Protestant, metropolitan Perth primary schools. Furthermore, the researcher had recently been teaching in this type of school and was familiar with their structure and culture. This background knowledge assisted with the interpretation of the language used in the individual in-depth semi-structured interviews, thus capturing an accurate meaning of the participants' experiences.

Finally, inductive methods were used to analyse the data. This qualitative research did not begin by aiming to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Instead, it collected stories from parents and teachers, which were pieced together and examined from the bottom up (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 6). Emerging themes were identified (Hatch, 2002), with generalisations being drawn and examined against the overall data set (Mertens, 2005) using NVivo 8 software to assist this process. The present study is

neither a description nor an analysis of text, but an interpretation of the participants' perspectives through their collected stories.

In summary, "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). This present study adopted a qualitative approach to describe, explain, and/or explore topics on the perspectives offered by the participants that assist with their social world being understood (Willis, 2007). Furthermore, this research sought to interpret the nature of parent and teacher experiences of their interactions and to determine whether social influence strategies were evident in their interactions.

Methodological approach

In qualitative research, different approaches are available for the collection and interpretation of data. Two major perspectives were identified from the literature as dominating educational research: positivism (or post positivism) and constructivism (or interpretivism) (Hittleman & Simon, 2006). A discussion of these two approaches is provided with justification for selecting interpretivism as the research methodology.

Positivists view data as being objective, which is in existence and ready to be found. They believe that reality is perceived through the senses of the people whose behaviours can provide the same results, which can then be based on universal cause laws (Hittleman & Simon, 2006; Sarantakos, 1993). Interpretivists however, obtain the subjective meanings of people's experiences, which have been "negotiated socially and historically" (Creswell, 1998, p. 21). In addition, interpretive research adopts the perspective of understanding the behaviours of people whose reality is in their own minds, and assign subjective meanings to their actions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Sarantakos, 1993). As this present research sought to understand the behaviour of parents and teachers and their subjective lived experiences, interpretivism was selected as the theoretical perspective for this study.

Interpretivism and constructivism are closely related as qualitative paradigms because both seek to make meaning from interpreting the world in which we live (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). However, constructivism was adopted for the conceptual framework and an interpretive approach was found to be more suited to the collection and analysis of data.

Interpretive research

Interpretive research was developed as a way to capture "social aspects of the natural sciences" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 125). Interpretivism applies "logical empiricist methodology ... to a framework of human inquiry" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 125). The interpretive perspective believes that "reality is internally experienced, is socially constructed through interaction and interpreted through the actors, and is based on the definition that people attach to it" (Hughes cited in Sarantakos, 1993, p. 36). Furthermore, interpretivism "emphasizes social interaction as the basis for knowledge" (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 9) and where reality can be described as being what people make it to be (Schwandt, 1994).

This is a study located in primary schools, with parents and teachers as participants; their stories were collected, described, and interpreted as their lived experiences of parent-teacher interactions. The interpretive researcher wanted to "understand how others understand their world" (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 10). In this current research, the interpretive perspective assumed a "relativist ontology, a subjective epistemology and a naturalistic set of methodologies" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 14). This present investigation captured the lived experiences of parents and teachers and the subjective meanings of their interactions.

Interpretive approach

The interpretive approach was used to understand how the realities of parents and teachers have been socially constructed, and therefore, how these social constructions became their lived experiences. Using suitable methods for the collection of their stories, the purpose of this present research was to understand the lived experience of parent-teacher interactions. Table 4.1 illustrates the basic assumptions of interpretivism, which were adopted as the theoretical perspective for the present research. It must be emphasised that any meaning derived from this research is to be understood only in the local school context from which it was derived and cannot necessarily be generalised to other school communities (Willis, 2007).

The following section highlights the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions of the interpretive paradigm. Subsequently, this theoretical perspective examines: the nature of reality as seen from the actors'

perspectives; factors that guided this interpretive research; and how meaning from the data was derived.

Table 4.1   Basic Assumptions of Interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Hatch, 2002; Neuman, 2007; Packer, 1999)

Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Multiple realities are presented	Understanding is created through the social constructions of their world	Naturalistic qualitative methods
Definition is given to their own view of reality	The researcher and participants co-construct their understandings	Understood within the local context
Socially constructed through action and interaction	Created as the research progresses	Participatory stance of the researcher that provides descriptions, narratives, and stories

Firstly, interpretive research includes the collection of multiple realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). What is real is defined by the individuals' perspectives along with their socially constructed viewpoints (Willis, 2007). Therefore, each individual has his or her own version of reality. Interpretivism understands that people develop their own version of reality based on their experiences, which in turn presents researchers with many versions of the 'truth'.

Secondly, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) commented that individuals are influenced not only by their own perceptions of reality, but also their shared experiences with other people and their environment. The realities of participants are co-constructions of their actual reality, which are identified by the researcher and the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Willis, 2007). The present research, therefore, is a collection of parents' and teachers' realities that were reconstructed with the researcher, based on the participants' lived experiences.

Finally, interpretive research seeks the lived experiences of "real people in real settings as the objects of study" (Hatch, 2002, p. 6). In addition, interpretive research occurs in a setting, which is open and not controlled (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Gall, et al., 2007). This study investigated parents' and teachers' experiences of their interactions in a primary school setting. Therefore, emerging themes from their lived

experiences might be influenced by the school's environment of expectations, culture, and practices (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The purpose of interpretive research is to strive for knowledge through what Weber (cited in Bogdan & Taylor, 1975) called "understanding or verstehen" (p. 4). Weber's (1864-1920) notion regarding the sociological interpretive principle of *verstehen* was that the "purposes and underlying ideas or motives could be revealed providing an understanding of why people act the way they do" (cited in Albrow, 1990, p. 125). Interpretivism seeks to understand what motivates people's behaviour, and how they (and others) interpret their actions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Neuman, 2007; Willis, 2007). In this research, interpretivism assisted with an understanding of parents' and teachers' experiences of their interactions. The purpose of this research was "to see a social situation from the point of view of the actors in order to understand what is happening in the situation" (Lindlof, 1995, p. 30). Meaning derived from parent-teacher interactions is presented as the subjective lived experiences of these parents and teachers.

The interpretive paradigm, as a form of social science research, may not "prove anything; ... [it may] simply add to the evidence ..." (Willis, 2007, p. 40). Positivist research however, examines universal truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), whilst interpretivism seeks to understand the perspectives of the participants that can be generalised to similar settings (Willis, 2007). This signals that there are limitations and boundaries to this current interpretive research project. The conclusions drawn from this investigation reflect the perspectives offered by the participant parents and teachers of the particular schools. The results from this present research are therefore considered as local knowledge and should not be generalised to all schools (Willis, 2007). However, in the final analysis, findings from this study can add to the body of knowledge about parental involvement, parent-teacher relationships, parent-teacher communication, and parent-teacher interactions found in primary schools.

In conclusion, the purpose of this qualitative interpretive research was to seek an "understanding as opposed to rules or laws" (Willis, 2007, p. 121). In addition, the study aimed to provide local truths by collecting and analysing stories from parents and teachers, which it was hoped would offer their subjective experiences of their realities in the context of schools, parental involvement, parent teacher interactions, and social influence.

Qualitative interpretative research model

The current interpretive research is a collection of stories from the lived experiences of the participants (Hatch, 2002), illuminating the truth from both the parents' and teachers' perspectives. The design for this research is based on the interpretation of stories, as told by parents and teachers, identifying their understanding of their collected lived experiences through rich descriptions of their settings, situations, processes, and/or the nature of their interactions.

The Qualitative Interpretive Research Model (see Figure 4.1) firstly highlights constructivism as being adopted as the theoretical perspective for this study. Secondly, interpretivist research methods were used to assist with the collection and analysis of data. Subsequently, underpinning this qualitative interpretive approach was *verstehen* (or understanding), which sought to comprehend the lived experiences of parents and teachers in the contexts of low fee, independent, Protestant, metropolitan Perth primary schools. Finally, this investigation explored parent-teacher interactions through the collection of their individual stories, worldviews, and perspectives.
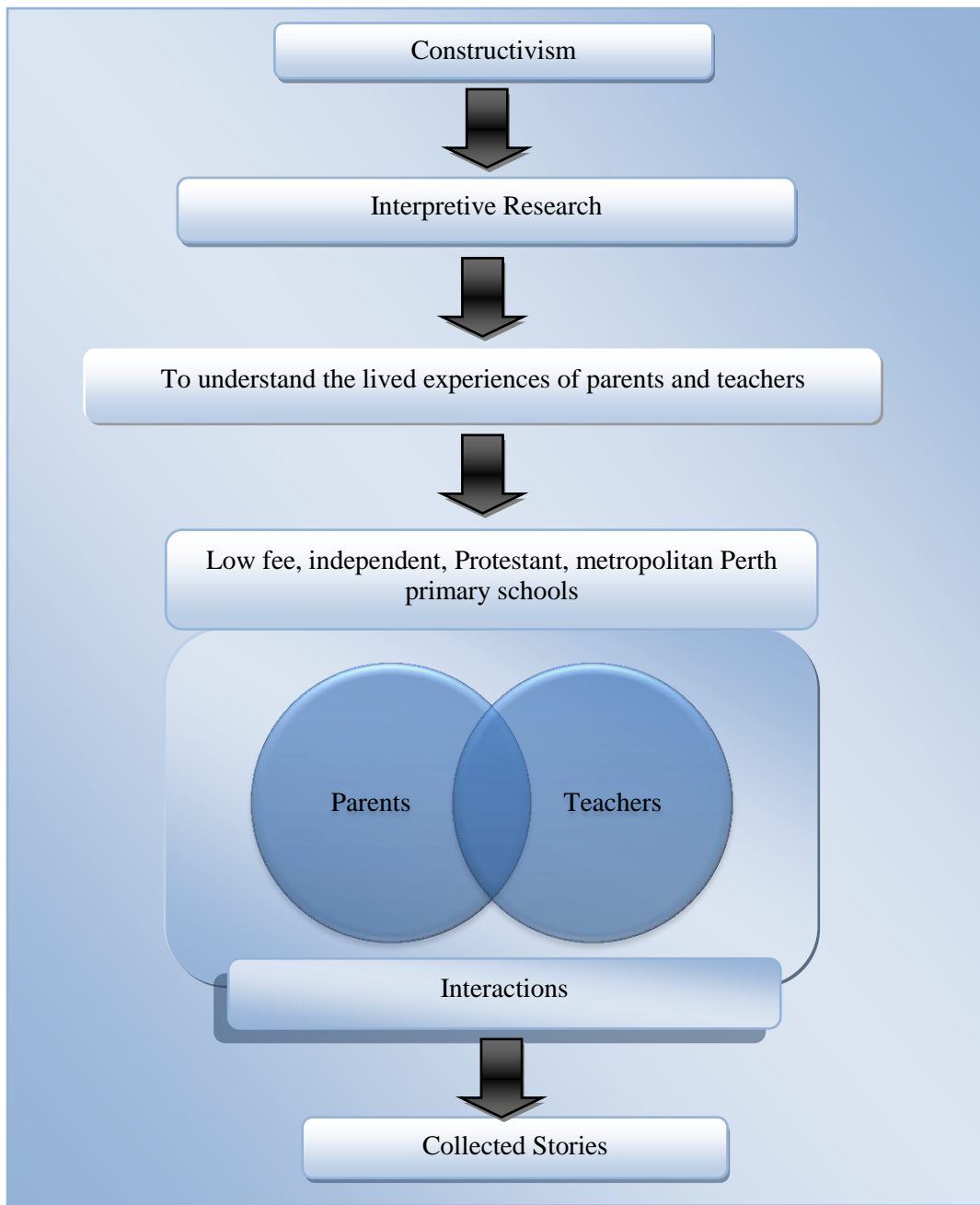
Figure 4.1   Qualitative Interpretive Research Model

Research Methods

Attempting to make sense of the experiences of parents and teachers was reliant on quality information being collected and the interpretation of how parents and teachers viewed their socially constructed world (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Rich descriptions from the perspectives of parents and teachers were obtained through focus group sessions and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. From the analysis of their stories, a number of themes were discerned. The nature of the parents' and

teachers' experiences of their interactions and the uncovering of social influence strategies were identified by interpreting these emerging themes through the reading and then coding of transcripts and using NVivo 8 software.

Focus groups and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were used to collect data on parent-teacher interactions. Interactions were described as being any meeting between parents and teachers during which information was shared about the child/student regarding school or educational issues. In the literature, interactions between parents and teachers were defined as being 'formal' or 'informal' types of communications. Formal communications included parent-teacher meetings, as well as notes or emails from the school to home, or from the home to school (Lasky, 2000; Walker, 1998). Informal communications were viewed as casual conversations usually occurring either at pick-up and/or drop-off times, when parents volunteered in the classroom, or through school events such as sporting carnivals and fund raising activities (Lasky, 2000). Understanding the initial perspectives of participants via focus groups facilitated for the development of interview questions used to collect further information (Morgan, 1997).

Participants for a research project may be selected purposively or randomly. Patton (1990) describes purposeful sampling as being aligned with qualitative studies through the selection of "information rich cases to be studied in more depth providing greater insights" (p. 230). Random sampling, on the other hand, is associated with quantitative studies and provides generalisations that can be applied to the broader population (Seidman, 1991). In the present study, purposeful sampling was utilised.

Focus groups

This study initially used focus groups to provide an insight into the perceptions of the parents and teachers in an efficient and timely manner (Krueger, 1994, p. 19). Focus groups are also known as group interviews, using seven to ten participants who offer their points of view, experiences, and/or perspectives on a given topic (Morgan, 1997). An advantage of using focus groups was that comments could be directly clarified with the participants with regard to specific responses (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). This was particularly useful when probing parents and teachers in relation to the research questions and determining whether social influence was evident in their interactions.

Focus groups assisted the participants to respond to open-ended questions, providing general information on the positive and less than satisfactory experiences that parents had when interacting with teachers, and vice versa. This also assisted with an understanding of how parents and teachers talked about their experiences and the vocabulary they used. Parents and teachers were encouraged to respond in a way that was meaningful for them, allowing connections to be made between their stories. The responses given in the focus group sessions influenced the design of interview questions.

Individual in-depth semi-structured interviews

Individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were used to collect information that could not be observed directly (Patton, 1990), providing information about the participants' insights and experiences of the world in which they operated, and the meaning that they gave to these experiences (Seidman, 1991). The interviews utilised two techniques: in-depth interviews, which allowed parents and teachers the freedom to express their thoughts and to tell their stories in a way that made sense to them (Seidman, 1991, p. 1); and, semi-structured interview questions, which obtained responses to particular topics that were derived from the focus group sessions. Individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were constructed with particular questions that related to this study, whilst providing the participants the freedom to recollect their relevant lived experiences (Seidman, 1991). As Schutz (1967) suggested, the reconstruction process between the researcher and, in this research, the parents and teachers, allowed the experiences of participants to be captured and become the objects of attention.

Using focus groups and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews, the realities of parents and teachers were collected with sufficient detail so that rich descriptions could emerge from their stories. This assisted with learning about the contexts in which these interactions occurred, deepening the understanding of the complexities of parent-teacher interactions, and identifying evidence of social influence.

In summary, "qualitative research is intended to understand, describe and explain social phenomena 'from the inside'" (Flick, 2007, p. ix). Interpretive research methods enabled the understanding of the nature of parent-teacher interactions and how parents and teachers made decisions about their own behaviour and their

interpretation of the behaviour of others (Radnor, 2002). An interpretive approach permitted this study to seek understanding or *verstehen* (Gerth & Wright Mills, 1991) of parents' and teachers' experiences of their interactions, and the opportunity to determine whether social influence was evident in their interactions.

Research Procedure

The researcher made contact with 11 Western Australian low fee, independent, Protestant, metropolitan Perth primary schools with a 2008 - 2009 median socio-economic score (SES). In Western Australia, schools are associated with one of three organisations: the Department of Education Western Australia (DETWA); Catholic Education Office (CEO); or the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA). Other schools from the government and Catholic systems were considered; however, the researcher had established personal and professional relationships with the independent Protestant sector so this particular sector was chosen. The literature on parent-teacher interactions and parental involvement highlights barriers to parent-teacher interactions that include the schools' population based on its SES. Schools with parents who were middle class with higher SES levels were found to be more involved in the school and more confident to interact with the school and their teachers (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). Therefore, these low fee, independent, Protestant, metropolitan Perth primary schools were considered for this present study because they had a median SES, as well as strong parental involvement programs. The literature on SES factors assisted with the consideration and selection of the participant schools. From the 11 schools that were contacted, eight schools expressed interest in the study of which four schools made themselves available for the research.

The study involved two phases of data collection. The first phase involved focus group sessions with participants from two of the four K-12 schools, namely East Point and Queen Street schools. Parents participated in a focus group session at their school and teachers participated in a separate focus group session also at their school. The second phase of the data collection process involved individual in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants from the remaining two schools, South Boulevard and Jarvis Lane. Parents and teachers were interviewed from the K-12 schools in their respective school's interview rooms.

During the first phase of data collection (see Appendix B), parents and teachers responded to a set of guiding questions such as describing a positive parent (or teacher) meeting followed by a description of a less than satisfactory parent (or teacher) meeting. Other questions included:-

- What general topics were discussed at these meetings?

- What was the purpose of the meeting?

- How did you and the parent (or teacher) take on board each other's ideas/suggestions?

- How was your goal of the meeting achieved?

The second phase of data collection (see Appendix C and D) involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with individual parents and teachers who recounted their experiences of a positive parent (or teacher) meeting followed by a description of less than satisfactory parent (or teacher) meeting. Other questions included:-

- What general topics were discussed at these meetings?

- Who initiated the interaction?

- How do you feel when a parent (or teacher) initiates a meeting?

- How was the meeting conducted?

After collecting the data, the individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were transcribed by both an external agent, and the researcher. The completed transcripts were emailed back to the participants for member checking with only two minor alterations made. Following on from member checking, the interviews were then entered into NVivo 8 software for analysis.

The schools

The criteria for selecting the primary schools included: SES between 91 and 110 based on 2008-2009 figures (see Appendix A); the schools were known to have active parental involvement (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3); and the established personal and professional relationships held by the researcher. The presence of active parental involvement programs signified that the schools would already have a working relationship between the parents and teachers.

Table 4.2   Parental Involvement in East Point and Queen Street Schools –
Responses from Primary Principals (July 2010)

Questions	East Point School	Queen Street School
Do you have a parental involvement policy in your school?	Yes. It is based on a voluntary system and at the discretion of the teacher.	Yes. Parent Participation Program (PPP).
How can parents be involved in your school?	Excursions, classroom help, special days.	Excursions, washing linen, sport, class-help, Parents' & Friends' Association, library, administration, fund raising events – school fete.
If you do have a policy, how do you expect parents to volunteer each year?	The classroom teacher makes a request for help. The parents then respond to this.	10 hours per year for the first 3 years. We advertise any opportunities in our newsletter or display on our noticeboard.
If they do not complete the hours, what is the school's next procedure?	No consequences.	There are no consequences for not volunteering.
If you do not have a policy, how do you encourage parental involvement?	We invite parents into the school via newsletters, invitations, and notices.	We make an appeal in our newsletters. Nothing formal.

Table 4.3   Parental Involvement in Jarvis Lane and South Boulevard Schools – Responses from Primary Principals (July 2010)

Questions	Jarvis Lane School	South Boulevard School
Do you have a parental involvement policy in your school?	No written policy, but opportunities are provided for parental involvement.	Yes.
How can parents be involved in your school?	Parent rosters for classroom help, reading, writing, sport, carnivals, camps, clean-ups, dance, and music. Assist outside of school: for example sewing, art, cooking.	Excursions, camps, linen, sport, class help, Parents' & Friends' Association, library, administrative activities.
If you do have a policy, how do you expect parents to volunteer each year?	There is no set requirement of time for the parents to volunteer. Parents are encouraged to get involved with Parents' & Friends' Association, and/or contribute time to school events.	10 hours a year. Parents have a choice, work for 10 hours, or contribute $200. Many parents do many more than 10 hours.
If they do not do the hours, what is the school's next procedure?	Not applicable.	We are supposed to invoice them for the hours they missed. The commitment scheme is run by the Parents' & Friends' Association.
If you do not have a policy, how do you encourage parental involvement?	Parents are invited to join the school Parents' & Friends' Association, speak at the 'Meet the Teacher' nights; letters and flyers go home and notices placed in school publications. Teachers send home invitations or requests for classroom assistance or put up parent helper rosters, as and when required.	Every day I see parents around the Primary School, particularly in the mornings when they are here to listen to students reading.

The participants

Purposeful sampling was undertaken to recruit participants for both the focus group sessions (19 participants) and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews (48 participants). Due to the researcher's awareness of the barriers to parental

involvement, advice was sought from principals of parents and teachers, who were involved in the school, confident, willing to share their stories and had experiences of parent-teacher meetings. This was because the literature review highlighted that culture, gender, social class, self-efficacy, and time were barriers to parental involvement. Thus, purposeful sampling allowed rich descriptions to be obtained from the 67 participants.

The demographic information of parents and teachers who participated in this research is provided in Tables 4.4 and 4.5. The data indicate that both parents and teachers were predominantly Australian, had completed further education such as Technical and Further Education or tertiary education, had time available to be involved in the school, and ranged from being new to established members of the school community.

Table 4.4   Demographics of Parent Participants used in this Study

Parent Participants	Yes	No
Participants born in Australia	28	8
Participants' parents born in Australia	23	13
Speaks another language at home	3	33
Completed Year 12 or equivalent	28	8
Completed TAFE and/or further studies but not university	18	
Completed university	16	
Working commitments:		
Not at all	9	
Part time	25	
Full time	2	
Years as a parent at the school:		
Less than 3 years	10	
3 to 4 years	11	
5 to 7 years	7	
8 to 10 years	8	

Table 4.5   Demographics of Teacher Participants used in this Study

Teacher Participants	Yes	No
Participants born in Australia	20	11
Participants' parents born in Australia	16	15
Speaks another language at home	3	28
Completed Year 12 or equivalent	29	2
Completed university	31	
Years of university study:		
3 years	4	
4 years	16	
5 years	9	
6 years	1	
7 years	1	
Years as a teacher:		
Less than 5 years	5	
5 to 7 years	5	
8 to 10 years	7	
11 to 15 years	5	
16 to 20 years	3	
More than 20 years	6	

Ethics clearance process

Ethics clearance was obtained through Edith Cowan University's Human Research Ethics Committee, and was noted in all correspondence with participants. All participants received an information letter and a consent form to participate in the study. The letter outlined the issues regarding their privacy, anonymity and a guarantee that their confidentiality would be safeguarded. Names and locations of schools and participants were replaced with codes and pseudonyms. All focus group and individual in-depth semi-structured interview transcripts were assigned a code as a means of identification, known only by the researcher and supervisors. Participants were also aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

The researcher made contact with each of the schools through the principals and primary principals for the authorisation of the study. Parent participants for the focus group sessions were canvassed via a flyer and/or an article in their school's newsletter. A letter, followed by a short introduction given by the primary school

principal was used to canvass teacher participants for the focus group sessions. All interested respondents were asked to make contact with the researcher via her university email address or mobile telephone number. The school initially made contact with the parents advising them of the research project and provided them with the researcher's contact details. Parents could choose to participate in the research by making contact, or could decline by making no further contact. During the initial conversation, an outline of the project and its requirements was given to the parents.

To further safeguard confidentiality, transcripts were only made available to the researcher, researcher's supervisors, and the respective participants. In addition, the research assistant, and an external agent who transcribed some of the individual in-depth semi-structured interviews, signed a confidentiality agreement ensuring the rights of the participants were respected. Consent forms, school, and teacher information was stored at Edith Cowan University in a locked cupboard in a secure office area.

Each participant was also reminded of their rights in the research including: being allowed to withdraw from the study at any time; being consulted during the data collection phase; being able to check for transcript accuracy; as well as whether they knew of any relating breeches of confidentiality amongst the participants. Schools were informed about each stage of the project and communication to all participants remained open, but confidential.

Data collection

Data were collected from parents and teachers who participated in focus group sessions and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. This provided enough detail and depth of information, which was central to the purpose of this research. Each focus group session and interview was recorded and then transcribed for analysis.

Phase One: Focus Groups

Parent participants used in the first phase of data collection were sought through flyers and/or an article in their school's newsletter, whilst a short introduction by the primary principals canvassed teacher participants for the focus group sessions. On-going communication between the primary principals and the researcher regarding the process of recruiting participants was undertaken, such as "I have recruited five

staff members so far. I have included some information in the next newsletter for parents" (Primary Principal – Primary, East Point School, personal communication, May 2009).

Respondents then made contact via the researcher's email or telephone to either accept or decline being a participant for the research. The next step was to coordinate times and dates for the focus group session with the willing participants. Two parent focus group sessions were held at the beginning of the school's second term, whilst two teacher focus group sessions were held in the middle of the second term so as to give consideration for heavy workloads at the beginning of term. All sessions were held in the various schools' meeting rooms.

East Point School had three parent participants, whilst Queen Street School had four parent participants at the focus group sessions. Both groups had a mix of new parents and more established parents of the school, who were involved in the school either regularly and/or irregularly (see Table 4.6). Overall, six females and one male participated in parent focus group sessions. One parent was also a primary school teacher in a local government school. Participants were unfamiliar to the researcher.

Table 4.6   Phase One Data Collection: Breakdown of Parent Participants from Focus Group Schools

Focus Group School	Number of Female Parents	Number of Male Parents	Total
East Point	2	1	3
Queen Street	4	0	4
Total			7

In the second focus group session, 5 teachers from East Point School and 7 teachers from Queen Street School participated in the focus group sessions. The teachers in the focus groups were a mix of recent graduates and experienced teachers of Pre-Primary to Year 6 classes, including specialist subject teachers such as educational support, physical education, and languages other than English (see Table 4.7). Overall, 9 females and 3 males participated in teacher focus group sessions. Participants were unfamiliar to the researcher.

Table 4.7   Phase One Data Collection: Breakdown of Teacher Participants from Focus Group Schools

Focus Group School	Number of Female Teachers	Number of Male Teachers	Total
East Point	3	2	5
Queen Street	6	1	7
Total			12

The researcher chaired the focus group sessions with an assistant taking note of verbal and non-verbal communication during the sessions. At the completion of each focus group session, the researcher and her assistant compared notes covering specific observations of participants' use of expressions, tone, perspectives, and moods. This later provided anecdotal evidence of the participants' communication with each other and assisted with the reflexive nature of the research when reporting rich description of their stories. During these sessions, the assistant scribed leading sentences from each of the participants' responses to assist with voice identification during transcription. Participants were reminded that their anonymity was guaranteed as the transcripts would de-identify them using codes that were familiar only to the researcher and the supervisors of the study. All participants were provided with copies of their transcripts, which were checked for accuracy of interpretation and that no details or phrases would signal their identity.

Phase Two: Individual In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

Parents were invited to participate in the second phase of data collection through the school. Teacher participants were recruited before parents were sought. Each of the participant teachers then approached three to five parents from their class, who, in their view, might be interested in participating in the research. These teachers approached the parents with research information flyers, which showed how the parents could choose to make contact and volunteer for the research. Therefore, 19 teachers asked 57 to 95 parents to participate in the study and of these 24 parents volunteered.

Interested participants made contact via the details listed on the flyer. Further aspects of the study were explained over the telephone or via university email. Times were then coordinated to meet at the school. Once the parents agreed to participate in

the study, a formal letter was given to them advising them of their rights as a participant and the ethical responsibilities of the researcher.

Twenty parents from Jarvis Lane School and nine parents from South Boulevard School undertook individual in-depth semi-structured interviews (see Table 4.8) with a mix of new and old parents of the school who were involved either regularly and/or irregularly. Overall, 29 females and no males participated in these interview sessions. Participants were unfamiliar to the researcher.

Table 4.8 **Phase Two Data Collection: Breakdown of Parent Participants from Interview Schools**

Interview School	Number of Female Parents	Number of Male Parents	Total
Jarvis Lane	20	0	20
South Boulevard	9	0	9
Total			29

Teacher participants were elicited for individual in-depth semi-structured interviews via a brief presentation at the school's staff meeting at which the research project and the time commitment involved were explained. Flyers were left in the staffroom with a brief outline of the study including the researcher's contact details for teachers who wanted to participate in the study. Further details of the study were explained to them over the telephone or by email and suitable times were arranged to meet.

Every effort was made to accommodate the participants' work schedules, availability, preferred times to meet, as well as care of younger children during these interview sessions. Meetings were usually held at different times during the day in the schools' shared interview rooms. 'Shared' in this case means interview rooms that are available to educational specialists and external agents who infrequently attend the school. At all times, the participants' comments were respected and professional integrity was maintained.

Twelve teachers from Jarvis Lane School and seven teachers from South Boulevard School undertook individual in-depth semi-structured interviews (see Table 4.9). The teachers included both inexperienced and experienced teachers teaching Pre-Primary to Year six classes, including specialist subject teachers, such as learning

support and physical education. Two of the teachers were familiar to the researcher: one through committee membership, and the other through shared professional development opportunities. However, this seemed to have encouraged these two participants to provide greater detail to their stories than that provided by the other teachers. Overall, 14 females and five males participated in these interview sessions.

Table 4.9   **Phase Two Data Collection: Breakdown of Teacher Participants from Interview Schools**

Interview School	Number of Female Teachers	Number of Male Teachers	Total
Jarvis Lane	8	4	12
South Boulevard	6	1	7
Total			19

Individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed. Participants then reviewed their transcripts for accuracy where minor changes were made to three transcripts. These changes did not seem to alter the themes relating to these parent-teacher interactions.

The researcher also maintained a reflexive journal with personal written accounts of events, ideas, and observations as they occurred through the course of the data collection phase. This diary was maintained to account for possible personal bias.

Data analysis

The research methodology adopted for this study was interpretivism. Interpretive research allowed the data to be organised and reduced to uncover patterns of meaning (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005). In this current study, data were analysed by extracting meaning from the transcripts to identify emerging themes of the parents' and teachers' experiences of their interaction and evidence of social influence. In addition, an analysis of the data for sub-themes exploring any similarities and differences in the data was also undertaken (Strauss, 1987). Reading, interpreting, and coding transcripts with the assistance of NVivo 8 software aided in the uncovering of patterns of meaning.

Analysis of the data commenced after the first focus group session and the findings later assisted with refinement of questions for the individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. During each phase of data collection, notes and anecdotal

records of a reflexive nature were kept in a personal journal that later assisted with transcription and interpretation of any hidden meanings that were derived from participants' comments.

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the research, various procedures were undertaken to enhance the study's credibility (Gall, et al., 2007; Hatch, 2002; Lindlof, 1995). Firstly, triangulation of data (Lindlof, 1995) was achieved through the use of focus group sessions and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. Secondly, rich data were collected through interview transcripts, field notes, journal entries, and written observations during and after each focus group session and interview (Hatch, 2002). In addition, the possibility of bias was restricted through the practice of reflexivity (Gall, et al., 2007) during the data collection phase and bracketing (Bednall, 2006) of the researcher's assumptions. A reflexive journal was maintained which allowed the researcher's interpretations to be explored against the emerging themes (Hatch, 2002). Furthermore, each participant was provided with a copy of his or her transcript (or group transcript from the focus group session) for member checking (Hatch, 2002). The participants highlighted anomalies, which were then modified. The transcripts were, therefore, a true record of these parents' and teachers' statements about their lived experiences and represented their interpretation of their parent-teacher interactions.

Feedback received from some of the participants highlighted the introspective nature of the individual in-depth semi-structured interviews:

> Surprisingly, it was worthwhile in the sense that I had a chance to talk about and reflect on an aspect of the job that isn't often discussed in detail (Tia, personal communication, May 26th, 2009).

> The researcher was very pleasant too and listened graciously to my load of drivel (Tabitha, personal communication, May 26th, 2009).

> It was an enjoyable discussion, and she made me feel completely at ease (Tracy, personal communication, May 26th, 2009).

The transcripts from these interviews with parents and teachers were analysed individually, followed by parents as a group, and teachers as a group. Further analysis occurred when themes emerged from the data, which were coded and re-coded determining whether social influence was used during their interactions. Any other themes and/or patterns that emerged from the data were also identified and coded. A

more detailed discussion of the data analysis methods used in this study is provided in the subsequent findings chapters.

Limitations of the study

Opportunities to overcome the identified limitations were developed to provide a more credible and valid research project. Schools that were chosen for this study had an average SES, that is, a population with middle-income range, in 2009. In 2010, the SES for schools was changed and recalibrated to the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) score that altered the category within which some schools in this research fell (see Appendix A). The middle income range of schools was selected because previous research highlighted that these types of schools were more likely to have higher levels of parental involvement (Henderson & Berla, 1997) .

Low fee, independent, Protestant, metropolitan Perth primary schools were selected because these schools encourage parent participation through their parent volunteer programs, either as part of the school policy, or as a school expectation (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3). The literature on parental involvement suggests that if parents and teachers are aware of their schools' expectations of their roles, the parents tend to be more confident and comfortable in coming into the school and helping in the classroom, thereby, reducing barriers to parental involvement (Lasky, 2000). Therefore, schools were specifically targeted with a median SES, and in addition, well developed parental involvement programs.

The role of researchers, in interpretive research, is to avoid imposing their own interpretation and to be true to the meaning given by the participants (Blackledge & Hunt, 1985). However, cultural assumptions and/or bias of the researcher can influence what is asked and what is heard (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In this research, bracketing and suspending judgements or assumptions were undertaken so that the subjective meanings of the participants' actions were provided (Christ & Tanner, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher's task was to interpret how others understood their world and to consider the meanings behind their actions (O'Donoghue, 2007). Being aware of her own potential for bias, the researcher therefore, adopted a reflexive process and evaluated the potential for bias when interpreting data (Bednall, 2006). This was established through maintaining a research journal, which allowed thoughts to be entered post interview; recording of perceptions of the information presented; comparing understandings during the focus group

sessions with the research assistant; evaluating the interviewing process by considering the factors that impacted on the interview; as well as developing an awareness of contextual information that was apparent or observed. The journal acted as an aid to remember details and interpretations of the participants during focus group sessions and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews, which were later used to assist with analysing stories.

A further limitation was the sampling techniques used for focus groups and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. Firstly, the majority of participants were female, with only nine males represented out of the total 67 participants, and only one male parent. Secondly, purposive sampling techniques cannot be seen as being representative of the general population (Patton, 1990). Participants who volunteered for the research were found to be generally confident, well-spoken, and had time for these focus groups and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. Therefore, some people could have been marginalised from this study, due to other commitments, lack of confidence, and/or trust in the research. This study, therefore, is not representative of all parents or teachers found in these schools or in other schools.

Additional limitations include the methods used to collect the data. Firstly, during the focus group sessions, interactions amongst the participants provided an opportunity for one person (or a few people) to dominate the conversation or topic, or to silence others. Being aware of these possible group dynamics, provisions were made allowing opportunities for all participants to express their experiences through turn taking cues (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Secondly, limitations for the individual in-depth semi-structured interviews included the length of time taken for each interview and finding participants who were willing to spend a length of time on the topic (Seidman, 1991). Being aware of these limitations, the researcher facilitated these issues by encouraging participants to participate in the research and by being flexible in the arrangements. These assisted in obtaining rich descriptions from the participants.

The analyses of data were guided by the research questions (Morse, 1994); however, Lopez and Willis (2004) state that knowledge of the topic, either through personal experience or the literature review, leads to specific ideas about the inquiry. This highlights that there remains bias in the results due to the researcher's previous

experience as a teacher, a primary school parent, as well as the influence of the literature.

Summary

This chapter focused on the qualitative interpretive research methodology that was adopted for this study. An outline of the interpretive research methods was provided justifying the data collection methods used. This was followed by an explanation of the research design and procedures for this research which included participant information, ethics, phases of data collection and the process used to analyse the data. In the concluding section, limitations to the study were explored, and ethical considerations were made clear. This interpretive qualitative research sought to understand the lived experiences of parents and teachers and determine whether there was any evidence of social influence. This required the researcher to capture, through rich descriptions, the perspectives offered by parents and teachers in a primary school setting.

The next four chapters focus on the findings that resulted from the focus group sessions and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews with parents and teachers.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS:

COLLABORATIVE AND NON-COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES

The purpose of this study was to investigate the nature of parent-teacher interactions and to determine if social influence was evident within these interactions. To achieve this objective, focus group sessions and individual in-depth semi-structured interviews (hereafter interviews) were held with parents and teachers exploring incidents that provided satisfactory and/or less than satisfactory experiences of their parent-teacher interaction. Further questions were used to identify 'in what context' and 'for what purposes' did these interactions occur. The nature of parent-teacher interactions and the social influence strategies used were interpreted from descriptions of parents' and teachers' direct experiences.

The next four chapters present the findings of this research in relation to the two research questions and ensuing sub-questions into parent-teacher interactions. Overall, the findings in this research firstly, indicated that parents and teachers viewed their interactions as being either collaborative or non-collaborative in nature. In addition, there were associated attributes from the parents' perspectives and the teachers' perspectives that defined these practices. Secondly, six social influence strategies were identified as being employed during these parent-teacher interactions. These strategies are again discussed from the parents' and teachers' application of them during their interactions. Thirdly, these social influence strategies were found to occur in particular contexts and fourthly, the strategies were related to particular purposes during the interactions.

This chapter, however, will examine the results derived from the first research question what were the parents' and teachers' descriptions of collaborative and non-collaborative practices during their parent-teacher interactions. This section initially outlines who the participants were in this study, followed by a review of how the data were categorised as either collaborative or non-collaborative practices. An explanation is also provided of the attributes that confirm these collaborative and non-collaborative practices as described by parents and teachers, together with verifying comments.

Participants

A breakdown of participant information and the data collection methods used in this study is presented in two tables (see below). This study interviewed parents and teachers from four low fee, independent, Protestant, metropolitan Perth primary schools to provide details about their interactions. A breakdown of the figures shows that 67 people participated in this study, comprising 36 parent participants (see Table 5.1), as well as 31 teacher participants (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.1   Number of Parent Participants From Each of the Four Schools

School Name	Data Collection Method	Number of Participants
East Point	Focus Group Sessions	3
Queen Street	Focus Group Sessions	4
Jarvis Lane	Interviews	20
South Boulevard	Interviews	9
Total Number of Participants		36

Table 5.2   Number of Teacher Participants From Each of the Four Schools

School Name	Data Collection Method	Number of Participants
East Point	Focus Group Sessions	5
Queen Street	Focus Group Sessions	7
Jarvis Lane	Interviews	12
South Boulevard	Interviews	7
Total Number of Participants		31

Nineteen participants consisting of seven parents and 12 teachers from 2 different schools, East Point School (EPS) and Queen Street School (QSS) attended

focus group sessions. In addition, 36 people comprising 29 parents and 19 teachers from the other two schools, Jarvis Lane School (JLS) and South Boulevard School (SBS) attended these interview sessions.

For the purposes of analysing the data, comments made by parents during focus group sessions and interviews were collated into the one folder, titled 'parents,' which was later categorised as the parents' perspectives. Similarly, stories shared by all teachers were initially placed into a 'teachers' folder and later recoded as the teachers' perspectives.

Data Analysis

In this study, parents and teachers were grouped using the NVivo 8 software where each parent and each teacher represented one source in the final data analysis. The maximum number of sources for parents was 36, whilst for teachers it was 31; this equated to the total number of participants. The total number of parents and teachers who described differing collaborative and/or non-collaborative experiences was tallied and later converted into a percentage figure.

Parents and teachers were recorded as sources, however, some parents and teachers reported more than one incident or experience of a collaborative and/or non-collaborative practice in this study. Using NVivo 8 software, these incidents of collaboration/non-collaboration were counted as references and calculated within the data; thus, incidents, experiences, and stories from parents and teachers were calculated as individual, separate references. In this study, references were described as either a collaborative practice (*approachability, honesty, listening, relationships, sharing information,* and *working together*) or a non-collaborative practice (*emotive behaviours, lack of confidence, lack of information, lack of support, not listening, not working together,* and *unapproachability*). Therefore, one source (parent/teacher) could report, for example, five references (or incidents) under a particular collaborative or non-collaborative practice.

To illustrate the total number of references made by parents and teachers, two figures are presented. Firstly, Figure 5.1 indicates the total number of separate references that were described by parents and teachers; this total number is the sum of all the separate incidents coded under the seven different attributes of collaborative

practices. Likewise, Figure 5.2 indicates the total number of separate references that were coded under non-collaborative practices.

The data show (see Figure 5.1) that most parents and teachers recalled single references in this study; however, it also shows that one parent and three teachers each described eight separate references to collaborative practices. A summative total of 142 references of collaborative practices were analysed in this study.
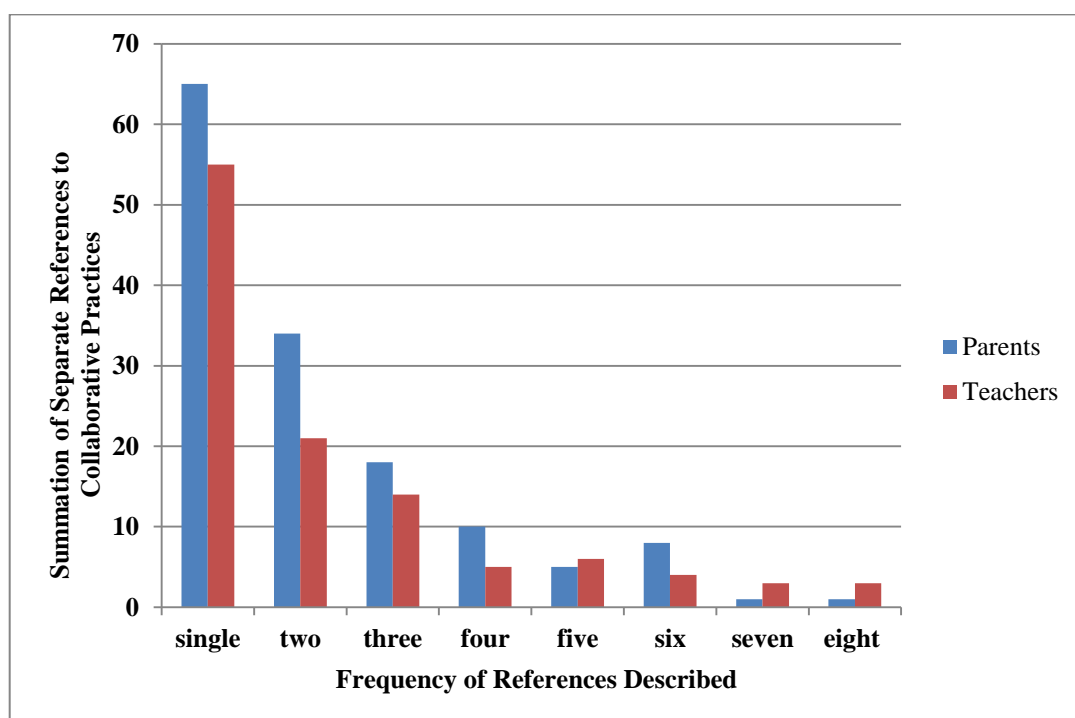
Figure 5.1   Total Numbers of References to Collaborative Practices Experienced by Parents and Teachers

Figure 5.2 indicates the number of references that were described by parents and teachers as being non-collaborative practices. The figure also indicates that parents described 44 separate references of a non-collaborative practice, whilst teachers described 35 separate references of non-collaborative practices. Furthermore, one parent and one teacher each described six separate references. In this study, a summative total of 82 separate references were analysed as non-collaborative practices.
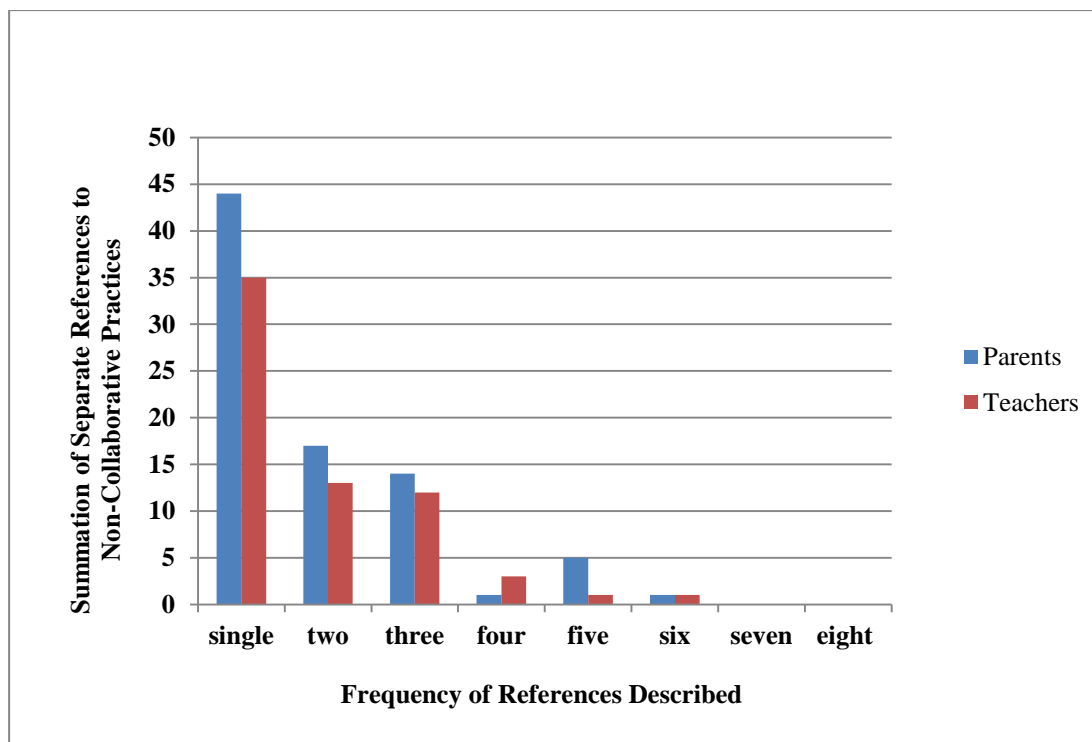
Figure 5.2   Total Numbers of References to Non-Collaborative Practices Experienced by Parents and Teachers

Summary of Data Analysis

Using NVivo 8 software, each parent and teacher was counted as a source of information. Furthermore, parents and teachers were found to have shared more than one experience of collaborative and non-collaborative practices, which were tallied as single references. However, each reference was calculated as a separate incident that underpinned one or more of the attributes of collaborative or non-collaborative practices. Overall, 36 parents and 31 teachers provided examples of 142 positive experiences and 82 less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions. The next section presents the findings on the nature of parents' and teachers' experiences of their interactions.

The Nature of Parents' and Teachers' Experiences of their Interactions

Parents and teachers provided examples of positive or less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions. From the data, seven practices of collaboration and seven practices of non-collaboration were identified. The following sections discuss the findings obtained from the data in relation to firstly, collaborative

practices and secondly, non-collaborative practices of parent-teacher interactions given from the parents' perspectives and then the teachers' perspectives.

The findings obtained from analysing the data identified that collaborative practices led to positive parent-teacher interactions, whilst non-collaborative practices led to less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions. The following two sections examine respectively, these collaborative and non-collaborative practices in detail.

Collaborative practices

Collaborative practices identified in the data were *approachability, honesty, listening, relationships, sharing information, support and resources*, and *working together*. Several themes originally emerged from the data, which were later coded and recoded into these collaborative practices. For example, parents referred to the temperament of the teacher such being as warm, open, and nurturing in nature. These were collapsed into the theme of *approachability*. Telling the truth and providing the reality concerning the students' capabilities and activities at home and at school, were coded into *honesty*. In addition, the *listening* practice was viewed as hearing what was being discussed and demonstrating active participation during the interaction. Subsequently, another prominent theme developed from both parents' and teachers' stories included *relationships*. This was explained as having an association with each other through fostering connections where both parties could obtain and understand the other person's perspective. For the *sharing information* practice, parents often stated that they sought the teacher's advice and reassurance during some of their meetings, whilst teachers described these interactions as the exchange of information. *Support and resources* practice was developed from what the parent (or teacher and/or school) can or cannot provide in the way of teaching skills, and time. Reassurance was not considered as support because support referred to resources that could be made available to parents and teachers. Finally, the *working together* practice occurred when parents and teachers developed a partnership and consulted with each other. In summary, it was made evident from the lived experiences that both parties wanted to know and understand each other so that they could feel a level of comfort in being able to share information and foster connectivity. These themes were categorised as key practices of collaboration that led to positive parent-teacher interactions.

Figure 5.3 illustrates the percentages of collaborative practices used by parents and teachers during their interactions. Each experience shared by parents and teachers

was counted as a reference, and converted into a percentage figure. In the figure, each collaborative practice has a total percentage figure from the parents' perspectives and from the teachers' perspectives. The figure shows that parents and teachers used these collaborative practices differently during their interactions. For example, more than 75 percent of parents made references to the *relationships* practice, whilst over 90 percent of teachers provided experiences of the *working together* collaborative practice. In addition, more than 60 percent of parents, whilst only 35 percent of teachers made reference to the *approachability* practice. Similarly, over 40 percent of parents shared experiences of the use of *support and resources* compared to less than 30 percent for teachers. Furthermore, the percentages highlight that parents and teachers were disparate in their use of the collaborative practices *approachability* and *working together*.
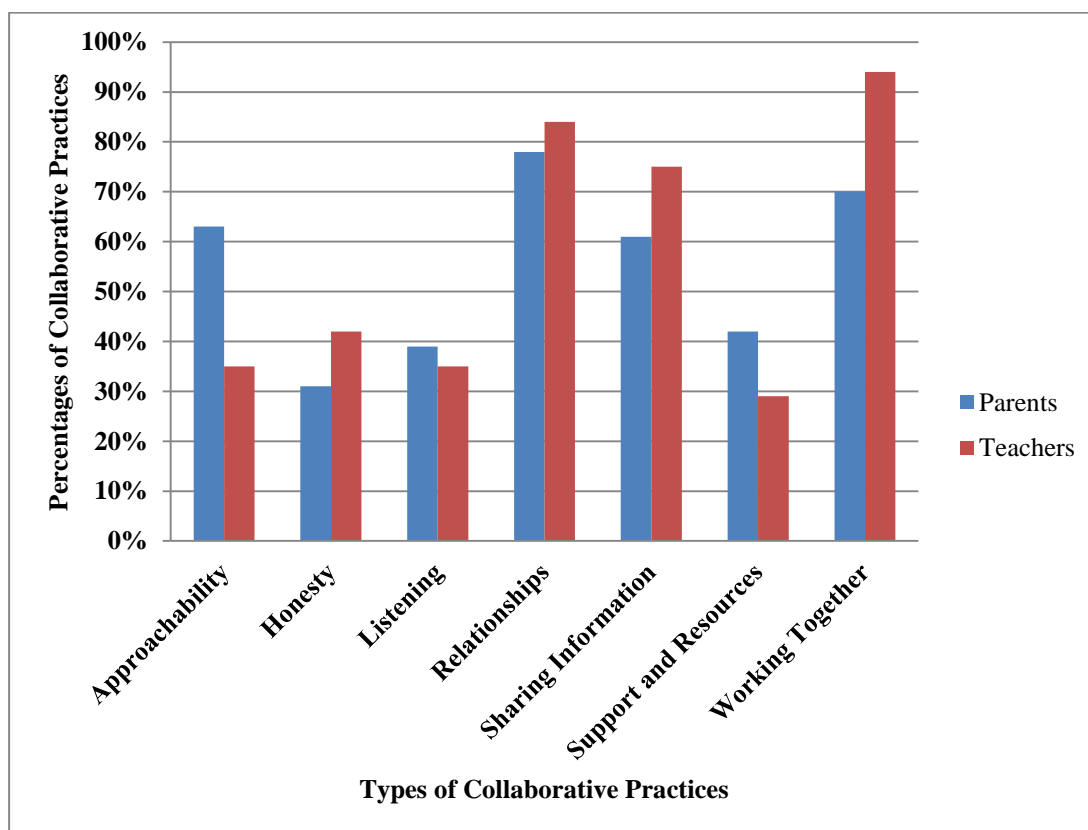
Figure 5.3   Percentages of Collaborative Practices Experienced by Parents and Teachers

The following two sub-sections explore both parents' and teachers' perspectives about these collaborative practices. Illustrative comments made by the participants supporting the perspectives are provided to assist with understanding and defining each collaborative practice.

Parents' Perspectives

The information in Figure 5.3 indicates that at least 60 percent of parents firstly viewed *relationships, working together, approachability*, and *sharing information* as being important collaborative practices with a teacher. The *relationships* practice was considered by parents (78 percent) as being the most important collaborative practice with teachers. Parents liked the relaxed friendly environment that was developed from having a good connection with the teachers. "We have sort of built a rapport, and we can have a joke" (Interview 36, 2009 - Alkira). They also highlighted the importance of just saying, "Hello, how are you? ... just that acknowledgement" (Interview 15, 2009 - Aida). Being recognised and greeted by a teacher was an important aspect of their connectivity. Alison commented, "There's quite a few of the teachers who now recognise me enough, just to say hello" (Interview 6, 2009 - Alison). Anita concurred, "you're not just any old parent" (Interview 8, 2009 - Anita). Azaria went further to say that her affiliation with teachers was "to see the teacher as a person, they have a life, they have issues" (Interview 28, 2009 - Azaria). She added, "If I hear negative things about the teachers ... I think well .... I have more rounded ideas of the teacher" (Interview 28, 2009 - Azaria), suggesting that her association with the teacher has an influence on her future interactions with the teacher. A further reason why parents wanted a connection with the teacher is that, "… you get to sort of know what the teacher is kind of like .... When you've got more of a relationship with them, they open up more about your child" (Interview 15, 2009 - Aida). In addition, Anisha summed up that establishing a good connection allowed her, "… to spend time with the teacher ... to ground all the awkward things that we're going to talk about" (Interview 22, 2009 - Anisha). The *relationships* collaborative practice assisted with parents and teachers getting to know and understand each other's perspectives and attitudes enhancing positive associations.

Working together was depicted by 70 percent of parents in this study as a collaborative practice. Parents described instances where teachers assisted them in dealing effectively with issues or concerns that were raised regarding a student. Amanda stated that for her this partnership occurred, "… in consultation with the teacher" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). Amy described *working together* as finding out where, "… the kids are at and what areas we [the parents] need to focus our attention on at home" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy). It was also considered that *working*

together were the times when the teacher would, "… suggest ideas, and explain it in a way that I can understand" (Interview 4, 2009 - Alana). Parents typically identified *working together* as a partnership that existed between themselves and the teacher. Alida commented, "If I am teaching them at home, it is being reinforced during the day, here at this school. So that was one of the reasons why we chose this school. So I do believe that it is a joint venture" (Interview 17, 2009 - Alida). In this study, the collaborative practice, *working together*, was a consultative process where parents worked in partnership with the teacher.

Sixty-three percent of parents viewed *approachability* of the teacher as a key feature of collaborative practices. Parents primarily described *approachability* as the teacher making them feel welcome, as well as the teacher's temperament. Alison explained *approachability* in terms of how the teacher made her feel, saying, "… for a teacher to ... be open and give those signals that she's happy to discuss anything, whether it's something to reveal what's happened or, ... the more important stuff, but you feel like you can talk to them about all sorts of stuff" (Interview 6, 2009 - Alison). Adair said her son's teacher, "… is just so open, you can be standing outside the classroom and he will come out" (Interview 29, 2009 - Adair). Parents also commented on the personality of the teacher from the child's perspective, "She was so lovely, the kids love her" (Interview 14, 2009 –Alicia), as well as "I think they're friendly to the kids as well as to us ... so the kids feel that they can speak to them [teacher]" (Interview 1, 2009 - Abbi). The personality of the teacher from the parents' perspective was described as, "She's very warm, [she has] got a beautiful nature" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). Thus *approachability*, from the parents' perspectives, was a teacher who was welcoming, open, and nurturing, with a caring personality. *Approachability* of the teacher aided parent-teacher collaboration.

Parents (61 percent) described the collaborative practice, *sharing information*, as positively impacting parent-teacher interactions. *Sharing information* was expressed by parents as being the opportunity to share and exchange information in relation to the child. Amanda stated, "I like to convey information and make sure they know that we're doing everything possible" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). Alice said, "I am always hearing what he is up to .... She has been quite helpful" (Interview 34, 2009 - Alice). At other times, it was the teacher *sharing information* as Amber described, "If there's something that needs to be discussed, she's great, she's approachable, she keeps

me informed of everything" (Interview 21, 2009 - Amber). Furthermore, *sharing information* was agreed on by Adair, Agatha, and Aileen as "communication" (Interview 29, 2009 - Adair; Interview 30, 2009 - Agatha; Interview 31, 2009 - Aileen). *Sharing information* is letting each other know the facts or concerns that can impact on the child's development; it is communicating.

Forty-two percent of parents in this study explained that on many occasions, they were *supported* by the teacher, and were offered *resources*. This was defined as the collaborative practice, *support and resources*. Arlene stated, "She sat me down and said, 'This is the issue, here take this home and try this for a while', and that was great" (Interview 25, 2009 - Arlene). This parent viewed the offer of *support and resources* as a collaborative practice. Parents also experienced teachers who outlined what support networks were available to them and/or the child. Adele clarified how teachers provided her with assistance by, "… going out of her way to organise tutoring, and just gave me some websites for him to work on at home" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). In addition, outside agencies were utilised as a *resource* to assist the parent (and the teacher) with providing *support* for the child. Parents found solace when the teacher was able to provide them with a level of *support and resources* for the student. Agatha shared, "They brought in the psychologist ... and it was all good in that they were looking at how they could help him" (Interview 30, 2009 - Agatha). In this study, *support and resources* referred to teachers providing assistance by way of resources and additional work to enhance student performance levels, as well as the provision of experts (and their advice) to assist with further developing the child.

Thirty-nine percent of parents claimed that *listening* was a collaborative practice. Anisha explained, "It was evident from the way she was responding and asking questions, that she was listening" (Interview 22, 2009 - Anisha). She further expressed, that a "… teacher had facilitated me ... to discuss a whole range of issues" (Interview 22, 2009 - Anisha). Parents also described the collaborative practice of *listening* as the time when teachers would hear and understand the parent's request. Addison commented on her experience of a teacher hearing her as, "… even if the teacher doesn't know this minute, she will say can I get back to you on that ... and I am really pleased with that she is not fobbing me off" (Interview 18, 2009 - Addison). A summative remark about the value of *listening* to parents was made by Agatha

advising teachers to, "… just listen to the parent sometimes. We have some valuable contributions to put towards the discussion" (Interview 30, 2009 - Agatha).

Honesty was identified by 31 percent of the parents in this study as a collaborative practice. Parents wanted to know the whole truth about their child's capabilities. Alkira stated, "I like for them to tell the whole truth, not hold back if there's something wrong" (Interview 36, 2009 - Alkira). For Adair, it was, "… I want to know everything" (Interview 29, 2009 - Adair), "… the good and the bad" (Interview 32, 2009 - Alooma). Parents wanted to know the whole picture even if it was going to be a difficult topic. Aranea summed this up as, "I would rather be told what they are battling in and learn to deal with it" (Interview 32, 2009 - Aranea). In this study, the practice of *honesty* was defined by the parents as the teachers telling them of any problems in relation to the student and being given the whole truth.

From the data, parents in these schools described several practices that led to collaboration with the teacher during their interactions. Parents were found to have used the *relationships* practice more frequently during their interactions and stated that it provided a level of comfort with the teacher; this was followed by the *working together* practice where parent-teacher partnerships were developed; and finally, the *approachability* practice where the parents described that the teachers made them feel welcome. Furthermore, parents described the collaborative practice of *sharing information* as enhancing communication; *support and resources* were the occasions when teachers set about finding the necessary materials and assistance to meet the needs of the child (at the parents' request); the *listening* practice was when teachers were actually hearing what the parent was saying (or requesting); and the *honesty* practice as the times when the teacher told the whole truth. Alana summarises these collaborative practices as, "My relationship with the teacher is very pleasant .... They're receptive to me having a chat with them. If I have any concerns, I feel like they are aware of my child ... and I feel like they would not hesitate to let me know if there was an issue" (Interview 4, 2009 - Alana). These collaborative practices, from the parents' perspectives, provided positive parent-teacher interactions.

Teachers' Perspectives

From the teachers' perspectives, the results indicated that over 70 percent of those in this study viewed *working together, relationships*, and *sharing information*, as

key attributes that contributed to their collaboration with parents. Ninety-four percent of teachers described the collaborative practice of *working together* as a key to their positive interactions with parents. Terry summed up *working together*, as "We want every parent ... to work for the best of their child so if there are any issues that need to be dealt with then, we will deal with them" (Interview 64, 2009 - Terry). Trisha further defined the practice of *working together* as, "… feeling that you are on the same page ... you have actually come together and you have understood each other and you are going forward together" (Interview 65, 2009 - Trisha). Teachers also explained that parents who provided the necessary support at home often complemented the activities and actions of the school. Tessa said, "They come for advice ... and then you are working together on strategies to implement in the home ... that you are doing in class" (Interview 61, 2009 - Tessa). Furthermore, parents giving assistance to the child encouraged the teacher to work more with the parent, thereby fostering a partnership. Terry stated that, "If I know that they will be supportive, then I will work with them, in fact, I will say that if you have any ideas on what we can do, let us know and we will work together" (Interview 64, 2009 - Terry).

The importance of the collaborative practice, *relationships*, was exemplified by 84 percent of the teacher participants in this study. The *relationships* practice was the affiliation developed between parents and teachers so they could understand each other's perspectives. A further attribute of the *relationships* practice was a level of trust and was highlighted by teachers as underpinning the quality of their association with parents. Tamsin commented, "They trust us" (Interview 58, 2009 - Tamsin), and Tennika added, "They trust us that if we see a problem then we contact them, and if we haven't, things are running smoothly" (Interview 56, 2009 - Tennika). "Trust is picked up ... through the child ... if there is a good relationship between the child and the teacher, then it is quickly communicated home" (Interview 51, 2009 - Travis). Teachers further described the *relationships* practice as the opportunities of getting to know the parents and developing a connection with them. Tiana stated, "If they come in all the time ... they become familiar, you know their personality" (Interview 38, 2009 - Tiana). This apparently made it easier for teachers to discuss matters with the parents. Tia found that interacting with parents, "… builds the relationship with you and the parent whereby you can have a channel of information. They know you are not that scary teacher ... somebody that is approachable, somebody that cares for your

child and is working with you for your child" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia). However, teachers expressed a concern over the level of friendliness with some parents. Tony explained, "It's really hard when they want to be your friend .... Over a series of chats, you get to know them better, but it is really hard to have that boundary because you want to be nice to them ... but you also want to draw a line" (Interview 67, 2009 - Tony).

Seventy-five percent of teachers stated that the collaborative practice of *sharing information* was important to their positive parent-teacher interaction. Tina explained this as, "… because I figure, all the parent wants ... is information. So I can support and help" (Interview 56, 2009 - Tina). The *sharing information* practice had two different aspects: firstly, the communication of facts from parents to teachers about the student, and secondly, the teachers' feedback to parents regarding information about the student. Taylor commented about the communication of facts as, "I like to know about their family. Are they going on holidays? If their child is feeling unwell, let me know what was wrong with them, [and] if they are feeling unwell to call them, I find it very important. And it's just a brief touching base" (Interview 54, 2009 - Taylor). In this instance, the provision of background information allows the teacher to make informed decisions about their pastoral care practice concerning that child. Tina also spoke about the methods and practices of the teachers feeding back results, reports, and other student related events to the parents. She described this as, "I always make sure that my parents are well informed, if they [the students] are struggling, they [the parents] know [about it in] week one. If they [the students] are not behaving ... then I will contact the parent" (Interview 56, 2009 - Tina). This kept the parents informed on how their child was performing at school. Teresa's philosophy was, "… [give] feedback to the parent when the child is being good. They can see you are paying attention to their child and their child matters to you. Then when the parents do come to see you later, they understand that you don't hate their child" (Interview 55, 2009 - Teresa). The *sharing information* practice was also viewed as utilising one-way and two-way communication of facts and knowledge that enabled understanding.

Forty-two percent of teachers explained *honesty* as being a collaborative practice. Teachers held the view that there needs to be a level of truthfulness about the child's capabilities, which is shared with the parent. "Just being honest, if a child is not

doing well, tell them" (Interview 43, 2009 - Tish). "I just tell them the facts, and tell them how it is, and then what we [the teacher and the parent] can do" (Interview 46, 2009 - Ted). Being real about what the child can manage without it being couched in educational jargon was a comment passed by Tristan. He said, "To be more honest. I know I said before that you have to be as honest as you can, but now I've worked out you have to be more honest - you don't sort of butter things up, you need to be honest" (Interview 42, 2009 - Tristan). Tara described the collaborative practice of *honesty* as presenting the parents with, "… all the data on the child ... all the data is there to back it up" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). Tony also described *honesty* as the practice when the parent can, "… explain exactly what they want ... and not for me trying to read between the lines" (Interview 67, 2009 - Tony).

Thirty-five percent of teachers described the collaborative practice, *approachability*, and its impact on parent-teacher interactions. Teachers explained that when they made themselves personable and friendly to the parent, they were in a better position to receive information about the child or concerns that the parents held. "Relaxed ... more friendly ... open" (Interview 63, 2009 - Tennille), "… comfortable in coming to see you" (Interview 65, 2009 - Trisha) and, "… [being] invited into the classroom ... to discuss anything ... warm ... informal as possible" (Interview 42, 2009 - Tristan) were often descriptions of teachers demonstrating the collaborative practice *approachability*. The value of the *approachability* practice was summed up by Tasha, "If you are talking to them ... especially when you are talking to parents who have got problems .... You want them to be comfortable approaching you with an issue or talking about it" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha). For Tish, however, being comfortable depended on the issue raised, "If there is a child that is a little bit weaker, I would feel a bit more uncomfortable ... because I know that I have to bring up issues which causes confrontation" (Interview 43, 2009 - Tish). Teachers are aware that they need to make the parents feel comfortable during their interactions in order to obtain information. The *approachability* practice fostered positive parent-teacher interactions.

Thirty-five percent of the teacher participants described the collaborative practice of *listening* as being important in parent-teacher interactions. Tracy described the *listening* practice as, "I probably do a bit more listening and let them speak and then have your say. Or try to find out" (Interview 37, 2009 - Tracy). Taj explained that

teachers needed to listen as, "If you [the parent] go away from the meeting feeling, I haven't been listened to, or well, that was a waste of my time, we [the teachers] still aren't getting anywhere, then the meeting hasn't worked" (Interview 47, 2009 - Taj). Tenika commented, "Listening to the parent tells you so much more about the child" (Interview 60, 2009 - Tennika) and that "when you hear what the parent has to say and you can receive extra information" (Interview 60, 2009 - Tennika). Teachers also portrayed the *listening* practice as hearing the parents' concerns and responding accordingly. Taj defined the collaborative practice of *listening* as, "… where both parties, ... go away, with a sense that they've been listened to, their expectations have been met, there's a definite plan for improvement, and we [the parent and teacher] are moving forward" (Interview 47, 2009 - Taj). Similarly, teachers expected parents to demonstrate the *listening* practice and act on their good advice; however, at times disappointment occurred when parents failed to adhere. Tamsin stated, "The worst is when they [the parents] agree to do lots of things and don't do anything" (Interview 58, 2009 - Tamsin). Teachers described the collaborative practice of *listening* as an opportunity to hear what the parent has to say, receive information about the child and respond accordingly.

Twenty-nine percent of teachers identified *support and resources* as a collaborative practice with parents. Teachers viewed themselves as professionals who had a level of expertise and access to educational material that could assist with the progress of a child. Expertise and educational materials formed the collaborative practice, *support and resources*. Tai described this as, "I find that parents have come in looking for advice on things ... primarily so they can help their child" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tai). Tara stated in her example of the *support and resources* practice as, "… one will come in ... my child has a lot of anxiety ... [I'll go] here are some strategies ... try it for 2, 3, 4 weeks, come back if it doesn't improve, we [the school] will send you off to the school's psychologist" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). Teachers also had access to knowledge on what the school can provide in the way of equipment, both internally and externally to the school, and how this could benefit the child. "So if we pick up a child that we think is ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder], we will call the parents in, and say this is what we have observed with your child. What do you see at home? We think we need more intervention, ... we need to look further, and we need to see a paediatrician and have a look further to see what is happening" (Interview 52, 2009 -

Tara). Teachers explained that they had a level of expertise that can be shared with the parent, as well as access to personnel and materials to assist in meeting the needs of the child (and assisting the parent).

From the data, teachers in these schools primarily described these seven collaborative practices as positively enhancing their parent-teacher interactions. From the teachers' perspectives, they frequently utilised the *working together* practice fostering parent-teacher partnerships: followed by the *relationships* practice, which enabled connectivity. The *sharing information* practice enhanced parent-teacher communication; whilst the *honesty* practice progressed truthfulness about the student's capabilities; and the *approachability* practice encouraged a level of comfort, which promoted dialogue between parents and teachers. Furthermore, the *listening* practice engaged active hearing and conversations between parents and teachers; and the *support and resources* practice provided materials that could assist with student development. These collaborative practices provided positive parent-teacher interactions. In summary, a teacher explained collaborative practices as, "The coming together of the parent and teacher, I think completes the jigsaw" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia).

In conclusion, collaborative parent-teacher interactions developed around the practices of *approachability, honesty, listening, relationships, sharing information, support and resources*, as well as *working together*. The study found that parents primarily preferred the collaborative practices (in the order of) *relationships, working together,* and *sharing information*, whilst teachers had a preference for *working together*, *relationships,* and *sharing information* practices. In addition, the results indicated that more parents, compared to teachers, viewed the *approachability* practice (with the teacher) as being important to their interactions. More teachers, however, compared to parents, viewed *working together* as a key collaborative practice. In addition, both parents and teachers valued *honesty, listening*, and the provision of *support and resources* as attributes of their collaborative practices. These practices provided positive parent-teacher interactions resulting in support and assistance towards the student, thereby enhancing student performance levels.

Non-collaborative practices

This section examines the themes that emerged from the data, which were categorised as being non-collaborative parent-teacher interactions. A general overview

is firstly provided followed by a presentation of the seven practices that provided less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions. In addition, Figure 5.4 illustrates the percentages of parents and teachers who viewed these practices as being non-collaborative parent-teacher interactions. Furthermore, the findings from this study are presented with supporting comments given from the parents' perspectives followed by the teachers' perspectives.

Non-collaborative practices were identified in this study as being *emotive behaviour, lack of confidence, lack of information, lack of support, not listening, not working together,* and *unapproachability*. Topics that emerged from the recounts of less than satisfactory experiences given by parents and teachers were coded and categorised as themes of non-collaborative practices. For example, teachers referred to the manner in which the parents proceeded to conduct themselves in some of their interactions. These confrontational interactions were coded into the practice *emotive behaviour*. Moreover, parents and teachers shared stories about their own self-efficacy, which were interpreted and categorised as being the *lack of confidence* practice. In addition, parents and teachers described their personal experiences where information was inconsistent or inaccurate, and at times was not received at all, were grouped into the practice *lack of information*. Furthermore, parents and teachers described incidents where the other party was immovable in their decision; used phrases such as, 'fobbed off'; and 'paid lip service to', which were interpreted as the *not working together* practice, *not listening* practice, and *lack of support* practice respectively. A final non-collaborative practice was the *unapproachability* practice where parents explained this as the times when the teachers appeared standoffish and/or abrupt in their manner. Teachers, however, described this as parents who were rigid in their views and were uncooperative. These themes were categorised as non-collaborative practices that led to less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions.

Figure 5.4 illustrates the percentages of non-collaborative practices used by parents and teachers in this study. The numbers of single references (now represented as a percentage) were coded into one of the seven themes of non-collaborative practices. Each practice has a total percentage figure from the parents' perspectives and from the teachers' perspectives. The figure highlights the different views held by parents and teachers about what qualified being significant non-collaborative practices within their interactions. From the data, more than 50 percent of parents identify

unapproachability as a major non-collaborative practice, whilst for teachers they viewed the *lack of support* given by parents as a prominent non-collaborative practice. Disparities in perspective were evident with only 10 percent of parents sharing stories on the *emotive behaviours* of teachers, whereas over 50 percent of teachers experienced this as an issue. Furthermore, more than 45 percent of parents described *lack of information* as a non-collaborative practice compared to only 23 percent of teachers reporting this practice. However, similarities in incidences of non-collaborative practices were also found with *lack of confidence* and *not listening*.
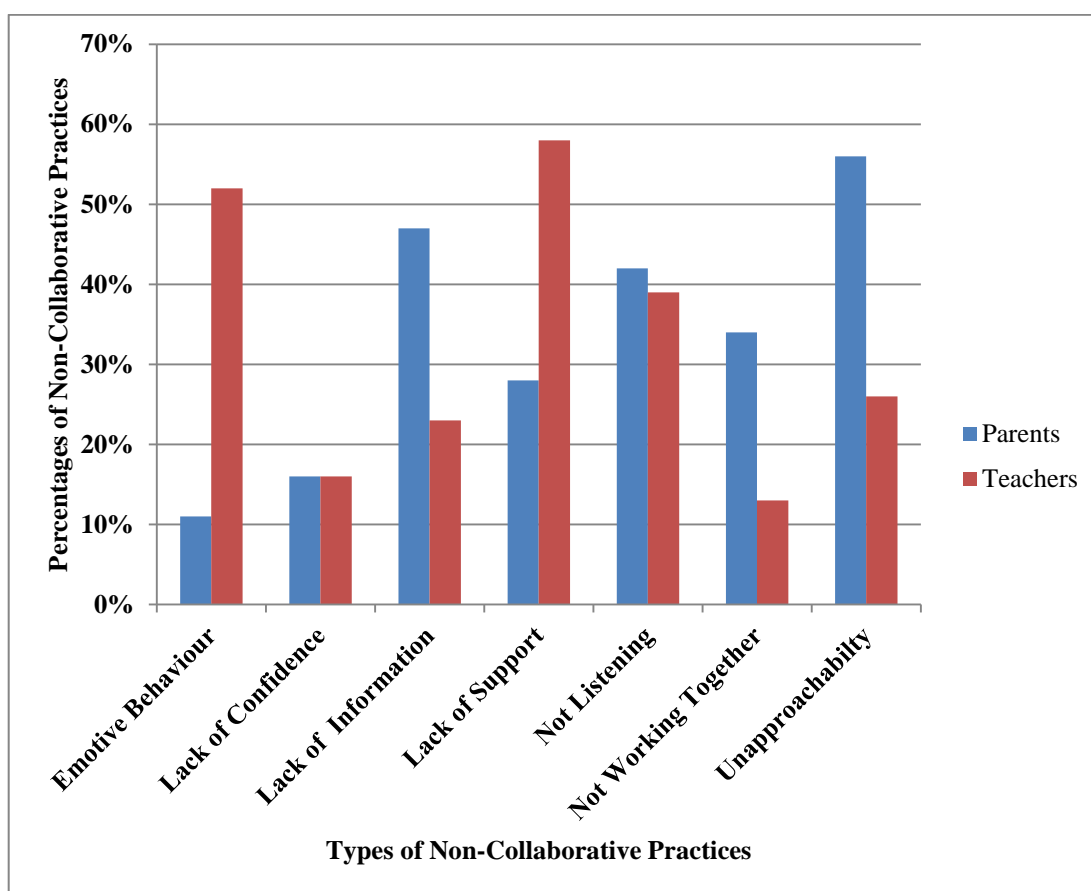
Figure 5.4   **Percentages of Non-Collaborative Practices Experienced by Parents and Teachers**

Data from this study identified seven non-collaborative practices employed during parent-teacher interactions; at times, these are contrary to the collaborative practices cited in the previous section. The next section presents the parents' perspectives, in order of magnitude, of these non-collaborative practices followed by the teachers' perspectives with supporting comments.

Parents' Perspectives

The results indicate that over 56 percent of parents provided stories on how the *unapproachability* practice impacted on their parent-teacher interactions. Some parents described teachers as, "… stand-offish" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy), "… not personable" (Interview 20, 2009 - Annabel), and "… were distant" (Interview 7, 2009 - Anna). These activities of teachers towards parents were attributes of this non-collaborative practice. In addition, parents stated that teachers were found to demonstrate the *unapproachability* practice when they were, "… lacking in warmth" leaving the parent "… feeling intimidated or uncomfortable" (Interview 18, 2009 - Addison). For Alison, "It's really just the warmth of the person" (Interview 6, 2009 - Alison). A consequence of this non-collaborative practice is that parents felt uncomfortable in coming forward to interact with the teacher. Agatha summed this up, "I have had a couple of teachers where you didn't feel comfortable to approach them .... You would stand back because you feel a bit intimidated I suppose" (Interview 30, 2009 - Agatha). The non-collaborative practice, *unapproachability*, from the parents' perspectives, was a teacher who lacked warmth and left the parent feeling uncomfortable.

Almost half of the parents viewed *lack of information* as a non-collaborative practice. The *lack of information* practice included teachers not providing enough details about school matters or feedback about student progress to the parents. Common occurrences were the misunderstandings developed from homework. April commented, "We could get a book sent home. Are you meant to do a quarter of a page? Or are you meant to do three of them? I'm feeling like I really have no handle on that" (Interview 24, 2009 - April). Angelina stated the lack of contact with the specialist teachers also created problems as, "… the communication between the extension activities and classroom are very different. The ELC [Early Learning Centre] is excellent at giving out heaps of notes, you always know what is going on there and you're given lots of warning, but not with the TAGS [Talented and Gifted Students] teachers" (Interview 23, 2009 - Angelina). Lack of feedback was described by Adele, "I could see him struggling .... I kept asking, 'How is he going?' And she kept saying, 'Yeah, he's okay, he's okay' but I could tell from his work that it wasn't" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). Not enough details also stemmed from the teacher saying to the parent "… your daughter is going fine, okay .... And that was sort of it"

(Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). These practices led to less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions from the parents' perspectives.

Not listening was expressed by 42 percent of parents as being a non-collaborative practice. Parents stated that the teachers were not hearing them and ignored their points of view. "Placated" (Interview 4, 2009 - Alana), and "fobbed off" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele) were examples of the *not listening* practice. Adriana said, "Sometimes they don't want to get into lengthy discussions and they cut it short by fobbing you off" (Interview 2, 2009 - Adriana). Anisha commented, "I would bring in a problem and he'd just brush it off! He really seriously brushed it off!" (Interview 22, 2009 - Anisha), which left her frustrated with the process. She also stated that for her, "It's got to do with listening and being heard ... you can see with their body language" (Interview 22, 2009 - Anisha). Alison commented, "You want to feel like she's [teacher] going to listen ... and take on board what you've said" (Interview 6, 2009 - Alison). Parents explained that they wanted the teacher to hear what they had to say and see the relevance of their concern and not to feign listening or interest.

In this study, over a third of the parents viewed *not working together* as a non-collaborative practice. Parents described this as the teacher being rigid in their attitude and making no accommodation for their requests. Adair depicted incidences of, "… I am the teacher, and we are doing it this way in the class" (Interview 29, 2009 - Adair). Parents would often consult the teachers, and seek assistance in dealing with matters, but found that some teachers just refused to help. "So I asked for homework and they said, 'He doesn't need it! What does he need it for?'" (Interview 31, 2009 - Aileen). In one case when a parent did request help, a comment was passed, "… and I went up to him and just off the cuff ... said, 'If you want to send home any extra worksheets we can work with her at home'. And his reply was 'Well then I've got to mark them!'" (Interview 14, 2009 - Alicia). Parents described teachers who were dismissive of their requests as demonstrating the non-collaborative practice, *not working together*.

More than a quarter of the parents described *lack of support* as a non-collaborative practice. The *lack of support* practice occurred when parents asked the teachers for assistance such as extra work, referrals to resources, and/or help, then nothing eventuated. Amanda explained, "I could tell from his work that it wasn't really that okay, and I kept asking her to give me extra work and she'd go, 'Yes, I'll give you extra work', and then we were not getting anything and I was disappointed" (Interview

5, 2009 - Amanda). Alison also commented, "She'd [the teacher] go, 'Yes, yes, I'll do that for you', and then nothing ... so then I sort of stopped asking after a while, I thought there was no point" (Interview 6, 2009 - Alison). A further attribute of this practice was when early career teachers lacked the necessary skills to respond to parental requests. Addison commented, "Basically you know, go and find your information from somewhere else, I'm running the program this way" (Interview 18, 2009 - Addison). Some parents would then seek answers from a more senior person, usually the deputy primary principal. Adriana explained that she, "… went to see the Deputy ... and we got chatting, 'I am a little bit concerned' .... And she said, 'Yeah, I think she [the teacher] needs the input, she's a new teacher'" (Interview 2, 2009 - Adriana). *Lack of support* was viewed by parents as a non-collaborative practice that led to less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions.

Lack of confidence was highlighted by a small percentage of parents as being a non-collaborative practice. Parents in this study described this practice as being either the self-assurance level of the teachers they engaged with, or their own personal self-efficacy. Alicia said, "They [teachers] were really on the defensive for some reason …. I was a bit taken aback" (Interview 14, 2009 - Alicia). Adriana's comments defined the teacher's sureness as, "She got quite sort of defensive on that as well. The openness and honesty is appreciated and it wasn't coming through" (Interview 2, 2009 - Adriana). The *lack of confidence* practice also included aspects of the parent's own ability of being able to come into the classroom to discuss issues with the teacher. Adriana said, "I'm scared of teachers …. I feel ... that I'm stressed" (Interview 2, 2009 - Adriana). Furthermore, the non-collaborative practice *lack of confidence* was related to the parent's view of retribution if they lodged a complaint. Alison explained, "… because I didn't want a black mark against my name .... No one wanted to get their head chopped off ... or any repercussions from it" (Interview 6, 2009 - Alison). In this study, the *lack of confidence* practice was considered as the teachers' self-efficacy and inexperience in matters, which led to them being defensive; similarly, parents had their own insecurities about school and potential outcomes of a meeting with the teacher.

A few parents commented about the non-collaborative *emotive behaviour* practice of the teacher. This was described as the teachers' attitude towards the parents, usually summarised as being "blunt" (Interviews, 3, 14, 22, 2009 - Adele, Alicia, and Anisha). Amy found that teachers were, "… like they're very blunt,

sometimes they've been abrupt …. They're quite rude at times" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy). Other times, it was when the parents were left with the feeling of being "intimidated" by the teacher (Interview 30, 2009 - Agatha) because the teacher was, "… defensive and off putting" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). No parents commented about teachers who expressed aggression or who were directly confrontational to them. The *emotive behaviour* practice was a non-collaborative practice.

In summary, the data suggest that over half of the parents identified *unapproachability* as a being a key non-collaborative practice. This is followed by the practices *lack of information* and *not listening*. Furthermore, a small sample of parents noted *lack of confidence* and *emotive behaviour* practices as contributing towards non-collaboration. These non-collaborative practices led to less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions. The next section examines the non-collaborative practices of parents from the teachers' perspectives.

Teachers' Perspectives

The data highlighted that *lack of support* and *emotive behaviours* of the parents were key attributes of non-collaborative practices. In addition, the *not listening*, *unapproachability*, *lack of information*, *lack of confidence*, and the *not working together* were also attributes of non-collaborative practices. The findings indicated that 58 percent of teacher participants viewed the *lack of support* as a key non-collaborative practice. The *lack of support* practice was described as the times when teachers organised assistance to address the needs of the student only to realise that the parents were not utilising them. Tamsin said, "They agree to do lots of things and don't do anything …. Then you realise it is just lip-service and the onus is on you" (Interview 58, 2009 - Tamsin). Terry found that, "Some go yep, yep, yep and go off and do totally the opposite" (Interview 64, 2009 - Terry). The non-collaborative practice, *lack of support*, also included the times when parents would absent themselves from the school. Tina commented, "… that is if they [the parent] want to be contacted" (Interview 60, 2009 - Tina). Furthermore, the *lack of support* practice occurred when parents did not fulfil classroom learning activities. Tiana exemplified this with, "… getting their homework done, the parents haven't [assisted the child] ... can't be bothered" (Interview 38, 2009 - Tiana). The *lack of support* practice led to less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions from the teachers' perspectives.

More than half of the teachers described *emotive behaviour* of the parents as being a non-collaborative practice. *Emotive behaviour* practices ranged from the disgruntled parent to more serious incidents of verbal abuse. Teachers described parents as being abrupt, angry, and/or used shouting overtones during their interactions. Tiana said, "… just a rude person and would be very abrupt ... wouldn't say, 'Hi, how are you going? Just wondering?'" (Interview 38, 2009 - Tiana). Tristan describes his experience. "This father came in to pick his son up .... And, he just started swearing, from outside, this wasn't in the classroom, came right in to me, and confronted me going, 'What's going on here?' ... 'I'm sick of this shit, I'm sick of this school, I'm sick of this ... this is absolute bullshit'" (Interview 42, 2009 - Tristan). Tish stated in her experience of a dad that, "… just screamed at me" so whenever she saw the dad again she made sure she had a peer teacher stand with her, "… because I just didn't want him to feel he could yell at me" (Interview 43, 2009 - Tish). The non-collaborative practice, *emotive behaviour*, was reported by teachers as providing less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions.

The *not listening* non-collaborative practice was expressed by a third of the teacher participants as the times when parents either failed to adopt their suggestions, or when they kept reiterating the same issues after the school had already addressed them. Tony remarked on a parent demonstrating the *not listening* practice as, "… we have had one student ... where we have listened ... and we said, 'Well maybe you could do this, this and this.' And they said, 'Yes, we will try that'. Then the next meeting, the exact same thing was said, again. The meeting after that, the same reasons, the same things said time and time again" (Interview 67, 2009 - Tony). Tiana commented on parents who could not understand why their child was not in the top reading level, "… just show them the work, and explain, how and/or why his levels were at the place he was ... but they just kept badgering, and badgering and badgering about it" (Interview 38, 2009 - Tiana). Tommy found that in his experience, parent(s) who did not take on board their suggestions were those who "… didn't get the response she wanted. Eventually [they] pulled the girl out of the school" (Interview 40, 2009 - Tommy). *Not listening* was described by teachers as a non-collaborative practice by the parents.

Over a quarter of the teachers viewed the *unapproachability* practice as being non-collaborative. The *unapproachability* practice was highlighted as the times when

parents were viewed as being overzealous, held differing views to the teacher, as well as the temperament of the parent. Tanya described some parents as, "… difficult ... demanding" (Interview 51, 2009 - Tanya), whilst Tasha found parents to be distant as, "There was some sort of tension between us. I don't know what I had done to cause it ... we got on quite business like" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha). A consequence of the *unapproachability* practice was that some parents would not engage with the teachers, thereby impacting on future interactions. Tia held different professional views to the parent, which created problems for her. "She [parent] felt that I wasn't acknowledging his [student] anxieties well enough. I was trying to nip it in the bud .... I felt it was detrimental ... and she disagreed" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia). The *unapproachability* practice led to less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions. Furthermore, Tommy summed up an aspect of this non-collaborative practice, "There are certain people, who personality wise, you're always going to clash with …. There are always going to be people that you cannot satisfy, and have unrealistic expectations" (Interview 40, 2009 - Tommy).

Twenty-three percent of teachers discussed *lack of information* as being non-collaborative. The *lack of information* practice was understood as the times when parents were not in receipt of all of the facts, or did not refer to the information found in school documents. In Tanya's experience, she described a dad who returned to the school a bit disgruntled stating, "He's [the son] being punished and the other kids haven't and I want to know why?" (Interview 50, 2009 - Tanya). She then explained to him all the events surrounding the incident, which was the basis for her decision and outlined the consequences afforded to all parties. She further highlighted the private nature in which matters were dealt with and, therefore, the consequences delivered to each party were not made public. This parent acted on some information, which resulted in the initial interaction being less than satisfactory. In other instances, teachers provided examples of parents who were inattentive to information sent home from the school. Taj cites one story of a parent, "She came through the door ... steam radiating out of her, and she came up and she said, 'My child's not happy', and she's banging on my desk .... 'What's the problem?' 'It's all this bloody God stuff you do in this school. There's too much of it and my child doesn't like it'. .... And I said, 'Well it is a church school'" (Interview 47, 2009 - Taj). Similarly, teachers realised that the more information parents have, the less parent-teacher interactions teachers have.

Tish, who was an early career teacher, explained feeling the pressure from parents because she did not provide them with the relevant information during her first year of teaching. She commented, "Last year, I didn't do that ... so they [students] were struggling ... then they'd [parents] find out ... 'Why is my child behind?' 'Why wasn't I told?' .... This year I am more prepared ... getting in there first and saying ... your child is having a bit of trouble" (Interview 43, 2009 - Tish). The non-collaborative practice, *lack of information,* was also viewed by teachers as impacting on their interactions with parents.

The *lack of confidence* practice was viewed as an example of non-collaboration between parents and teachers. In particular, a few early career teachers noted their own self-efficacy levels as providing less than satisfactory interactions with parents. Furthermore, teachers reported the non-collaborative practice *lack of confidence* of parents as impacting on parent-teacher interactions. Firstly, teachers described their own level of anxiety, before parent-teacher meetings, which impacted on the collaborative nature of the interaction. Tish described that, "I wasn't very confident .... I could feel myself getting upset and I had to control that" (Interview 43, 2009 - Tish). Tasha also suffered levels of anxiety, "… I get a knot in my stomach" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha). Tony questioned his own level of confidence regarding parent meetings, "They go smoothly and you think why was I stressing about, why was I worried about it?" (Interview 67, 2009 - Tony). The teachers' self-efficacy impacted on the parent-teacher interactions. Similarly, teachers also found that some parents were nervous in their meetings. Terry provided a comment, which encapsulated the parents' level of anxiety, "You see them sitting there and they are shaking, so you can see that they are actually really quite nervous" (Interview 64, 2009 - Terry). The non-collaborative practice, *lack of confidence,* was described by teachers as impacting on these parent-teacher interactions.

A small group of teachers stated that the non-collaborative practice of *not working together* was a cause for concern for parent-teacher interactions. Some parents were described by teachers as being persistent and relentless in their quest for information about matters that were not seen by the teacher in the same way. These were defined as less than satisfactory experiences. Tracy stated, "It was just constant. 'My child has nits' and would blame all the other children .... 'Why haven't the kids got a computer?' ... reading books, was just a constant issue" (Interview 37, 2009 -

Tracy). She further commented that this non-collaborative practice was experienced, "Every day, we would get 10 to 15 notes in the diary" (Interview 37, 2009 - Tracy) asking questions and requesting information that they already had. The *not working together* practice also included parents and teachers having different views on a matter. Taneesha explained, "We set things in place and they wouldn't do it. Then they would complain, we would set up more things in place and they wouldn't do it, and they would complain, blaming, blaming, blaming us all the time" (Interview 49, 2009 - Taneesha). Tia described another example of the *not working together* practice, "I wrote in the diary ... 'It was lovely to see ...' and I would get no response at all from mum" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia). The non-collaborative practice of *not working together* was viewed by teachers as the times when parents did not provide support, assistance, or understand the teachers' view. This led to less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions.

In summary, the data indicated that the *lack of support* and *emotive behaviour* of parents rated highly as being non-collaborative practices from the teachers' perspectives. *Not listening* and *unapproachability* practices were also noted practices of less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions. Furthermore, *lack of information*, *lack of confidence,* and *not working together* practices were viewed as further instances of non-collaboration. These practices led to less than satisfactory experience of parent-teacher interactions.

Summary

Analysis of the data showed that parent-teacher interactions were either collaborative or non-collaborative. Parents viewed *relationships*, *working together*, a*pproachability,* and *sharing information* to be key collaborative practices with teachers. Teachers, on the other hand, identified *working together*, *relationships*, and *sharing information* as being significant collaborative practices with parents. These practices however, were viewed as positively impacting on parent-teacher interactions, enhancing student performance levels. Furthermore, parents highlighted non-collaborative practices of teachers as *unapproachability*, *lack of information*, and *not listening*; whilst, teachers viewed *lack of support*, *emotive behaviour*, and *not listening* as non-collaborative practices of parents. These practices were viewed as providing less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions and inhibited student

performance levels. These collaborative and non-collaborative practices were defined in this study as being the nature of parent-teacher interactions.

The next chapter provides evidence of social influence strategies employed during parent-teacher interactions.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS:

SOCIAL INFLUENCE STRATEGIES EMPLOYED DURING

PARENT-TEACHER INTERACTIONS

The second research question was to determine if social influence strategies were evident during parent-teacher interactions. Social influence was defined in the literature as, "change in the belief, attitude and/or the behaviour of one person (the target of social influence) that can be attributed to another person (the influencing agent)" (French & Raven, 1959, p. 118). Social influence strategies that were found in this study stemmed from the information shared by parents and teachers during their focus group and interview sessions. Analysis and interpretation of these lived experiences identified six forms of social influence: *authorities/experts, discussion, evidence, passive resistance, pressure*, and *relational* strategies. Five of these social influence strategies enabled parents and teachers to obtain compliance to a request through either persuading, manipulating (appealing) or coercing the other person into complying with their request: this resulted in a positive outcome. One social influence strategy however, negated parents and teachers from complying with a request through ignoring or avoiding the other person and thus, not complying resulting in a less than satisfactory outcome.

This chapter begins with a review of the data analysis process, followed by examples of emerging themes, and the justification for the development of these six social influence strategies. Finally, an explanation of the findings from the parents' perspectives and the teachers' perspectives is provided with comments made by the participants supporting the findings.

Data Analysis

One of the aims of this study was to identify social influence strategies used by both parents and teachers during their interactions. Throughout the coding process, 'compliance experiences' of parents and teachers emerged from the data; common themes were then grouped together; and social influence strategies transpired. In this study, parents and teachers were tallied as sources using NVivo 8 software and not as

references. When a parent or teacher was identified as using a social influence strategy, it was counted as one incident. Each incident was recorded under a social influence strategy highlighting the number of times parents and teachers, as sources, utilised the social influence strategy. Therefore, the maximum number for each individual source for parents was 36 whilst for teachers it was 31. Finally, the total amount of sources for parents and teachers was converted to a percentage figure.

Table 6.1 illustrates, for example, that from the 36 parent participants, 19 parents were identified as employing the strategy *authorities/experts* within their interactions. In addition, of the 31 teacher participants, 24 teachers were categorised as utilising *authorities/experts* within their interactions with parents (see below). In total, the parents provided 145 examples of social influence strategies being used, whilst teachers provided 149 experiences.

Table 6.1   Numbers of Sources that Identified Social Influence Strategies in Parent-Teacher Interactions

Social Influence Strategy	Parent Sources	Teacher Sources
Authorities/Experts	19	24
Discussion	33	31
Evidence	31	27
Passive Resistance	17	18
Pressure	18	22
Relational	27	27
Total	145	149

Social Influence Strategies

In this study, social influence strategies were categorised as being either *authorities/experts, discussion, evidence, passive resistance, pressure*, and/or *relational*. Several themes that originally emerged from the data were coded and recoded into these categories. This was achieved by asking questions of the data such as, "How do parents get teachers to address their concerns?" similarly, "How do teachers achieve their aims set for their meeting with parents?"

Themes that emerged, such as *authorities/experts*, were developed from the experiences given by parents and teachers who used people with greater expertise to

assist them in persuading (or coercing) the other person to address their concerns. These included primary principals, deputy primary principals, and/or medical personnel (psychologists and therapists) who could offer perspectives and methods to support the child, at home, and/or at school. The *discussion* strategy was developed from incidents where parents and teachers both wanted to offer their points of view, obtain advice, and/or seek reassurance, which persuaded the other person into changing their belief or attitude resulting in a course of action. However, the *evidence* strategy utilised facts that were often presented during these parent-teacher interactions; this included documentation (sometimes medical), school reports, test results, and/or written accounts of incidents. This was used in an attempt to persuade the other person into adopting a perspective. Moreover, the *passive resistance* strategy was drawn from incidents of a person not engaging (ignoring) with the other person, and this deliberate lack of action (negation*)* resulted in the person not complying with the request. The *pressure* strategy was identified as using persuasion and/or coercion through their insistence, perseverance, and the use of a member from the school's leadership team (exerting their power and authority) within the school. Finally, the *relational* strategy utilised manipulation (appeals) to foster a connection with the other person, which also provided an insight into the attitudes, values, and nature of the other person, thereby resulting in a positive outcome. The *relational* strategy employed convivial approaches and/or obsequious behaviours that facilitated this knowledge. From the data, the various activities of parents and teachers that were used to obtain or negate a request were coded into one of these six social influence strategies.

Figure 6.1 illustrates the percentages of parents and teachers who used a social influence strategy. The results indicate that between 90-100 percent of parents and teachers used the *discussion* strategy during their interactions, whilst more than 80 percent of them used the *evidence* strategy. In addition, over 70 percent of parents and teachers described incidences of the *relational* strategy being employed. Moreover, 53 percent of parents used *authorities/experts* as a social influence strategy compared to 78 percent of teachers. Likewise, 50 percent of parents identified using the *pressure* strategy compared to 71 percent of teachers. However, the use of the *passive resistance* strategy was described less frequently by both parents and teachers. Overall, teachers used all six strategies more frequently than the parents.

Data from this study identified six social influence strategies that were employed to persuade, manipulate, coerce and/or negate the other person into complying with a request. In the next section, social influence strategies are discussed in order of importance from the parents' perspectives followed by the teachers' perspectives. Supporting comments made by parents and teachers are provided exemplifying the social influence strategy.
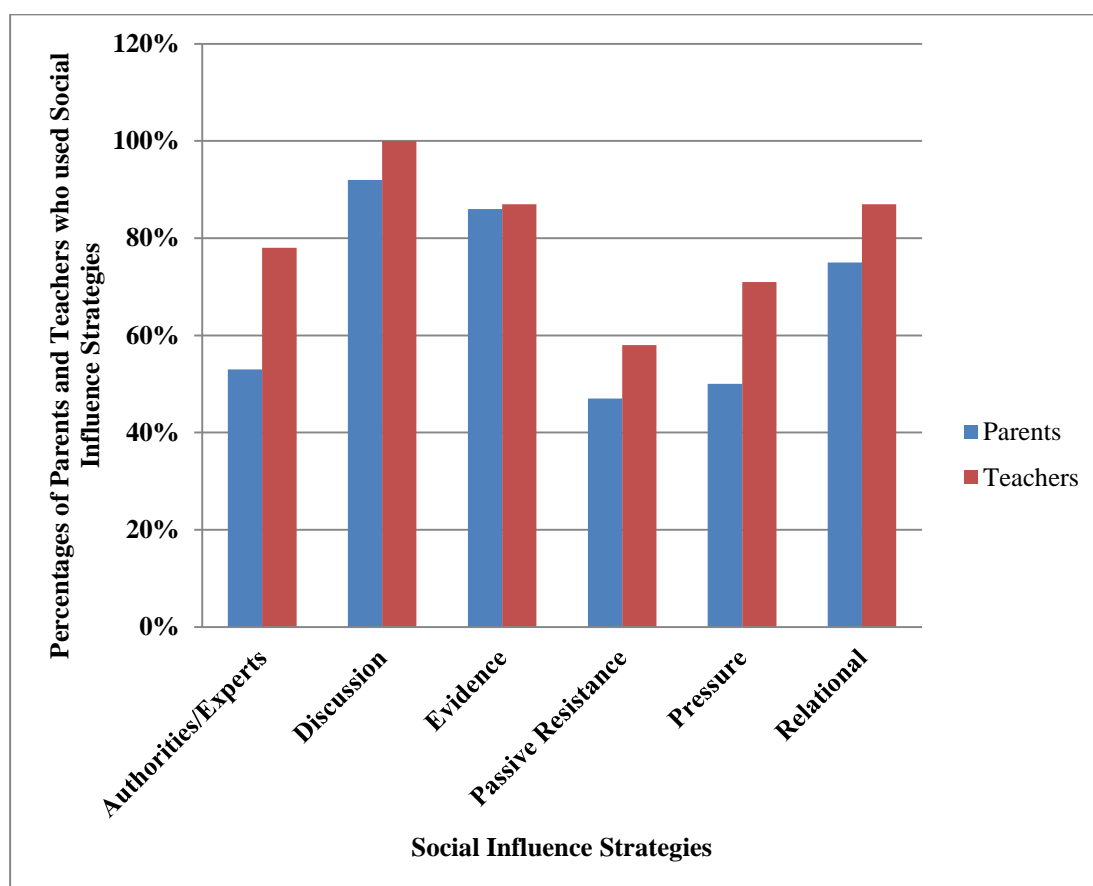
Figure 6.1   Percentages of Parents and Teachers who Used Social Influence Strategies

Parents' Perspectives

Most parents (92 percent) were found to have utilised the *discussion* strategy when interacting with the teachers. The *discussion* strategy facilitated the exchange of information and provided mutual understanding, persuading the teachers into reviewing their perspective. Addison described the *discussion* strategy as, "I wanted to discuss with her what our arrangements were going to be. What was going to be her end of the bargain, what was going to be my end of the bargain, and together what goal were we going to get him to achieve .... I was happy that she listened to my point of view and my concerns" (Interview 18, 2009 - Addison). Parents described these

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interactions as being amicable as they felt they were part of the decision-making process. Anita stated that the *discussion* strategy enabled her to engage with the teacher, or present a point of view resulting in assistance. "If I've got any issues I'll talk to her ... and they can help" (Interview 8, 2009 - Anita). Amber typifies parental views of the *discussion* strategy as, "… but in terms of communication, it was great. So we had the meeting with a few people and went, 'Okay, where to from here?' sort of thing, then it was really a case of 'let's see how it goes'" (Interview 21, 2009 - Amber). The *discussion* strategy enabled differing perspectives to be presented, as well as opportunities for Amber to be part of the decision-making process resulting in a positive outcome. The *discussion* strategy also provided opportunities for parents to obtain reassurance, as well as share information in regards to the child. Amy highlighted that, "If you want to find something out, they're happy to answer your questions ... and any concerns, they are happy to help" (Interview 11, 2009 - Amy). Parents explained that the *discussion* strategy was an opportunity to share perspectives and concerns with the view of reaching an agreed outcome in order to support the student.

The *evidence* strategy was described by 86 percent of the parents as a method that would assist them obtaining compliance to a request when interacting with teachers. Parents presented portfolios, school reports, as well as medical reports to persuade the teacher into providing additional support for their child. Ariel was relocating to another school in the eastern states and described how she was going to use various medical and school reports to argue extra support for her son. Ariel proposed that she would state that, "He does need help, I'm not just telling you this. Here are all the reports!" (Interview 26, 2009 - Ariel). Similarly, parents with special needs children also used the *evidence* strategy to help the teacher improve their understanding of the child's needs. Anisha, frustrated in trying to explain to the teacher how her child needed to be managed, decided that, "I just had to wait until she made her own observations; I had no control in that situation …. I couldn't think of anything else that I could say to make it evident to her .... I was pretty sure that eventually she would see what was going on" (Interview 22, 2009 - Anisha). In each case, documentation, reports, and verification of the facts led teachers to acquiesce the parent's request.

The *relational* strategy was used by parents in 75 percent of their parent-teacher interactions. Through the use of this strategy parents fostered an affiliation with the teachers (through either their convivial approaches and/or obsequious behaviours), which facilitated the parents with an understanding of the teachers' values, attitudes, and/or nature. This knowledge determined the parents' approach to their interactions with the teachers, by appealing to their nature; facilitating compliance to their requests. Many parents, like Anita, described using a convivial approach to her teachers. "I speak to the teacher most mornings .... I go in, say hello" (Interview 8, 2009 - Anita). Annette stated, "So everyone gets to know you …. They see me, they might not know my name, but they give me a hello" (Interview 11, 2009 - Annette). Others, like Azaria, stated their obsequious behaviours towards teachers. "I figured that my daughter would have her next year, so I made a point of going and introducing myself to her, and getting to know her" (Interview 28, 2009 - Azaria). Azaria fawned a relationship with the teacher so that the teacher was made aware of her as a parent and her child. Azaria's justification was, "… it helps to perhaps understand the child more" (Interview 28, 2009 - Azaria). Similarly, Alida stated, "I will go in every morning and have a chat ... I will always engage them in conversation because I want to know what is happening, all the time. Maybe I'm nosey" (Interview 17, 2009 - Alida). Alida edged her way into the classroom speaking to the teacher to obtain extra information. Other activities that underpinned the *relational* strategy included the parents observing the teachers' behaviour in the classroom, also obtaining an insight into the temperament of the teacher. Adele would watch the teacher, "… just how they react ... how they interact with the kids ... see how they deal with it" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). Parents suggested that these types of activities allowed them to understand the teacher's disposition, thereby influencing their decision on how to approach the teacher during future interactions. With this knowledge, parents could determine the best way of appealing to the teacher's nature with regard to requests for support and/or pastoral care. Obsequious and/or convivial behaviours underpinning the *relational* strategy facilitated the approach to the teacher when seeking compliance to a request.

From the parents' perspectives, *authorities/experts* referred to the use of deputy primary principals, primary principals, and outside professionals such as psychologists, therapists, and/or medical personnel during their interactions with

teachers. These people were considered as having expertise, which could provide information that assisted parents to persuade teachers into providing extra support for their child. Fifty-three percent of parents used different forms of *authorities/experts* to assist with their issues when interacting with teachers. In one of her meetings, Ariel had "… the classroom teacher, learning support teacher, and the psychologist" (Interview 26, 2009 - Ariel) present. Ariel was able to access these professional people on behalf of herself, and the classroom teacher, to address her son's concerns. Amber also found that the use of the various experts helped her to demonstrate to the teachers a need for more support regarding her son's learning. She said, "We then decided to meet with a few people, the learning support teacher, the class teacher, and the primary principal, and my husband, and myself and it was just basically to touch base and make sure we were all on the same page" (Interview 21, 2009 - Amber). Adriana explained that she was chatting with the deputy primary principal and raised her concern; and the deputy said "Yeah, I think she needs the input, she's new …. I will show her" (Interview 2, 2009 - Adriana). The *authorities/experts* strategy provided opportunities for the parents to share the knowledge of experienced people and make recommendations to the teachers, and therefore, influence an appropriate course of action to support the student.

Fifty percent of parents described incidents where they utilised the *pressure* strategy during their meetings. Typical incidents involved the use of perseverance, insistency, and if required, a member of the school's leadership team as a form of coercive action (their power and authority). Amanda explained her use of the *pressure* strategy as, "So I think, in my son's case, that's when I had to be more in their face .... When the situation calls for it you have to be" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). April described how she had to persevere with the teacher to obtain compliance. "So we pushed that, and eventually the teacher had to say …." (Interview 24, 2009 - April). Furthermore, a teacher highlighted the impact of the *pressure* strategy through a parent's use of a member from the school's leadership team, which resulted in this teacher having to change her classroom practice. This parent "… went to the principal, and then the deputy principal said I had to change my program. I didn't have a choice" (Interview 58, 2009 - Tamsin). This parent used the primary principal to exercise their authority and power over the teacher to obtain compliance. Another form of the *pressure* strategy adopted by parents was the formation of an action group, "I got a

[*sic*] call from a parent at nine o'clock at night .... We were asked to go to a meeting of parents" (Interview 18, 2009 - Addison). The parents got together and presented a case to the school's principal, which eventually was dealt with communally. In these cases, the *pressure* strategy forced an action resulting in a positive outcome to support students.

The *passive resistance* strategy was mainly described by parents as the times when a teacher negated their request through a deliberate lack of action (ignoring the request). In this section of the study, teachers were also identified as using the *passive resistance* strategy towards the parents. Amy explained this as when, "I'd write notes in the diary .... 'Can I see you for a chat to see how she is going?' .... They're not forthcoming" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy). Forty-seven percent of parents provided examples when the teacher did not engage with them. April said, "I wanted the teacher to tell me if we needed to practice the times tables. The response was 'that is between you and her'... and I just felt I was not validated in my concern about that issue" (Interview 24, 2009 - April). 'Fobbed off' was another expression used to describe activities that underpinned the *passive resistance* strategy. Adele commented, "'Yes, yes, I'll do that for you!' And then nothing ... so I sort of stopped asking after a while" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). Parents provided incidents where teachers agreed to an action, but nothing eventuated from their request; their stories however, were usually associated with student homework. Similarly, parents enacted the *passive resistance* strategy by absenting themselves from interactions with the teacher. Amy settled for, "There have been previous teachers [who my child had and] ... I try and stay away from the teacher. I try and do it myself" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy). Parents saw the *passive resistance* strategy as the times when teachers deliberately undertook a lack of action to their request.

Teachers' Perspectives

All of the teachers, in this study, provided examples of using the *discussion* strategy when interacting with parents. Compliance was obtained through the teachers sharing a perspective allowing parents to be part of the decision-making process resulting in a course of action. Teachers were found to offer their professional views, "… to reassure them that their child is fine, but also let them know that their child may not be ready for things they think they are ... and yes, they can reinforce these things at home" (Interview 49, 2009 - Taneesha). Tamara stated how she uses the *discussion*

strategy, "… I try to tell them a few things that will kind of provide that reassurance, and we discuss it. So if I can tell them a few things it is usually enough to reassure them" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). An aspect of the *discussion* strategy was the sharing of information, "… for me it's to clear up a lot of facts that their child might have gone home and said" (Interview 66, 2009 - Tilly). Tilly used the *discussion* strategy as a time to share information and offer her own perspectives on the student matter. The study revealed that the *discussion* strategy was used to share information and perspectives, obtain mutual understanding, and at times, persuade the parents into undertaking an action that assisted the student. This was a positive experience of parent-teacher interactions.

Eighty-seven percent of teachers were found to have engaged the *evidence* strategy to achieve an outcome with parents. This strategy utilised differing forms of persuasion through the use of documentation and/or facts to support a point of view. Teachers highlighted the use of class results, work samples, or written records to support their (and the school's) perspectives. Tiana summed this up with her comment of how she would, "… show them the work, and explain to them how or why his levels were here" (Interview 38, 2009 - Tiana). At other times when parents made requests, teachers utilised documents such as school policy (rules) especially with regard to homework. Tasha would, "… direct them to the office to have a look at the homework policy. And that is the school policy, and that is your salvation" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha). Tenika went so far as to say for her, "I'm sorry but I haven't got the time to do that. I have got to spend time with all 32 children in the class! They can't argue with that" (Interview 56, 2009 - Tenika). Teachers used the *evidence* strategy to strengthen their argument about why the parents' requests could or could not be undertaken. Teachers stated that the *evidence* strategy facilitated the provision of a perspective and was a positive experience of a parent-teacher interaction.

The *relational* strategy was used by 87 percent of the teachers during their interactions with parents. This strategy utilised convivial approaches and/or obsequious behaviours to obtain an insight into the attitudes, values, and nature of the other person. Compliance to a request was then achieved by appealing to the nature of this person during future interactions. Teachers noted that with the *relational* strategy it is primarily, "… being nice ... but drawing the boundary on personal things" (Interview 66, 2009 - Tilly). Tabitha commented that the benefits of the *relational*

strategy include, "Good parent-teacher relationships are most important because once you have the parents on your side, then it works in a partnership, from the school to the home and back to the school. And when you're more approachable with parents, they are a bit more approachable to talk to you" (Interview 44, 2009 - Tabitha). Teachers explained that developing an affiliation with the parent allowed for greater understanding within the partnership, thereby making it easier to persuade parents into complying with a request of support for the student. Tia portrayed parent-teacher partnerships as, "You meet the parent and they also give you their special little qualities and the little things that you possibly had no way of knowing from their home, and I just think it gives you a better idea of the child" (Interview 34, 2009 - Tia). However, the level of friendliness was an area of tension for some teachers as Taj explained, "Dealing with parents is a fine line. Just how friendly can you get with some of them? Do you let it become a friendly relationship or do you keep it a purely professional relationship? ... I've got a couple of really good friends [that are parents in the school] now" (Interview 47, 2009 - Taj). Tony described his strategy as, "I set those boundaries up straight away ... out of school I am not talking shop" (Interview 67, 2009 - Tony). The *relational* strategy facilitated teachers to foster an affiliation with the parents, providing an insight into their nature, which assisted making appeals to the parents for student pastoral care or support.

Seventy-eight percent of teachers were found to have used the *authorities/experts* strategy to influence parents. *Authorities* such as deputy primary principals, primary principals, learning support teachers, and *experts* such as outside professionals (psychologists and/or therapists) were used by teachers to assist parents with reaching a common understanding. Tessa used a translator, as well as Therapy Focus (a government service that works with children who have a disability), to help the parent understand the student's ability levels and, therefore, the school's concern. Tessa explained that, "The meeting went for about an hour, and the translator was explaining to her, and Therapy Focus was sort of saying, 'You know, these are the activities that he does, these are the activities that year one do, they're not the same'" (Interview 57, 2009 - Tessa). The *authorities/experts* strategy enabled people's expertise to inform the parent-teacher interaction on suitable teaching and learning practices. In this case, the *authorities/experts* strategy helped the teacher to persuade the parent into supporting the needs of the child.

The *pressure* strategy was described by 71 percent of teachers during their parent-teacher interactions. Through the use of the school's policy and/or a member of the school's leadership team, the *pressure* strategy coerced parents into complying with the teacher's request. From the teachers' perspectives, Terry noted that, "At times you have to revisit the school policy. Just go through the discipline policy …." (Interview 64, 2009 - Terry) reiterating the school's expectations coercing parents to comply. Tara explained to the parent, "There is [*sic*] criteria for children to be in academic extension and your child did not fit the criteria" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). Teachers also reported that they would engage deputy primary principals or primary principals to exercise their power and authority as a leader in the school to coerce parents into compliance. Tilly cited, "We had one incident where the principal was going to address them on this issue because that was the only way we could get the message through" (Interview 66, 2009 - Tilly). In these instances, the *pressure* strategy was used by teachers, to force parents into adopting a perspective, insisting that they comply with a request, which resulted in an outcome that benefitted the student.

Fifty-eight percent of teachers outlined experiences of the *passive resistance* strategy being utilised by parents during their interactions. Activities that defined the *passive resistance* strategy included ignoring requests and/or avoidance behaviours. The *passive resistance* strategy resulted in non-compliance to a request. Tamsin explained that, "They agree to everything in the conference and go home and do nothing!" (Interview 58, 2009 - Tamsin). Encouraging parents to assist with the learning program was sometimes difficult as Tiana stated, "Put a note in the diary saying, 'Can you please ensure that you're reading a book every night with the child?'. Sometimes they'll do it for a week ... sometimes they will ignore it" (Interview 38, 2009 - Tiana). Furthermore, the *passive resistance* strategy also included teachers avoiding interactions with particular parents, "I just walk across the playground with my head down" (Interview 43, 2009 - Tish). Similarly, this occurs when parents avoid teachers, "I have one parent who won't come to me and say anything" (Interview 37, 2009 - Tracy). The *passive resistance* strategy was identified as a form of non-compliance to a request through the parents not supporting the learning program or avoiding contact with the teacher. Similarly, teachers would absent themselves from

interacting with parents. This was viewed as providing less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions.

Summary

This study identified six social influence strategies that parents and teachers used to change the belief, attitude, and/or behaviour of the other person. Five of these social influence strategies provided positive parent-teacher interactions, whilst one strategy led to less than satisfactory experiences. Furthermore, the findings from this study revealed that both parents and teachers primarily used persuasion as a compliance technique, with the aim to share or encourage the other person to adopt a perspective. Furthermore, the use of these social influence strategies led to positive outcomes that provided a course of action, level of pastoral care and/or support for the student. The next chapter investigates the particular contexts that were associated with these six social influence strategies.

CHAPTER SEVEN
FINDINGS:
PARTICULAR CONTEXTS ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIAL INFLUENCE STRATEGIES

The first aim of this research was to identify the nature of parent-teacher interactions, followed by determining whether social influence strategies were evident during parent-teacher interactions. In addition, two sub-questions were investigated, seemingly whether these social influence strategies were associated with particular contexts, and/or purposes for the interaction. The aim of the first sub-question was to identify the contexts in which these six social influence strategies occurred. The findings with regard to contexts of social influence will be explored in this chapter, whilst the findings in relation to the purposes for these interactions (which was the second sub-question) are discussed in the following chapter.

Contexts, in this study, referred to the face-to-face circumstances in which these parent-teacher interactions occurred. Contexts for face-to-face interactions included formal and informal interactions such as scheduled interviews, various types of parent-teacher meetings, and the experiences of non-verbal communication. Parent-teacher interactions that happened in a non face-to-face context, for example, emails, notes, diary entries, and/or telephone calls, were not considered for this investigation. This chapter sets out to explain the findings derived from focus group and interview sessions in relation to the context of face-to-face parent-teacher interactions and the use of social influence strategies.

The following sections explore the context of parent-teacher interactions, beginning with formal parent-teacher interviews; followed by formal parent-teacher meetings; formal parent-teacher meetings using a third person; informal parent-teacher interactions; and, finally, informal non-verbal parent-teacher interactions. Parent-teacher interactions that occurred in a formal sense were arranged through an appointment process usually with a focus for the meeting, whilst informal interactions occurred without an appointment and the subject matter varied.

Data Analysis

The contexts derived from the data were identified from the various stories provided by both parents and teachers. However, not all parents and teachers experienced every context that was identified in this study. The following sections present the differing contexts identified in this study, together with relevant comments made by parents and teachers. Each section will examine the experiences offered from both the parents' perspectives and then the teachers' perspectives identifying the social influence strategies used in their interactions.

Formal Parent-Teacher Interactions

In this study, formal parent-teacher interactions occurred in the context of parent-teacher interviews (held at the beginning of each school year and after school reports); parent-teacher meetings (held at irregular times during the year discussing student related matters); and parent-teacher interactions using a third person (held at irregular times throughout the year where an external person was invited to assist with the parent-teacher interaction). These formal contexts will be discussed in turn.

Formal face-to-face parent-teacher interviews

The context of formal parent-teacher interviews included school mandated parent-teacher interactions designed to primarily discuss student performance levels. These interactions required parents and teachers to meet at the beginning of the year, mid-year and at the end of the year to discuss the assessment and progress of the children. Topics centred on the students' portfolios (visual work samples of student skills across all learning areas) and the students' school reports. Time would be set aside when parents could schedule an appointment with the teacher, and conversations were usually held about student achievement.

Table 7.1 illustrates the percentages of both parents and teachers who described their experiences of formal interviews where social influence strategies were found to be evident during their interactions. The data show over 45 percent of parents and teachers used the *evidence* strategy and 42 percent of parents and teachers utilised the *discussion* strategy during their interactions. *Authorities/experts* were not identified as being used in these types of formal face-to-face parent-teacher interviews.

Table 7.1   **Percentages of Parents and Teachers who Provided Experiences of Social Influence Strategies in the Context of Formal Face-to-Face Parent-Teacher Interviews**

	Authorities/ Experts	Discussion	Evidence	Passive Resistance	Pressure	Relational
Parents	0	42	47	6	22	31
Teachers	0	42	55	7	7	26

The next two sections will present the findings, in order of magnitude, from the parents' and then the teachers' perspectives. Supporting comments made by parents and teachers are given which illustrates the social influence strategy.

Parents' Perspectives

This study found that almost half of the parents used the *evidence* strategy during their parent-teacher interviews. At these types of interviews, parents commented on the students' performance levels, often seeking justification for the various scores, thereby determining a level of support needed for the student. Alkira found that her child's teacher, "… went through the test results to see if you sort of agreed" (Interview 36, 2009 - Alkira). In another example, one parent was seeking an explanation from the teacher for the scores and comments found on the child's report. Tracy (teacher) described this parent coming in for an interview and she had the, "… report highlighted and underlined, the portfolio will have sticky notes in it and a list of prepared questions" (Interview 37, 2009 - Tracy). This parent sought an explanation of the results. Amy liked these interviews as she, "… just asks specifically about her [child's] language development" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy). During these formalised parent-teacher interviews, the *evidence* strategy was utilised to provide reasons for the scores and progress (or lack of progress) made by the student. This informed the parent on appropriate support for the student and was described as being a positive parent-teacher interaction.

Forty-two percent of parents utilised the *discussion* strategy when participating in formal parent-teacher interviews. This strategy enabled parents and teachers to share perspectives, and information, in order to determine a course of action for the student. At times, this meant extra work at home or support mechanisms at school. Annette described these formalised interviews as, "Well, the parent-teacher meetings

are 15 minutes long .... You just basically go through how the child's doing ... their portfolio, ... just tell me what she needs work on" (Interview 11, 2009 - Annette). Adele went further to describe these interviews as the sharing of information, which is, "… more for us, to tell the teacher if there's anything we want to tell them" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). Ashley, also described these meetings as the exchange of information, "Basically ... you can give information to the teacher about your child" (Interview 9, 2009 - Ashley). She also added that, "The next one is not until the beginning of Semester Two when you've received your first report. And ... it's more the teacher giving you feedback about how your child is going" (Interview 9, 2009 - Ashley). Alkira said, "Now we just ask what has he been doing and how has he been going and whether he is up with the other kids" (Interview 36, 2009 - Alkira). The parents used the *discussion* strategy to acquire knowledge and obtain shared understanding, which assisted with the provision of a support/action for the student. This was described as a positive experience as it facilitated student support, which assisted with enhancing student performance levels.

The *relational* strategy was employed by 31 percent of parents during this study. This strategy encouraged parent-teacher connectivity through convivial and/or obsequious activities. This affiliation provided parents with an insight into the worldviews of the teacher; thereby compliance was achieved through making appeals easier through the knowledge of the person's nature. However, during these formal parent-teacher interviews, there were not too many opportunities for the *relational* strategy to be practiced. Anna commented, "The interviews have tended to be, good to see you" (Interview 7, 2009 - Anna). She also added that it was because of, "… our ongoing relationship. Anything that needed to have been said had been said along the way" (Interview 7, 2009 - Anna). Anita also agreed that these parent-teacher interviews were a formality, "Because I speak to her so often, there's probably not much at the parent interview that I don't already know" (Interview 8, 2009 - Anita). She offered the reason as, "I don't want to just wait until parent-teacher night to speak to them" (Interview 8, 2009 - Anita). This parent was continually in contact with the teacher. The parents used the *relational* strategy to build upon their knowledge of the teacher's nature, and therefore, what approach to utilise when seeking support for the student during future interactions. This provided positive outcomes for the student.

Nearly a quarter of the parents' experienced the *pressure* strategy during their formal parent-teacher interviews. Throughout these formal parent-teacher interviews, parents described the *pressure* strategy as the methods used by the teacher to adhere to time limits. Ava shared her experience as, "It's extremely annoying when a teacher puts on a timer and says, 'Excuse me, but we have to stick to ten minutes per child'. No ... that puts me off straight away" (Interview 27, 2009 - Ava). The restrictive time limit also led to parents becoming frustrated because they felt the teachers were unable to work within the time frame. Aida described the teacher being disorganised during this time, "It always seems to happen to me, my meeting seems to get cut short because the teacher's never organised" (Interview 15, 2009 - Aida). Alida commented, "Because it seems so rushed when you get in there ... you want to know what's going on ... academically ... socially and I just think ten minutes is not quite enough" (Interview 17, 2009 - Alida). The *pressure* strategy in formal parent-teacher interviews mainly referred to insistence of restrictive time limits that both parties had to manage, as well as the stress that both parties experienced.

A few parents (six percent) mentioned the *passive resistance* strategy as being used in the context of formal parent-teacher interviews. Some parents commented that at times, these interviews were, "… boxes to be ticked" (Interview 7, 2009 - Anna) and that the teacher was disengaged. Anisha also described her interview as, "… just boxes to be checked, that they actually had no value" (Interview, 22, 2009 - Anisha) as teachers were not active within these types of interactions. Adriana expressed her concern that the supposed 15 minute interview lasted six minutes and was rounded off with, "Well, we've got nothing more to say, you can go!" (Interview 2, 2009 - Adriana). The *passive resistance* strategy was described as the lack of action during their interactions, and in this case, although the meetings were compulsory in nature, the content was considered poor or inadequate. This led to less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions.

Teachers' Perspectives

Just over half of the teachers were found to have used the *evidence* strategy during their formal parent-teacher interviews. Teachers commented on how they would prepare themselves with records, test results, work samples, and school reports to validate the progress (or lack of progress) made by the child. This documentation would persuade the parent to see the teacher's point of view. Tia described this as,

"Any scores I get from the children I have laid out already on a sheet so I can talk to them first of all what their performance has been, what their scores are like, any difficulties I will write down so we can address that" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia). Teachers liked to present information to the parents so they can have an understanding of how their child is performing at school, and therefore, what level of support was required for the student. Tish commented that she would present, "… maths, language ... so how they're going in each of the learning areas" (Interview 43, 2009 - Tish). The *evidence* strategy facilitated the teacher into providing the parent with a reality, often persuading the parent into adopting a perspective. These were described as positive parent-teacher interactions.

The *discussion* strategy was utilised by 42 percent of teachers during these parent-teacher interactions. This strategy enabled opportunities for perspectives to be shared that usually resulted in agreed outcomes. Teresa described formal parent-teacher interviews as, "We actually have a policy that we have those first term interviews …. It's almost compulsory to meet every parent …. We chase them up and even if we just get them on the [*sic*] just so we have at least touched base" (Interview 55, 2009 - Teresa). Tess described the use of the *discussion* strategy in this context as, "After I have met with the parents they realise what is happening, they come on board, and then, we are both basically on the same page. It makes a huge difference" (Interview 61, 2009 - Tess). The *discussion* strategy used by Tahlia included, "… a chance to let the parents know, that I know their child and share a bit of information …. We can talk it through and then we set goals" (Interview 45, 2009 - Tahlia). These formal face-to-face parent-teacher interviews utilised the *discussion* strategy to share perspectives, participate in the decision-making, and set goals for the student to achieve. This resulted in compliance to requests and was an example of positive parent-teacher interactions.

The *relational* strategy was experienced in formal parent-teacher interviews by 26 percent of teachers. For teachers, these interviews were a chance to meet some of the more distant parents, fostering a connection with them, and obtaining an insight into their worldviews. Tilly described this, "You rarely see the ones [parents] who are working, so parent interviews are a good time when they come in and meet you, and you can meet them" (Interview 66, 2009 - Tilly). Tia agreed that, "It also gives us a chance to meet face-to-face to talk to them [the parents]" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia).

Taj found that, "The one at the start of the year is a very quick getting to know you. Having been here so long, I know most of the parents and the kids anyway" (Interview 47, 2009 - Taj). Meeting the parents enabled teachers to have an understanding of the attitudes and beliefs of the parent, and therefore, their educational philosophies, which assisted the teachers appealing to the parents into providing a level of support for the student. The *relational* strategy led to positive parent-teacher interactions.

The *passive resistance* strategy was defined as the times when parents avoided or ignored the teacher's request and were viewed as non-compliance. Only a few teachers mentioned examples of parents not coming into the school where this strategy was experienced. Teresa commented that these parent-teacher interviews were opportunities to, "… at least touch base" (Interview 55, 2009 - Teresa). For teachers, however, the school's policy was used to make contact with remissive parents who did not attend these formal parent-teacher interviews. Tabitha commented, "With the two meetings a year basically, the invitation for the meeting comes from the office …. Parents are expected to come, and they sign if they are not coming, and we need to chase them up" (Interview 44, 2009 - Tabitha). The *passive resistance* strategy was demonstrated by parents not supporting the school and avoiding contact with the teacher. This was described as a less than satisfactory experience of parent-teacher interactions.

Rarely did teachers identify using *pressure* strategies during these parent-teacher interviews. The *pressure* strategy utilised forms of *coercion* to obtain compliance to a request. For teachers, this was explaining to the parents in some depth as to why their child received particular scores or comments. The *pressure* strategy facilitated the teachers into forcing a perspective. Tristan commented, "Where parents come in for reports ... 'Why is my son at this level?', and 'Why is my daughter?' sort of, 'What's this comment?'" (Interview 42, 2009 - Tristan). Taj concurred, "If you put something in there that's even the slightest bit negative, they want to know why, they want to know how to fix it" (Interview 47, 2009 - Taj). The *pressure* strategy was used during these parent-teacher interviews through explaining the school report, as well as providing an alternate perspective to the achievement levels of the student. This was however, viewed as providing positive outcomes to their parent-teacher interaction.

Formal face-to-face parent-teacher meetings

Data from formal face-to-face parent-teacher meetings stemmed from the experiences given by parents and teachers who met to discuss matters pertaining to the student. These meetings were found to occur at irregular times throughout the school year, but were organised through the appointment making process. Formal face-to-face meetings were based on issues, concerns, or topics that were thought important by either party. These types of meetings were not mandatory, but were encouraged by the school.

Table 7.2 illustrates the percentages of parents and teachers who shared face-to-face meetings, and the different social influence strategies employed in their interactions. The results indicate that 78 percent of parents used the *discussion* strategy, whilst 47 percent of parents were identified as using the *evidence* strategy. However, 87 percent of teachers were identified as using both the *discussion* and *evidence* strategies during parent-teacher meetings. In addition, the *passive resistance* strategy was experienced by 17 percent of parents and 13 percent of teachers in these types of meetings.

Table 7.2   **Percentages of Parents and Teachers who Provided Examples of Social Influence Strategies in the Context of Formal Face-to-Face Parent-Teacher Meetings**

	Authorities/ Experts	Discussion	Evidence	Passive Resistance	Pressure	Relational
Parents	42	78	47	17	31	33
Teachers	71	87	87	13	29	65

The following section will present the findings, in order of magnitude, from the parents' perspectives and then the teachers' perspectives together with illustrative comments from the participants.

Parents' Perspectives

The majority of parents described using the *discussion* strategy during these formal parent-teacher meetings, usually to obtain support for their child. Parents were able to offer their points of view and participate in the decision-making process. For Annette, "We really were just discussing my daughter's problems that she has, and we were trying to identify ways of dealing with her in the class" (Interview 11, 2009 -

Annette). Annette had the opportunity to obtain shared understanding and support for her child. Similarly, Alana could exchange perspectives with the teacher and obtain a course of action for her child. Alana commented, "I feel like I can say, yes, I agree, or no, I don't agree" (Interview 4, 2009 - Alana). Aida summarised the use of the *discussion* strategy during parent-teacher meetings as, "I could say they're doing the talking, you're doing the listening ... but it's on par, like adult to adult" (Interview 15, 2009 - Aida). These meetings utilised the *discussion* strategy so parents could work with the teachers, share perspectives, access advice, and/or obtain a level of support, courses of action, and care for the student. The *discussion* strategy facilitated positive parent-teacher interactions.

Almost half of the parents were found to have used the *evidence* strategy during these interactions with teachers. This strategy was the presentation of facts and documentation by parents, so that the teacher could realise the child's needs and make changes to their teaching and learning practices. Amanda wanted to change the teacher's perspective and had all the necessary information; she had "… strategies all written down. This was translated into the classroom" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). The *evidence* strategy was utilised by parents to persuade the teacher into adopting a course of action that would enhance student performance. In other examples, parents were presented with school reports and documentation and the teacher's role was to explain to the parent the performance of the student. This use of the *evidence* strategy facilitated shared understanding, the adoption of similar perspectives, and a course of action that could further enhance student performance levels. Ashlyn was delighted in that her teacher, "… had gone through all of my daughter's maths ... English, and she had all this, and then she sat down and said, "Well, really the only thing is that [she] needs to practice is counting up from fives" (Interview 16, 2009 - Ashlyn). Ariel described that she presented facts to the teacher as, "It's all documented now …. Here's all the reports!" (Interview 26, 2009 - Ariel). The *evidence* strategy facilitated a positive outcome through the use of facts and documentation persuading a perspective to be adopted by the other person.

Forty-two percent of parents described using the *authorities/experts* strategy during formal face-to-face meetings. People within the school, as well as external professionals, were utilised by parents to persuade teachers during these types of interactions. Amanda commented that she wanted support for her child, and at one of

her meetings, "… all his therapists. I can't remember how many at the time … and his two teachers sitting down together providing suggestions and sharing their expertise on the matter. This resulted in his learning plan" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). She also added that, "It was an opportunity for everyone to discuss concerns and provide and practical strategies" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda) to assist him in the classroom. Annette was also pleased that the school organised school personnel and external agencies to attend her meeting. She said that they [the school], after a series of meetings, finally were, "… organising meetings ... with the school psych[ologist]" (Interview 11, 2009 - Annette) to come in and discuss the possibilities that her child was dyslexic. Annette was impressing on the school that the child needed intervention and drew on the *authorities/experts* strategy to engage school action. The *authorities/experts* strategy utilised people's expertise, and in these examples, to inform the teachers of classroom practices that could improve the child's educational performance levels. This strategy facilitated positive experiences of parent-teacher interactions during these formal face-to-face meetings.

The *relational strategy* was described as being used by a third of the parents in this study. This strategy facilitated parent-teacher connectivity along with providing an insight into the nature of the teacher. This was used to inform the parents on an approach to the teacher when making requests. Anna explained, "Some of the parents were, kind of, being a bit critical, but when we actually met and talked with that particular teacher, what really came across clearly is that she was absolutely devoted to the kids .... Her particular way of getting the best out of them might not have aligned with what some people were used to. But in getting to know her and knowing that was her motivation, you could say, yeah, no okay, hang on, she is really well meaning" (Interview 7, 2009 - Anna). A parent also went on to describe the teacher's nature, "One of them is mad as a hatter" (Interview 11, 2009 - Annette) whilst Alicia described her children's teacher as, "She was so lovely, and the kids love her" (Interview 14, 2009 - Alicia). Similarly, April utilised the *relational* strategy when she, "… develop[ed] rapport with this teacher" (Interview 24, 2009 - April) aiding communication, thereby meeting the needs of her child. Conversely, parents stated that they did not seem to enjoy teachers who, "… were very businesslike" (Interview 9, 2009 - Ashley). The *relational* strategy facilitated connectivity and successful outcomes for parents when making requests.

In this study, 31 percent of parents were identified using the *pressure* strategy during their interactions with teachers. Parents described how they were insistent with teachers until they had achieved their outcome. Amy stated, "We had to keep asking him, you know, 'Where is she here? And where is she there?', 'How's she getting on?' So we had to keep plucking around with him" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy). Similarly, April commented, "Last year I tried to organise meeting times, and that just never happened, so this year, eventually, I got one, I pushed it" (Interview 24, 2009 - April). Some parents were found to continue meeting with the teacher until they were listened to and support was provided for their child. One teacher described her persistent parent as, "… who wanted to know why their child was not in every extension program …. That was an issue ... they were meeting for an hour and on the half hour, we would get up and they would say, 'No! We haven't finished! We have got this, this and this to discuss'" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). The intensity of the *pressure* strategy varied in use, however, it forced a course of action that supported the student and resulted in a positive outcome.

Approximately a fifth of the parents mentioned the *passive resistance* strategy as being used by teachers in the context of these formal parent-teacher meetings. Teachers were described as being non-compliant (by avoiding the parent) leaving the parents feeling futile. Adele said she was, "Not very happy, but sort of thought, not much we can do really, and we'll just try and do our own thing" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). Other parents felt that the teacher was ineffective and that the situation was hopeless. Adriana described, "I had organised the meeting with her ... but I just got the feeling I'd been – 'No, no, no, no, there's no problem' ... you're left thinking" (Interview 2, 2009 - Adriana). In other instances, the teacher remained distant to the parents. Adriana explained, "He's a very nice man, I mean I get on well with him but he tries to stay away from the parents" (Interview 2, 2009 - Adriana). These parents noted teachers ignoring and/or providing no action to their requests. The *passive resistance* strategy was viewed as a less than satisfactory experience of parent-teacher interaction.

Teachers' Perspectives

Discussion was identified as a strategy used during parent-teacher interactions by nearly all of the teachers. The *discussion* strategy was often used to persuade parents into adopting a perspective, as well as the development of shared

understanding through the exchange of information. Tia, during her parent-teacher interactions, commented, "I was able to identify the causes she was talking about. Reassure her that we were doing something to be able to move forward with that and, we were addressing the issues concerned. The outcome of the meeting was that she was really happy" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia). Furthermore, Tamara provided her experience of using the *discussion* strategy in her meetings as, "… so it was a little awkward ... it was actually quite an open discussion and went quite well considering" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). The *discussion* strategy allowed perspectives to be shared, as well as opportunities for parents and teachers to participate in the decision-making process resulting in a level of pastoral and/or support for the student. These were positive parent-teacher interactions.

Similarly, nearly all of the teachers, during parent-teacher meetings, used *evidence* as a strategy in order to persuade parents into adopting a perspective. The *evidence* strategy utilised written records and/or work samples to explain the reality of the student's progress, and encouraged parents into affording levels of student support at home. "Generally the standard question is. 'How are they going?' Which is a very broad question, but I find if I tell them about the main areas of learning and any difficulties they are having, and if I have that information prepared ... then I feel that I am ready to tackle the majority of questions that they will ask" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). Tia also stated that, "Any scores I get from the children, I have laid out already on a sheet so I can talk to them [the parents]" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia). Having documentation on hand for these meetings made Tiana, "… feel more confident going into the meeting" (Interview 38, 2009 - Tiana). The *evidence* strategy provided facts and reasons for the students' results persuading the parents into providing support for the students. This had a positive impact on parent-teacher interactions.

The use of the *authorities/experts* strategy was mentioned by nearly three-quarters of the teachers in these parent-teacher interactions. Teachers quite often utilised the *authorities/experts* strategy to impress upon the parents, the needs of the child. Tahlia described her experience as, "I will organise the school's psychologist ... a little boy who was suspected to be on ASD spectrum [Autism Spectrum Disorder] .... I collected a lot of data beforehand, there was the whole NESB [Non-English Speaking Background] issue as well, and we had to get a translator. Then met in a

little group and that involved notes going backwards and forwards" (Interview 45, 2009 - Tahlia). The use of professional people and their expertise assisted in persuading the parent to see the teacher's perspective, thereby realising the support required for the child. Tammy made sure that, "… the right people were there that have either worked with the child or have got something to do with the child ... so the parents know that it's like a team effort, and we're all working to get to the same goal" (Interview 41, 2009 - Tammy). Teachers utilised the *authorities/experts* strategy to inform parents of the child's needs (often changing the parent's perspective), and therefore, the level of support required at home and at school. This strategy was described as providing positive parent-teacher interactions.

Sixty-five percent of teachers explained how the *relational* strategy assisted with developing a connection with their parents providing benefits to the students. Teachers employing the *relational strategy* utilised convivial activities to foster a rapport with their parents. Tracy described that during her parent-teacher meetings, "I have this parent who comes in with a list of things that she wants to say. But because I have had her child before I can make a bit of a joke about it with her" (Interview 37, 2009 - Tracy). She also added, "When the dads come in ... I often joke, oh it must be serious if the dad has come in" (Interview 37, 2009 - Tracy). Tristan in his meetings understood the nature of his parents and tried to make his meetings, "… warm and friendly as ... informal as possible because ... if we're sort of a little bit more relaxed and they're a little bit more relaxed, ... be a bit more open ... and talk to us more freely" (Interview 42, 2009 - Tristan). The use of humour provided connectivity with parents and resulted in a level of care and support for the student. The *relational* strategy facilitated these positive parent-teacher interactions.

Just over a quarter of teachers were found to have used the *pressure* strategy during their parent-teacher meetings. The *pressure* strategy encompassed different levels of intensity coercing parents to comply with the teacher's (or school's) requests. Tia described how a group of parents, who were constant in their questioning and insistent that she change her teaching practices, were referred to a member of the school's leadership team, "The deputy principal ... they would have to conduct the meeting" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia). This enabled the leadership team member to apply their position of power and authority coercing the parents to adopt the school's perspective. In a further example of the *pressure* strategy, Tia explained to the parent,

"This interview is going nowhere, and I am going to ask that you meet with the deputy. I spoke to the deputy, and two weeks later she [the parent] pulled them [the children] all out and moved them to a different school" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia). The school's leadership team were used to exercise their power and authority, forcing parents into a perspective. Similarly, parents were also noted as accessing a member from the school's leadership team, "A lot of nasty letters did go through to the deputy principal, primary principal and the school's principal. And it ended up having to be dealt with the school's principal" (Interview 37, 2009 - Tracy). Again, the *pressure* strategy was utilised to obtain compliance to a request. In this study, teachers also utilised school policy as a form of coercing the parents into adopting their perspective. Taj discussed, "There's a school policy ... you make sure you've got the policy documents handy so you can say, 'The school policy on this is blah, blah, blah, and this is how we will proceed from here'" (Interview 47, 2009 - Taj). School policy was used to assert the teachers' position on the matter, and therefore, forcing the parents to comply. The findings reveal that teachers employed the *pressure* strategy to coerce parents into adopting a perspective through the use of a member of their school's leadership team and/or school policy. This resulted in an outcome that suited the teachers, thereby providing a satisfactory experience of the parent-teacher interaction.

The *passive resistance* strategy was encountered by a few teachers (13 percent) during these interactions with parents. Teachers shared stories of parents not undertaking their requests. Tisha explained her perspective, "I had an incident ... with a parent and a girl who was really, her behaviour was terrible, and the parent told me, it was all my fault because they[the teacher and the parents] had no problems with her in the class, in the previous year" (Interview 65, 2009 - Tisha). Tia agreed in that, "A parent has come in and been really quite hostile. I tend to find that in situations like that; the parents didn't want to hear what you are telling them. You are giving them the honest information about their child, but that is not what they want" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia). Tamara also described occasions when parents were being difficult in becoming involved in the school, "Sometimes you have to initiate a meeting with parents, who you know is not terribly cooperative or not that supportive at home" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). Teachers encountered parents exercising the *passive resistance* strategy during their interactions resulting in non-compliance to requests.

Formal face-to-face parent-teacher interactions using a third person

Data from formal face-to-face parent-teacher meetings using a third person were developed from accounts given by the participants who utilised other people during their interactions. These meetings were scheduled throughout the year and these external people were invited to attend these meetings because of their knowledge of the subject matter. The third person, in this study, was identified as being, learning support personnel, deputy primary principals, primary principals, psychologists, occupational therapists, and/or translators.

During formal face-to-face parent-teacher meetings using a third person, the findings revealed that the deputy primary principals and/or primary principals had formal and informal roles during these parent-teacher interactions. In the formal sense, parents and teachers utilised the deputy primary principals' and/or primary principals' positions to exercise the *pressure* strategy; whilst informally, parents and teachers accessed the deputy primary principals' and/or primary principals' knowledge and expertise, implementing the *discussion* strategy.

Table 7.3 highlights the percentages of parents and teachers who described occurrences of a third person used in their meetings. Overall, the results indicated that parents and teachers predominantly used the third person in the role of applying the social influence strategy of *pressure* during their interactions. Furthermore, 33 percent of parents utilised the *pressure* strategy compared to 58 percent of teachers. Moreover, this table shows that 31 percent of parents used the *discussion* strategy compared to 42 percent of teachers. *Authorities/experts*, *evidence, passive resistance*, and *relational strategies* were not identified in these formal face-to-face meetings using a third person.

Table 7.3   **Percentages of Parents and Teachers who Provided Experiences of Social Influence Strategies in the Context of Formal Face-to-Face Meetings using a Third Person**

	Authorities/ Experts	Discussion	Evidence	Passive Resistance	Pressure	Relational
Parents	0	31	0	0	33	0
Teachers	0	42	0	0	58	0

The following section discusses the results from the parents' perspectives and the teachers' perspectives, in order of magnitude, with comments defining the themes.

Parents' Perspectives

In the context of parent-teacher meetings, a third person was utilised by parents for the purpose of applying the *pressure strategy*. Thirty-three percent of the parents described using a third person (in particular a member of the school's leadership team) to coerce a teacher into adopting the parent's perspective. Amanda clearly outlined that, "I've had to go over and above ... speaking to principals ... and complain about things" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). Amanda stated that she had to take it further because she wanted her issues to be recognised, as it would benefit the students. Amy, on the other hand, described incidents with a teacher where there were, "… lots of problems with [the] parents, and they all complained to the principal" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy). They insisted that the primary principal address their concern to support a student. Ashlyn further stated that a parent had, "witnessed something ... she went straight to the deputy" (Interview 16, 2009 - Ashlyn). The deputy primary principal was made aware of a situation and the parents awaited the outcome. Parents did agree that sometimes you had to go, "… over the previous teacher's head" (Interview 26, 2009 - Ariel) to insist that the teacher adopt their perspective. In these instances, parents utilised the school's leadership team to exert their power and authority over the teacher to address their issues and support the students. The *pressure* strategy utilised a third person, to coerce the teacher into addressing parental concerns resulting in a positive outcome for the parents and the students.

Just under a third of the parents described using the *discussion* strategy during these formal parent-teacher meetings. The third person was used to inform and mediate suitable practices that would best support the student at home and at school.

The *discussion* strategy facilitated this interaction by permitting all parties to share perspectives and participate in the decision-making process. For Amber, "We met with a few people, the learning support teacher, the class teacher, and the primary principal and my husband, and myself" (Interview 21, 2009 - Amber). She further added that this was because it, "… was just basically to touch base and make sure we were all on the same page, and to make sure that we were happy and in agreement" (Interview 21, 2009 - Amber). In this example, the exchange of perspectives and knowledge of the third person could persuade the teachers into providing suitable support for the student. Ariel stated that she had many people in her meeting as it was, "… just everyone sharing ... sharing information and trying to do our best for my son" (Interview 26, 2009 - Ariel). In summary, the *discussion* strategy was described as, "a big long talk session ... people talking about issues ... practical strategies" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). Opportunities were given to all parties to share ideas and agree upon a strategy to enhance student achievement levels. This was described as providing positive parent-teacher interactions.

Teachers' Perspectives

Fifty-eight percent of teachers described the use of the *pressure* strategy by involving a member of the school's leadership team during their parent-teacher meetings. The school's leadership team were asked to exercise their power and authority to coerce parents to adopt the school's perspective. One teacher stated, "The school principal went in there and argued with these parents" (Interview 37, 2009 - Tracy). In addition, teachers, when dealing with uncooperative parents, used a third person by stating that, "If you're not happy with this, you need to make an appointment to see the deputy or primary principal to take the matter further" (Interview 47, 2009 - Taj). Teachers adopted the view that these parents needed to receive the information from a person in a more senior position. Tia, however, summed up that the role of the third person for her would be, "… supporting what I said, and I think if they [the parents] became hostile and they were arguing with me, then their [third person] role would be to come in and offer me support and mediate and try to explain in a different way or maybe clarify something. I think their biggest role would be support for me" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia). The role of the third person during these teacher meetings was to exert their power and authority over parents, provide information, and/or give support to the teachers in order to achieve parental

compliance to a request. The *pressure* strategy resulted in a positive outcome for teachers during their interactions with parents.

In the context of parent-teacher meetings using a third person, the *discussion* strategy was identified by less than half of the teachers (42 percent). The *discussion* strategy was implemented by teachers in an amicable way where all parties shared their points of view, resulting in a positive outcome for the student. Some teachers referred to the fact that they would, "… invite an admin[istration] person to sit in on the meeting ... as it might be a long-term pastoral care type thing" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha). Other teachers who had positions of responsibility in the school would also sit in on meetings especially, "… with new teachers to assist [them]" (Interview 47 - Taj) in sharing their concerns, offering support, and advice to the parents that benefitted the student. Similarly, Tristan, as a mentor teacher, would share the meeting with some of the teachers (particularly early career teachers) but, "The teacher takes control …. I sort of talk to the parent about some behaviours and what sort of information that we need to work together [on]" (Interview 42, 2009 - Tristan). The third person was employed to offer advice and/or points of view to inform the meeting, whilst the *discussion* strategy enabled mutual understanding and participation in the decision-making process. This was described as providing positive parent-teacher interactions.

In summary, formal face-to-face parent-teacher interactions occurred through scheduled interactions with a dedicated time to discuss matters at hand. In this study, the contexts for these meetings were firstly, parent-teacher interviews (school reports and student results); parent-teacher meetings (concerns or issues in relation to the student); and finally, parent-teacher meetings utilising a third person (knowledge and expertise). Overall, the findings revealed that parents and teachers utilised the *pressure* strategy to force an outcome or the *discussion* strategy to persuade an outcome. These, however, provided positive outcomes for the parent-teacher interaction. The next section discusses the differing contexts of informal face-to-face meetings in which parents and teachers interacted.

Informal Parent-Teacher Interactions

In this study, informal parent-teacher interactions were identified as occurring in the context of either parent-teacher meetings or non-verbal parent-teacher

interactions. These opportunities for discussion were irregular in nature where parents and teachers conversed over various school related and non-school related topics. These informal contexts will be discussed in turn.

Informal face-to-face parent-teacher meetings

Informal face-to-face meetings were considered as unscheduled interactions, which occurred without an appointment, and were not mandated by the school. In this study, they were identified as being daily greetings, casual conversations (where personal perspectives were shared), and/or where personal information was exchanged concerning the child: for example, lack of sleep, change of diet, or home/family issues. These were described as occurring in the doorway, at drop-off and pick-up areas (before and after school student collection points), and/or school sporting or social events.

Table 7.4 illustrates the percentages of parents and teachers who provided incidents of informal parent-teacher interactions where social influence strategies were identified. The results indicate that 64 percent of parents and 77 percent of teachers primarily utilised the *discussion* strategy during these informal meetings. *Authorities/experts*, *evidence,* and *pressure* strategies were not found to be present during these types of parent-teacher meetings.

Table 7.4   Percentages of Parents and Teachers who Provided Experiences of Social Influence Strategies in the Context of Informal Face-to-Face Meetings

	Authorities/ Experts	Discussion	Evidence	Passive Resistance	Pressure	Relational
Parents	0	64	0	3	0	44
Teachers	0	77	0	10	0	42

The following section will present the findings, in order of magnitude, from the parents' perspectives and then the teachers' perspectives. Supporting comments made by parents and teachers are provided as exemplars of social influence strategies.

Parents' Perspectives

Almost two thirds of the parents identified incidents where the *discussion* strategy was used during their informal parent-teacher meetings. This strategy was described as facilitating parents with the exchange of information and perspectives,

which resulted in a course of action that benefitted the student. Ava described her use of the *discussion* strategy when, "I took my daughter along to the PE [Physical Education] teacher and I said, 'Just want you to know what's happening?' …. I'm sure there's a reason why this is happening, can you let us both know', and he said, 'Yes, that's fine'" (Interview 27, 2009 - Ava). Similarly, Ariel stated that a teacher pulled her aside in the classroom, "Your son hasn't been himself for the last couple of days, would there be a reason?" (Interview 26, 2009 - Ariel). Furthermore, parents also explained unscheduled conversations in the way that they would, "… just pop in very briefly, if it's just for something very little ... just something very quick" (Interview 23, 2009 - Angelina). The *discussion* strategy, during these instances, was the exchange of information that was relevant to the successful functioning of the child for the day emulating in a level of pastoral care by the teacher.

The *relational* strategy was employed by 44 percent of the parents in this study. School events such as excursions, sports, church, parent-helper days, and fundraising activities provided opportunities for parents and teachers to develop connectivity. Furthermore, the *relational* strategy facilitated parents getting to know the teacher's temperament, values, and attitudes, which resulted in the parents determining their approach towards the teacher when making requests. Azaria thought that her child might have this teacher in the following year, and so at a, "… swimming carnival ... made a point of going to introduce myself to her and getting to know her ... so there's already a kind of relationship and already an understanding before she [the student] even comes in" (Interview 28, 2009 - Azaria). In addition, parents wanted to be known in the school, and to know the teacher that way, "She knows who I am, both of them [the teachers] know who I am and that helps I think too, to make it [meetings] more approachable" (Interview 25, 2009 - Arlene). Parents would interact with the teachers to obtain an insight into their nature, with the view of making appeals for requests more successful.

Very few parents (three percent) mentioned *passive resistance* as a strategy in the context of informal face-to-face parent-teacher meetings. This strategy was defined as the avoidance of requests. Addison wanted to know what the school could offer her in the way of resources for her child, but was referred to an external provider in an offhand manner, "Go and speak with your speech pathologist" (Interview 18, 2009 - Addison). Parents also found that they had difficulty relating to teachers employing

the *passive resistance* strategy in the form of agreeing to do something, but then taking no action. Alana stated that she, "… struggled more with that than I do with the ones that say, 'No I can't do it'" (Interview 4, 2009 - Alana). Furthermore, disappointed by the lack of response given by teachers, Adele suggested, "… not much we can do really, and we'll just try and do our own thing" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). The *passive resistance* strategy was used to negate a person's request.

Teachers' Perspectives

Over three quarters of the teachers utilised the *discussion* strategy during their informal parent-teacher meetings. Teachers would share information with parents about their child's activities during the day, at times persuading the parent to follow up with issues at home. Tristan explained that, "I did speak with mum quite frequently, informally ... just to let her know" (Interview 42, 2009 - Tristan). Taylor would often communicate with parents at, "… the end of the day. It's easier to do that, and I will catch a parent that maybe is worried" (Interview 54, 2009 - Taylor). The *discussion* strategy enabled teachers to exchange their perspectives and obtain shared understanding. Tony explained that a parent spoke to him briefly after school where, "… both concerns were what I needed to know about. Certain behaviours for tomorrow and she wanted to talk to me about it" (Interview 67, 2009 - Tony). The *discussion* strategy enabled teachers to share their perspective and derive a level of pastoral care for the child both at home and at school.

Forty-two percent of the teachers used the *relational* strategy during their informal parent-teacher meetings. This strategy included building connectivity with the parents, and understanding their nature making communication easier which provided benefits for the students. Some sociable activities included just, "… chatting, like how was your weekend? ... personal stuff ... renovations" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha), and asking, "… her about the ring and made a fuss about the wedding" (Interview 55, 2009 - Teresa). During these types of interactions, the teacher, "… just touches base with the parents" (Interview 54, 2009 - Taylor). Teachers would also utilise the *relational* strategy by fostering an association with the parent, offering an insight into their temperament, developing a level of trust. Tasha described the value of the *relational* strategy, as "I think they feel more comfortable with me as the child's teacher if they have some idea of who I am. What my life is about, and what I'm like, and by talking about myself and my life gives them a ... strong level of trust in leaving

their child with me" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha). Informal interactions, and the use of the *relational* strategy, assisted with worldviews and perspectives being shared adding a level of trust to the relationship. This also facilitated the approach of the teacher when making a request.

A few teachers (10 percent) mentioned *passive resistance*, as a social influence strategy, during these informal face-to-face meetings. Teachers commented that they preferred not to interact with the parents before the school day officially began. Tabitha would defer her interactions with early morning parents in the fear of, "… being bailed up" (Interview 44, 2009 - Tabitha). Tanya offered suggestions for her parents to, "… leave a note in the child's document wallet ... don't have to come up and interrupt in the morning busyness" (Interview 50, 2009 - Tanya). Furthermore, she also suggested for parents to "… come back another time" (Interview 50, 2009 - Tanya) for a scheduled meeting. Tommy, as a teacher and a parent, shared an experience of a teacher who was not engaging with the parents, "She's at her desk, she won't get out and talk to people, and they sort of judge her based on that, not on the work that she's doing" (Interview 40, 2009 - Tommy). In these instances, teachers used the *passive resistance* strategy to defer or avoid interactions with parents.

Informal face-to-face non-verbal parent-teacher interactions

Informal face-to-face non-verbal parent-teacher interactions were the times when parents and teachers made observations about the other person, obtaining an insight into their temperament. There was no exchange of words; nevertheless, information was derived from witnessing various activities and behaviours, informing them of the person's disposition. Information included the nature of the other person, their approach to children, and the manner in which they conducted themselves in a learning environment. This had an impact on the way parents and teachers approached each other during future parent-teacher interactions.

Table 7.5 illustrates the percentages of parents and teachers who provided stories of social influence strategies being used during informal face-to-face non-verbal parent-teacher interactions. The data show that parents and teachers predominantly used the *relational* strategy in these types of interactions. The table also shows that 36 percent of parents and 39 percent of the teachers engaged with the *evidence* strategy in this non-verbal context. Similarly, the *passive resistance* strategy was experienced by both 22 and 23 percent of parents and teachers respectively in

these types of interactions. The findings also indicate that *authorities/experts*, *discussion,* and *pressure* strategies were not used during these interactions.

Table 7.5   Percentages of Parents and Teachers who Provided Experiences of Social Influence Strategies in the Context of Informal Face-to-Face Non-Verbal Parent-Teacher Interactions

	Authorities/ Experts	Discussion	Evidence	Passive Resistance	Pressure	Relational
Parents	0	0	36	22	0	42
Teachers	0	0	39	23	0	39

The following section will present the findings from the parents' perspectives and then the teachers' perspectives in order of magnitude. Supporting comments will be provided that exemplify the importance of these strategies.

Parents' Perspectives

The *relational* strategy was used by 42 percent of the parents in this study. Parents were found to present an image of themselves as visible, active, and participatory parents in and around the school. They held the view that this facilitated connectivity with the teachers. Azaria described her informal presence in the school as, "I still like to just sort of wander in and see who's around and might pop in have a quick chat to the teacher. So I guess I make myself known" (Interview 28, 2009 - Azaria). Similarly, Amanda said, "… makes your life easier when you have a certain level of involvement in the school and just being known around the place" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). Furthermore, a rationale for being present in the school was the benefits extended to their child. Amber found that when you, "… build relationships ... you really benefit from it. You're giving but you also receive" (Interview 21, 2009 - Amber). Azaria concurred, "They know who you are, and I tend to think that if they know who you are, that helps perhaps with their relationship with my child" (Interview 28, 2009 - Azaria). In summary, "Well, most of the teachers know who I am because I'm always hanging around" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy). The informal presence of these parents provided opportunities for them to be recognised as approachable and active participants of the school, making communication and interactions with teachers easier. Furthermore, the *relational* strategy facilitated a level of connectivity that parents viewed as deriving benefits for their child.

Just over a third of the parents provided examples of using the *evidence* strategy during these types of interactions. The *evidence* strategy utilised facts and the provision of a reality. Parents obtained their information through surreptitious observations within the school about their children, the teachers, and at times, other parents. Adele said for her, she likes to, "… see how the teacher is with the students ... how they interact with the kids ... and what their personality is like" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). Amy commented, "Yeah, it's just nice to see how the teachers interact with the kids and I just like, I'm a nosey parent" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy). Other parents saw this as an opportunity to venture into the world of their children, "… see who their friends are, how they behave", as well as "… have some insight into her world" (Interview 6, 2009 - Alison). "You could see what they [the students] were doing, so at home you could talk about those concepts", and "You learnt how they [the teachers] related to the kids, how they [the teachers] connected, and just seeing what was happening around the place" (Interview 3, 2009 - Anna). "Seeing how your child behaves, because they're different in class to what they are out" (Interview 15, 2009 - Aida). Similarly, "… where they sit amongst their peer group, but not so much to rank them but just to know where their weaknesses are, what we can work on" (Interview 24, 2009 - April). Parents, through non-verbal parent-teacher interactions, received information in relation to a person's temperament and disposition. This was how the *evidence* strategy was used by parents to obtain facts.

Twenty-two percent of parents encountered the *passive resistance* strategy in the context of informal face-to-face non-verbal parent-teacher interactions. Amanda shared her view of the times when teachers did not make themselves available, "I just don't have much to do with him ... I just, I never really see him" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). Adriana also discussed her experience, "I see him at pick-up every day, but I haven't spoken to him" (Interview 2, 2009 - Adriana). April discussed the culture of the upper primary classrooms, "There's a feeling like you can't step into the room" (Interview 24, 2009 - April). Annabel described the feeling of inequality, "You know a lot of people [the parents] won't approach them [the teachers] because they feel like that they [the teachers] have got more power than them" (Interview 20, 2009 - Annabel). Ava stated, "There are some teachers that clearly don't like having parents in the classroom" (Interview 27, 2009 - Ava). Parents shared experiences of their non-verbal interactions with teachers and the teacher's use of the *passive resistance*

strategy. This resulted in no verbal exchanges between parents and teachers as the teachers avoided many parent-teacher interactions.

Teachers' Perspectives

The *evidence* strategy was noted as being used by just over a third of the teachers during informal face-to-face non-verbal parent-teacher interactions. This strategy utilised facts and explanations that persuaded a person into adopting a perspective. Tamara explained how she was aware that parents came in to observe her behaviour in the classroom, "You can sometime sense when they [the parents] are there to check you out" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). Similarly, teachers described using this time as being educational role models to parents. They shared how they would attempt to influence the parents on teaching and/or learning strategies that they could use at home with their child. Tamara said, "I also have parents come in to help with language groups. So that's another time they are in the classroom, working with me, so they get that insight into how I work in the classroom" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). In these situations, the *evidence* strategy was used by teachers to demonstrate methods that could be used by the parents at home to teach or reinforce concepts, thereby providing examples that illustrated their position on good teaching and learning practices.

Thirty nine percent of teachers described using the *relational* strategy with their parents during these types of non-verbal interactions. In particular, teachers would establish their own profile within the school, providing parents with an insight into their disposition. The *relational* strategy facilitated connectivity, which encouraged greater communication, making appeals for requests more successful. Tahlia stated, "Part of the job is a little bit of PR isn't it really? In a fee paying school, you need to present yourself in a certain way and present your profession and your job" (Interview 45, 2009 - Tahlia). Similarly, Tasha said, "What my life is about and what I'm like ... gives them a stronger feeling for who I am, and gives them a strong level of trust in leaving their child with me" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha). When parents come into the classroom as a parent-helper, they can experience how the teacher operates. Tammy found that, "I think it's great for them to come in and experience it, and they definitely appreciate what you do, once they've been in, and realise how much work and effort you do put in to it, and how much time it takes" (Interview 41, 2009 - Tammy). Tamara further explained, "They do get an insight into

like how I am, explaining things to the kids ... and when they go home with their child, then they can try to apply those sort of things or see what we are learning so they can follow it up" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). Teachers utilised these informal non-verbal parent-teacher interactions to develop their own profile, as well as influencing the parents' perspectives of them as being professionals, thereby affording a level of trust and support to the student. The *relational* strategy facilitated this knowledge.

Nearly a quarter of the teachers were identified as using the *passive resistance* strategy during these non-verbal interactions. Teachers would engage in a practice that permitted them to avoid any interactions with parents. Tabitha would not interact with parents as, "In the mornings, it is time to talk to the children, it is for pleasantries ... and that is what I need to deal with" (Interview 44, 2009 - Tabitha). She said that she would not interact with parents and if the, "… parents wanted to discuss an issue ... [they were advised to] make an appointment" (Interview 44, 2009 - Tabitha). Other teachers announced that, "At the beginning of the day ... helping them [the students] to set up those independent routines," (Interview 54, 2009 - Taylor) and discouraging parents to unpack their child's bag. In addition, teachers would observe the parents' movements within the classroom and noted the response of parents when looking at their child's (and others) work. At times, parents were found to criticise the child's effort, which was met with the teacher removing the books, saying to herself, "You've no longer got access to them anymore" (Interview 60, 2009 - Tennika). Teachers described employing the *passive resistance* strategy with parents through avoiding and negating parent interactions.

Informal face-to-face non-verbal parent-teacher interactions where no words were exchanged usually occurred in the classroom, and at the beginning and/or the end of the school day. Knowledge was obtained by observing the behaviours and activities of the others, which informed them of their disposition and temperament. This study identified that the *evidence*, *relational,* and *passive resistance* social influence strategies were predominantly utilised by parents and teachers during these types of interactions. This knowledge would influence their understanding of each other, thereby the approach used during their interactions when making requests.

Summary

This chapter highlighted the social influence strategies that were associated with the formal and informal contexts of parent-teacher interactions. Formal interactions incorporated parent-teacher interviews, parent-teacher meetings, and parent-teacher meetings using a third person. Informal interactions were identified as being the unscheduled more social parent-teacher interactions, as well as the times when parents and teachers obtained knowledge through non-verbal observations.

In summary, parent-teacher interviews primarily identified the use of the *evidence* strategy, to persuade a person into adopting a perspective; whilst during formal parent-teacher face-to-face meetings, parents and teachers predominantly utilised the *discussion* strategy to share perspectives, resulting in courses of action and support for the students. The *discussion* and *pressure* strategies were employed as a means of social influence during parent-teacher interactions using a third person, mainly to insist on a perspective being adopted and a course of action for the child. In addition, informal parent-teacher interactions primarily identified the use of the *discussion* strategy, whereas the *relational* and *evidence* strategies were engaged during informal non-verbal parent-teacher interactions. The *relational* strategy facilitated connectivity between parents and teachers, making appeals for requests more successful.

In conclusion, the *discussion* strategy featured in most of the contexts identified in this aspect of the study. This means that parents and teachers, during these contexts, had a preference for shared perspectives, mutual understanding and participation in the decision-making process. Furthermore, these social influence strategies were utilised to obtain a course of action, level of care, and/or support for the student both at home and/or at school.

The next chapter outlines the findings in relation to the associated purposes for the application of social influence strategies during parent-teacher interactions.

CHAPTER EIGHT
FINDINGS:
PARTICULAR PURPOSES ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIAL
INFLUENCE STRATEGIES

A further aspect of this investigation was to identify if social influence strategies were associated with particular purposes during parent-teacher interactions. Throughout this study, parents and teachers, during focus groups and interview sessions, shared their experiences of parent-teacher interactions in which social influence strategies were found to be evident. Furthermore, the purposes for these parent-teacher interactions were derived from their stories, and grouped into either student related or non-student related themes. This chapter examines the findings from the parents' and teachers' data that defined the purposes for their interactions.

An explanation of the data analysis process is provided, which outlines the method used in this study to collate both parents' and teachers' lived experiences. This is followed by a tabulation and description of the social influence strategies associated with the different purposes for parent-teacher interactions. In addition, an explanation of the findings is offered from both the parents' perspectives and teachers' perspectives, using excerpts from the data. The findings from the study revealed that student related purposes were *behavioural, cognitive (academic), emotional, medical, social,* and/or *student support* issues. No mention was made of a child's physical development during this study. Non-student related purposes included *courtesies, identity, information*, and *personal matters*.

Data Analysis

The purposes for parent-teacher interactions were identified from the stories shared by the participants. From the data, several themes emerged offering different purposes for parent-teacher interactions, as well as highlighting the social influence strategies used by the various participants. The data were analysed using NVivo 8 software, where each story shared by a parent or teacher was tallied against the social influence strategy into the themes identified under student related or non-student related matters. However, it must be realised that not all participants described every

purpose, nor was every social influence strategy identified in this part of the research. The final tally of parents and teachers who employed social influence strategies associated with particular purposes was converted into a percentage figure.

The following section presents the purposes of parent-teacher interactions, which have been separated into student related and non-student related purposes. The findings are given firstly, from the parents' perspectives, followed by the teachers' perspectives. Tables 8.1 and 8.2 illustrate the percentages of parents and teachers who employed the differing social influence strategies, as well as supporting comments made by the participants. Moreover, some social influence strategies were not found to occur with every purpose of an interaction.

Student Related Purposes

In this study, parents and teachers interacted for the following student related purposes: *behavioural*, *cognitive, emotional, medical, social*, and/or *student support* issues. In addition, the findings found that parents and teachers employed six social influence strategies during these interactions. In the following section, two tables are presented: Table 8.1 provides the percentages of parents; whilst Table 8.2 illustrates the percentages of teachers who shared their experiences of parent-teacher interactions for student related purposes, and the times when social influence strategies were identified as being employed.

Firstly, Table 8.1 shows the social influence strategies used by parents during their interactions with teachers for student related purposes. The table illustrates that parents used the *discussion* strategy in all of their interactions with teachers for *behavioural, cognitive, emotional, medical, social*, and/or *student support* matters. In addition, for *cognitive* matters, nearly three-quarters of the parents utilised the *discussion* strategy, whilst over half of the parents utilised this strategy for student *behavioural* concerns. The next most frequently used strategy during these student related parent-teacher interactions was the *pressure* strategy, followed by *evidence,* and *passive resistance* strategies. Moreover, the social influence strategy, *authorities/experts*, was used for only three out of the six identified purposes, while the *relational* strategy was not used at all.

Table 8.1 shows that for student related purposes of *behavioural, cognitive*, and/or *social matters* all of the social influence strategies (with the exception of the

relational strategy) were utilised during parent-teacher interactions. In the current investigation, the *relational* strategy was predominantly utilised for non-student related matters. For the purposes of *medical* matters, only the *discussion* strategy was utilised by 11 percent of parents, and only three of the social influence strategies were associated with *student support*. This table indicates that parents described 21 incidences of social influence strategies out of a possible 36 during their interactions that were for student related purposes.

Table 8.1   Percentages of Parents who Provided Examples of Social Influence Strategies for each Student Related Purpose

Social Influence Strategies/ Purpose	Authorities/ Experts	Discussion	Evidence	Passive Resistance	Pressure	Relational
Behavioural	17	53	25	14	17	0
Cognitive	8	75	53	14	25	0
Emotional	0	47	0	0	6	0
Medical	0	11	0	0	0	0
Social	8	47	6	3	11	0
Student Support	0	28	0	6	3	0

Table 8.2 presents data relating to the percentages of teachers who described incidences of social influence strategies during their interactions with parents for student related purposes. Teachers were identified as predominantly employing the *discussion, evidence*, and *pressure* strategies during their interactions with parents. In addition, nearly all the teachers utilised the *discussion* strategy for *behavioural* and *social* matters. The next most frequently used form of social influence was the *authorities/experts* strategy. The social influence strategy *passive resistance* was used in only four out of the six identified purposes, while the *relational* strategy was not used at all.

Table 8.2 shows that the student related purposes of *behavioural, cognitive, emotional,* and *student support* were associated with all of the social influence strategies (with the exception of the *relational* strategy). The *relational* strategy was

predominantly utilised by teachers for non-student related matters. For the purposes of *medical* concerns, *discussion*, *evidence,* and *pressure* strategies were utilised by teachers. This table also indicates, for student related purposes, that teachers described 27 incidences of social influence strategies out of a possible 36.

Table 8.2   Percentages of Teachers who Provided Examples of Social Influence Strategies for each Student Related Purpose

Social Influence Strategies/ Purpose	Authorities/ Experts	Discussion	Evidence	Passive Resistance	Pressure	Relational
Behavioural	23	84	42	3	10	0
Cognitive	23	56	42	13	6	0
Emotional	16	61	6	3	6	0
Medical	0	19	3	0	6	0
Social	6	94	23	0	3	0
Student Support	3	35	6	45	3	0

Comparing the data from the two tables, both parents and teachers primarily utilised the *discussion* strategy during their interactions for student related matters. In addition, teachers predominantly employed the *evidence* strategy compared to parents who used the *pressure* strategy. Teachers were also found to have used more social influence strategies than the parents during their interactions for student related purposes. Furthermore, the data highlighted that parents interacted with teachers more often for *cognitive* concerns, whereas teachers interacted more frequently with parents for *behavioural* issues.

The next section, presents the findings for each student related purpose from the parents' perspectives followed by the teachers' perspectives. Supporting comments from the participants are provided illustrating the social influence strategies used.

Behavioural

Most of the social influence strategies were found to be utilised during parent-teacher interactions for the purpose of student *behavioural* matters. Parents and teachers primarily interacted to obtain a course of action (at home and/or at school) to

assist with the positive development of the student's behaviour. Parents and teachers particularly used the *discussion* strategy during these types of interactions obtaining mutual understanding and support for the student.

Parents' Perspectives

The study firstly identified that the *discussion* strategy was being used by over half of the parents when meeting with teachers regarding student *behavioural* concerns. The *discussion* strategy enabled parents to share their perspectives, obtain advice, and be a participant in the decision-making process. For Ashley, explaining the nature of her child to the teacher helped the teacher in understanding the specific needs of the child, and therefore, the level of pastoral care required. She explained, "We pretty much talk about ... [how] he's a quiet [boy] and perhaps might need a bit of help" (Interview 9, 2009 - Ashley). In addition, Alma would raise concerns about bullying during her interactions with a teacher. "My boy was bullied last year by the same kid ... so I did speak to the teacher a number of times" (Interview 36, 2009 - Alma). She felt that this resulted in the teacher being more cognisant of her child regarding *behavioural* issues. Amanda also stated that during these interactions, teachers would provide the contexts in which these behaviours occurred, creating mutual understanding between parents and teachers. In conversations about her son's behaviour, she said, "He had an incident where he punched someone or someone has punched him, and most of the time, it gets put into perspective" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). The *discussion* strategy facilitated parents and teachers sharing their perspectives and the provision of a level of pastoral care for the student.

A quarter of the parents were identified using *evidence* as an influencing strategy during their interactions with teachers over behavioural matters. The *evidence* strategy constituted the presentation of facts, anecdotal notes, and/or records often persuading a change in a person's perspective resulting in a course of action. Addison explained that she wanted to, "… know the facts ... [and] how we, as in me and the teacher, are going to address it …. I can read books on ... acceptable behaviours .... So I can enforce what she [the teacher] has been delivering" (Interview 18, 2009 - Addison). The *evidence* strategy facilitated the reality of her child's behaviour being recognised, followed by a course of action supporting the child at home and at school. Parents in this study also liked to interact with the teachers because the teacher would explain, "… behaviour and everything" (Interview 9, 2009 - Ashley). One teacher

approached Ariel because she had noticed a change in her child's behaviour and wanted to know how to support him at school. Ariel liked the way that, "… the teacher pulled me aside .... 'Your son hasn't been himself for the last few days, would there be a reason?'" (Interview 26, 2009 - Ariel). She was pleased that the teacher had noted this change in his behaviour and was sharing her concern, thereby achieving mutual understanding. From the data, the *evidence* strategy facilitated parents with knowing the facts about their child and in particular their behaviour. This often resulted in persuading both the parents and the teachers into understanding the reality and the provision of assistance to positively enhance the student's performance.

Seventeen percent of parents utilised the *authorities/experts* strategy during their interactions with teachers on behavioural issues. Parents engaged the services of professional people who would offer advice and/or expertise, persuading the teacher into providing suitable teaching and learning practices for the child. Amber, whose child was showing signs of oppositional behaviour, engaged the services of school personnel, such as learning support teachers and the school psychologist, to assist in developing strategies for her child at school. She said the reason for obtaining professional advice was, "… in terms of seeing if we could get help ... meet with a few people ... and agree with what the school proposed for treatment" (Interview 21, 2009 - Amber). Ariel also described how the school invited various expert personnel to assist with her child's bullying issues. "Yeah, they had to get in the school psych[ologist] and social worker ... to deal with these children" (Interview 26, 2009 - Ariel). In these examples, the use of the *authorities/experts* strategy facilitated changes to school practices and the provision of additional of support for the student.

The *pressure* strategy was made use of by 17 percent of the parents in this study when interacting with teachers over student *behavioural* concerns. Perseverance, insistence, as well as support from a member of the school's leadership team underpinned the use of this social influence strategy. Amanda described, "… having to be more in their [the teacher's] face" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda) to achieve an outcome. Her perseverance with the matter saw the *behavioural* concern finally being dealt with by the teacher. April also commented that she had exerted herself to the point where she had, "… to push that" (Interview 24, 2009 - April) for the teacher to assist in dealing with her *behavioural* concern. In this study, the *pressure* strategy was

used by parents to force a result from the teacher in order to obtain support for student *behavioural* concerns.

A small number of parents experienced the *passive resistance* strategy being used by the teachers during their interactions. *Passive resistance* was defined as the avoidance of a request and/or where the teachers declined a parent's appeal with no apparent rationale. April stated, "I wanted the teacher to tell me if we needed to practice the times tables" (Interview 24, 2009 - April) and the teacher did not support this request. She was left feeling, "… not validated in my concern about that issue" (Interview 24, 2009 - April). In addition, Tenielle, in her request for some post information about an incident was, "… told it was being seen to" (Interview 63, 2009 - Tenielle). Unhappy with the response, she approached the teacher again, only to be, "… advised that it wasn't anything to do with us [meaning Tenielle]" (Interview 63, 2009 - Tenielle). In these instances, the *passive resistance* strategy was utilised by teachers to avoid, ignore or negate a parental request. This resulted in no action or support for the student.

Teachers' Perspectives

The *discussion* strategy was used by nearly all of the teachers when meeting with parents for the purposes of student behaviour. Tara stated that, often in her interactions with parents, the *discussion* strategy enabled her to share a concern and develop strategies with the parents to support particular aspects of the student's behaviour. A parent asked Tara, "My child has a lot of anxiety. What do we do? And we say [that is Tara and the school], 'Here are some strategies that you can put in place ... come back if it doesn't improve'" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). Tammy said in her meetings at times, "Parents have said, 'Someone is bullying my child!' .... We'll have a chat and work out a strategy" (Interview 41, 2009 - Tammy). Opportunities existed for teachers to share perspectives, and encourage the parents to be part of the decision-making process, developing courses of action and a level of support for the student.

Forty-two percent of teachers were found to have used *evidence* as a strategy in their parent-teacher interactions about student *behavioural* concerns. The *evidence* strategy assisted with the presentation of information that supported the matter at hand resulting in a desired outcome. Travis used the *evidence* strategy when, "… the school

has a particular view about a child's behaviour ... you got to put it [the facts] on the table, but be clear" (Interview 51, 2009 - Travis). The presentation of facts, in this example, was designed to encourage support from the parent by adopting the school's perspective, and to change some of the student's *behavioural* patterns. In addition, teachers also often stated that they documented student incidents, which was used to demonstrate their perspective to the parents regarding any student *behavioural* issues. Terry explained, "As a school, we document a lot of things" (Interview 64, 2009 - Terry). He further commented that student records were kept by the school, "… to protect ourselves [the teachers]" (Interview 64, 2009 - Terry). Trisha stated that the *evidence* strategy assisted her with an intimidating parent, "… because there was a list a mile long of her [the student] behaviours ... because I was new to the school that year, I think she thought she could just get away with just saying it must be something that you're [the teacher] doing in the classroom because she [the parent] had never had this problem before" (Interview 65, 2009 - Trisha). The *evidence* strategy was utilised by teachers to explain student *behavioural* concerns and encouraged parents to support a proposed course of action.

The *authorities/experts* strategy was identified as being used by nearly a quarter of the teachers in this study. This strategy employed the services of other people who had greater knowledge of the topic to inform (or persuade) the parents into adopting a course of action. Tara, in her role of assisting parents, advised them, "We would like you to go and get some help" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). Another teacher, Tammy, invited one of the senior teachers, who was in charge of student behaviour, to attend her meetings, "… just so the parents know it is a team effort, and we're all working towards the same goal" (Interview 41, 2009 - Tammy). Teachers, in this study, sought the assistance of other people who had more knowledge of the topic to influence the parents' perspectives, thereby providing support and assistance for the student.

The use of the *pressure* strategy was utilised by 10 percent of teachers during their interactions with parents. Teachers explained that they implemented the *pressure* strategy as a form of influence insisting parents adopt a perspective. Terry explained that they would use the school's discipline policy to coerce parents to adopt a proposed course of action. He outlined how, "… some of those parents change, some don't, some pull their kids [out of the school], some just go through the discipline

policy because they refuse to acknowledge it" (Interview 64, 2009 - Terry). One teacher, who felt threatened by an aggressive parent, utilised the power and authority of a member from the school's leadership team to obtain compliance from a parent. Tish requested that her mentor teacher be with her when she interacted with an intimidating parent. "I then said to my peer teacher .... 'If you ever see this child's parent ... can you come and stand next to me' ... because I just didn't want him to feel like he could yell at me" (Interview 43, 2009 - Tish). Teachers were primarily identified as utilising the *pressure* strategy to coerce parents into adopting a perspective when conversing over student *behavioural* issues.

Only a few teachers described incidents of parents ignoring their advice and using the *passive resistance* strategy. Tamsin noted, "They agree to everything in the conference, and go home and do nothing!" (Interview 58, 2009 - Tamsin). Tiana's experience was similar, where she described parents who, "… would do it for a week ... sometimes they will ignore it" (Interview 38, 2009 - Tiana). Parents in these instances were noted as ignoring the teacher's request. In addition, Tony stated that in his experience, when interacting with some parents, the *passive resistance* strategy operated, "Well maybe you could do this, this and this. And they say, 'Yes! We will try that!' Then the next meeting, the exact same thing was said again; the meeting after that, the same reasons" (Interview 67, 2009 - Tony). The *passive resistance* strategy occurred when parents did not undertake an action requested by the teacher, which resulted in no support being afforded to the child.

Cognitive

All of the social influence strategies, except the *relational* strategy, were used for the purposes of student *cognitive* matters. Parents and teachers primarily interacted to obtain support (at home and/or at school) for the student to develop their *cognitive* skills. In this study, the *discussion* and *evidence* strategies were utilised by more than half of the parents and teachers during their interactions.

Parents' Perspectives

Three quarters of parents used the *discussion* strategy when interacting with teachers seeking an understanding of the student's *cognitive* development. The *discussion* strategy enabled perspectives to be shared, resulting in an agreed outcome of support for the student during their interactions. In most incidences, parents wanted

information about their child's performance, and in turn, the support, at home and/or at school that was required to enhance it. Amy found that in her meetings, it was, "How are they going ... in language, maths, science ... where are they, and if there's any areas that needs to be worked on at home" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy). Alice also commented, "If she knows these spelling words ... does she need more?" (Interview 34, 2009 - Alice). Parents utilised the *discussion* strategy to obtain information regarding their child's progress and therefore, the level of support needed to further enhance the student's performance.

Just over half of the parents were found to have utilised the *evidence* strategy in their interactions with teachers. The use of test results and school reports were the foci during these interactions. Ashley stated, "… talking about their [the students'] progress, their [the students'] reports" (Interview 9, 2009 - Ashley). Parents welcomed an explanation and feedback of scores and results about their child so they could reconcile their child's progress. Alison described how, "She'd [the teacher] actually done this testing with the kids using a computer program" (Interview 6, 2009 - Alison), whilst Adriana stated, "She was telling me where he is ... his spelling age and his reading age" (Interview 2, 2009 - Adriana). Parents were provided with information from the school regarding their child's academic achievement levels, and therefore, these interactions facilitated these parents into recognising the school's perspective on the achievement levels of the child. The parents could then use this information to negotiate teaching and learning practices to further enhance student achievement.

The *pressure* strategy was utilised by a quarter of the parents when they interacted with teachers regarding student *cognitive* matters. Parents found they had to use coercive measures with the teachers by persevering with their requests until compliance was achieved. For Alana, she said that she had, "… to kind of move this problem along" and that whilst she felt she was "being a bit pushy", the "teacher needed to do something differently" (Interview 4, 2009 - Alana). Alex would ask the teacher, "Where is she at with her marks? Is she being pushed enough? or Is she able to sit there and not do very much?" (Interview 33, 2009 - Alex). Alex would pursue her lines of questioning to ensure her child was, "… getting enough work to keep her going" (Interview 33, 2009 - Alex). Parents utilised the *pressure* strategy by insisting that teachers address their concerns satisfactorily.

Fourteen percent of parents encountered the *passive resistance* strategy in their interactions with teachers. These parents explained how they made their requests, only to find the teacher was not accommodating. Amy described her attempts to obtain support for her daughter's reading skills, which resulted in, "… they were not forthcoming" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy). She found that teachers deferred their interaction and negated her requests. Other parents also made requests for extra homework and were met with, "She'd [the teacher] go, 'Yes, I will give you extra work' and then we were not getting anything" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). In this study, parents particularly noted teachers employing the *passive resistance* strategy when they made appeals for extra homework.

The *authorities/experts* strategy was identified as being used by a small number of parents during their interactions with teachers regarding student *cognitive* matters. Ariel's daughter was having learning difficulties so she utilised the, "… classroom teacher, learning support teacher, and the school's psychologist" (Interview 26, 2009 - Ariel) in one of her meetings to help everyone understand the issues at hand; persuading people to adopt a perspective. Similarly, Adriana accessed the deputy primary principal to discuss a concern over the teacher's provision of extension activities. Adriana stated, "I was chatting to her after one of these parent education seminars …. I explained the problem ... [and she said] 'I will show her [the teacher]'" (Interview 2, 2009 - Adriana). During these interactions, parents utilised the *authorities/experts* strategy to help persuade the teachers into adopting classroom practices that better supported the student.

Teachers' Perspectives

The *discussion* strategy was utilised by just over a half of the teachers in their dealings with parents concerning student *cognitive* development. Teachers would share their perspectives with parents, obtaining mutual understanding resulting in a desired course of action, which benefitted the student. Tamara explained how she would share information with parents that required some extra work to be followed up on at home. She stated how she would work with her parents by saying, "In language today, I noticed that your child needs practice with ... maths .... Can you work on this at home?" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). Tristan also found that in his parent-teacher interactions, they were usually about, "…maths and language .... I let them take the lead; unless it's a child where I've got lots of things jotted down I need to speak

about" (Interview 42, 2009 - Tristan). In these instances, teachers worked with parents by providing information about the student's academic progress, resulting in extra support at home. The *discussion* strategy facilitated teachers in obtaining parental assistance for the student's *cognitive* needs.

Teachers (42 percent) utilised the *evidence* strategy to influence parents during their interactions regarding student *cognitive* matters. Tamara found that parents, "… want[ed] to know exactly how their kid is going ... number [mathematics] assessments and some reading assessments" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). School reports, test results, and documentation assisted teachers in explaining to the parents the student's *cognitive* development. Tracy also stated that one of her parents would come in with, "… the school report highlighted and underlined, the portfolio will have sticky notes in it" (Interview 37, 2009 - Tracy) ready for their parent-teacher interview. In these examples, the *evidence* strategy was used to provide parents with an explanation of the student's *cognitive* abilities, persuading the parents of a perspective and therefore, a level of student support.

Just under a quarter of teachers utilised the *authorities/experts* strategy during their interactions with parents. Teachers provided stories where outside agencies and their expert knowledge enlightened the parents on their child's *cognitive* abilities. Tahlia had to, "… organise the school's psychologist ... and we had to get a translator" (Interview 45, 2009 - Tahlia) to persuade the parent into understanding the student's *cognitive* development. Tara further added, "If we pick up a child that we think is ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder], we will call in the parents .... We need to look further and we need to see a paediatrician" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). In these instances, the use of the *authorities/experts* strategy was used to inform the parents of their child's *cognitive* skills, and therefore, obtain levels of support at home and at school.

Only a small number of teachers drew on the *passive resistance* strategy with parents regarding student *cognitive* concerns. In the present study, this strategy was used when interacting over homework matters. Tiana stated that at times, she could not support the parent's appeals as their perspectives differed, "She [the parent] thought that her daughter should have reading books and all things like that, when she could hardly write her name!" (Interview 38, 2009 - Tiana). In this example, the teacher did not acquiesce to the parent's request. Tracy, on the other hand, was

overwhelmed with parental demands, resulting in her utilising the *passive resistance* strategy. Parents were constantly criticising and questioning her such as, "My child has nits .... Why haven't all the kids got computers? ... 10 to 15 notes in the diary ... so it was an extreme case .... Both myself and the other teacher had stress leave off at the time" (Interview 37, 2009 - Tracy). The *passive resistance* strategy was identified as the occasions when the teachers would not comply with the parents' requests, and in one case, the continual questioning of parents caused the teachers to absent themselves from further meetings.

The *pressure* strategy was experienced by a small number of teachers when they interacted with some of their parents over student *cognitive* concerns. Teachers explained that when parents applied the *pressure* strategy during their interactions (through their insistence), teachers occasionally sought the assistance from a member of their school's leadership team. For instance a deputy principal or primary principal was asked to exercise their power and authority over the parent. Tracy described her experiences of parents continually questioning her classroom practices. She said, "Reading books, that was a constant issue. Reading books aren't right" (Interview 37, 2009 - Tracy). This resulted in Tracy feeling intimidated; therefore, she invited the school's principal to intervene on the matter; invoking her use of the *pressure* strategy. Tara, also applied the *pressure* strategy in a similar way. She invited the deputy primary principal to be involved in her meetings with particular parents. Tara said that the parent, "… wanted to know everything, everything! When we explained that they couldn't have a copy of the NAPLAN [National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy], they said, 'They were going to the Minister', and we said, 'Go'" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). The demanding nature of these parents resulted in the teacher using the *pressure* strategy through seeking support from a member of the school's leadership team.

Emotional

The findings from this study identified that parents predominantly utilised the *discussion* strategy for the purposes of student *emotional* matters; whilst teachers employed the *discussion, authorities/experts, evidence, pressure,* and *passive resistance* strategies. Parents and teachers were highlighted as interacting to acquire levels of pastoral care (usually at school) to assist with the students' *emotional* well-being.

Parents' Perspectives

The *discussion* strategy was used by just under half of the parents when interacting with teachers regarding student *emotional* well-being. *Emotional* topics included, "… personal matters" (Interview 30, 2009 - Agatha), "… the passing of family members" (Interview 15, 2009 - Aida), "… levels of anxiety over a teacher" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele), "… effects of bullying" (Interview 23, 2009 - Angelina), and/or, "… resilience of the child" (Interview 22, 2009 - Anisha). In most cases, parents, "… made a point of telling the teachers, because ... you don't know how it's going to impact them [the student]" (Interview 15, 2009 - Aida). Through the use of the *discussion* strategy, parents could share their perspectives with the teachers, obtain mutual understanding, and a level of pastoral care suited to manage the *emotional* needs of the student.

Very few parents were identified as using the *pressure* strategy during their interactions with teachers for student *emotional* concerns. However, Alma explained that she repeatedly spoke with the teacher regarding incidents in which her son and another child were involved. She said that she went to the teacher a, "… number of times, as she felt he [the other boy] was the naughty boy of the class" (Interview 35, 2009 - Alma). Her son was, "… shy and if something bothers him, he will hold it in all day, and as soon as I pick him up, he will just burst out crying" (Interview 35, 2009 - Alma). Alma was pleased that her perseverance led to the teacher eventually listening to her concern; resulting in a change of classroom practices. In addition, April kept meeting with the teachers utilising insistence as her influencing method to obtain a change of perspective. April explained that "she [the student] had an issue last year and the year before about bullying ... so I met with the teachers about that" (Interview 24, 2009 - April). The *pressure* strategy enabled these parents to have their concerns addressed by the teachers.

Teachers' Perspectives

The *discussion* strategy was identified as occurring in 61 percent of these parent-teachers interactions regarding student *emotional* issues. Teachers found that they would discuss a range of topics with their parents. Sometimes it was the sharing of information or concerns about the well-being of the student, or parents seeking advice, reassurance, and/or levels of student pastoral care. Tia described these

interactions as being when the, "… child has been involved in a fight ... or the girls have called another girl a name and has gone home and broken down in tears" (Interview 39, 2009 - Tia). Tammy also found that her parents would say, "So and so came home upset, can you tell me anything?" (Interview 41, 2009 - Tammy). On the other hand, Tara found that parents might come in because, "… the cat died on the weekend …. Grandma is not well ... about friendships ... and they are a bit worried that the child might be really upset" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). Tara also shared her experience of her interactions with parents over student *emotional* concerns as, "It just depends on how well they [the parents] know me and if they feel comfortable" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). She also indicated that in some instances parents would discuss, "… all sorts of things like eating disorders" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). In this study, the *discussion* strategy facilitated parents and teachers exchanging knowledge that resulted in the provision of support for the student's *emotional* well-being.

Sixteen percent of teachers, in their meeting with parents regarding student *emotional* concerns, used the *authorities/experts* strategy. Tasha stated that in relation to student *emotional* circumstances, she would invite the deputy primary principal to be part of the meetings. She explained that it was not to pressurise the parents, but to offer support and information. Deputy primary principals can provide, "… continuity of care ... that pastoral care element" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha), as well as being able to explain to parents what resources were available to the family. Similarly, Tara also stated that the *authorities/experts* strategy was used with parents especially when, "… a marriage has split up, [or they are] having problems with the kids, we can recommend a psychologist" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). The offers of support, resources, and professional people were implemented by teachers, as they recognised the short and long term issues surrounding the *emotional* needs of the students.

Very few teachers utilised the *evidence* strategy during their interactions with parents over student *emotional* issues. Tasha explained that in her experience, "The child [is] coming home every night crying because no one would play with them, but of course they are out there every lunch time happy ... to get across to the parent .... I was on duty, they had playmates the whole time, they were fine" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha). Teachers were able to alleviate the fears of the parent because they were able to provide the facts and contexts surrounding the events, persuading the parents to

adopt a different perspective. In another example, Tammy highlighted the frequency of parents interacting with her during pick-up and drop-off times over student *emotional* concerns. She described them as, "… lots of incidental things .... So and so came home upset, can you tell me anything?" (Interview 41, 2009 - Tammy). Tammy explained that it was, "… trickier documenting things because you have five parents at pick-up point" (Interview 41, 2009 - Tammy) all wanting to know why their child was upset at school that day. The inability to document information could explain why there were a low number of teachers who used the *evidence* strategy during these interactions regarding student *emotional* concerns.

The *pressure* strategy was noted by only a small number of teachers during these types of interactions with parents. Teachers described the confrontational behaviour of parents coercing them to act upon their request. One teacher described a parent's concern in relation to their child's *emotional* well-being to include religion. Taj explained, "You could see steam radiating out of her, and she came up and she said, 'My child is not happy', and she's banging on my desk …. 'It's all this God stuff'" (Interview 47, 2009 - Taj). This parent used the *pressure* strategy to force an outcome from the teacher; the teacher, however, responded with facts about the school. As a consequence of the teacher responding with these facts, the family left the school. Similarly, a father returned to the school to seek clarification about a playground incident that his son was involved in, "And, he just started swearing, from outside ... and confronted me going, 'What's going on here?' .... 'I'm sick of this shit, I'm sick of this school" (Interview 42, 2009 - Tristan). In these instances, parents were identified as exerting the *pressure* strategy through their intimidating behaviours over the teachers. In addition to parents engaging the *pressure* strategy, this study highlighted that this impacted on future interactions with these particular parents. Teachers went on to describe using the *pressure* strategy in the form of a member from the school's leadership team being invited to exert their position of power and authority over these particular parents. Tabitha, after her initial meeting with an explosive parent, was quite concerned about future meetings. She explained that she was apprehensive about the, "… nature of the meeting and got the deputy [principal] to sit in on the meeting ... I felt like I was facing the mafia .... I never have been through an interview like this before" (Interview 44, 2009 - Tabitha). This study found that parents used confrontational behaviours towards the teachers, often resulting in

the teachers deploying the *pressure* strategy. This was achieved through a member of the school's leadership team exercising their power and authority.

Teachers rarely applied the *passive resistance* strategy during their interactions with parents over student *emotional* matters. Travis explained how he had to negate the parent's request to move a child into another class for the following year because the parent was concerned about the student's *emotional* well-being. The parent claimed that their child was experiencing stress by not being with her friendship group. The teacher, however, made the comment, "Well I am a bit stuck here because I am not sure that we can actually do what you're asking .... I am sorry you feel that way" (Interview 51, 2009 - Travis). In Travis' view, the student was more suited to the placement class, and therefore, made no accommodation to the parent's request by utilising the *passive resistance* strategy.

Medical

The *discussion* strategy was the only form of social influence used by parents during these interactions. Teachers, on the other hand, were identified as using the *discussion*, *pressure*, and *evidence* strategies for the purposes of student *medical* concerns. Parents and teachers interacted to obtain a level of pastoral care (usually in school) for the student.

Parents' Perspectives

In this study, the *discussion* strategy was used by 11 percent of parents for the purposes of student *medical* matters. Sharing information, in relation to the student, and seeking a level of pastoral care underpinned the use of the *discussion* strategy during these types of interactions. For example, April held a meeting with the teacher to discuss her child's *medical* complaint as, "… that's affecting her schooling and her confidence and that sort of thing" (Interview 24, 2009 - April). Similarly, Ariel had to meet with the teachers to discuss her child's developing condition and how to, "… deal with ... muscle strength ... and [it] was tears because it was just a shock" (Interview 26, 2009 - Ariel). Ashley explained the *medical* issues for her was her son's, "… peanut allergy" (Interview 9, 2009 - Ashley), whilst Ava said, "It was teacher that finally said, 'Have a look at her eyes' .... I said 'I've taken her [the student] to an optometrist' ... and yes ... she couldn't see properly ... it was a stigmatism" (Interview 27, 2009 - Ava). The *discussion* strategy facilitated parents

being able to express their concerns obtaining mutual understanding, which resulted in the school providing a level of pastoral care for the student.

Teachers' Perspectives

Nineteen percent of teachers used the *discussion* strategy when they interacted with parents over student *medical* matters. This strategy facilitated shared perspectives. Tamara explained that, "A couple of my kids go to speech therapy so the mums will just give me a bit of an update on what is happening .... I have a kid with leukaemia and so his mum will say ... he has had chemo[therapy], radiation yesterday or he's had steroids" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). The *discussion* strategy provided opportunities for parents to share *medical* information with the teachers, which resulted in support being provided for the student.

Very few teachers utilised the *pressure* strategy when they interacted with parents over student *medical* issues. However, at times, schools would identify students with various conditions that required *medical* intervention. To assist with the process, teachers would collect anecdotal evidence of student behaviours that underpinned the *medical* concerns, holding several interactions to strongly encourage the parents to see the school's perspective. In this example, Taneesha collected relevant knowledge about the student and she had to have a few, "… parent meetings" (Interview 49, 2009 - Taneesha) insisting that the parents understand the *medical* concern, however, "The parents were not happy with the request and left the school" (Interview 49, 2009 - Taneesha). Taneesha was persistent in her request (employing the *pressure* strategy) for the parents to undertake a course of action to support the proposed student *medical* concern.

Only a small number of teachers used the *evidence* strategy during their interactions with parents over *medical* concerns. Tara made comments that, "If we pick up a child that we think is ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder], we will call the parents in and say this is what we have observed with your child ... we need to see a paediatrician" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). Students who are not performing in class are observed by teachers and in some cases are referred to specialists or professionals that can assist the child. Taneesha described her experience as, "The parents wouldn't get him tested for Aspergers [syndrome], and he was definitely according to everyone ... so I spent the term watching him ... writing things down ... parent meetings .... It

ended up being a pretty negative conversation ... all the evidence was there" (Interview 49, 2009 - Taneesha). The *evidence* strategy was used by teachers to persuade parents into adopting a course of action, and in this example, student *medical* matters.

Social

The majority of the social influence strategies were identified as being utilised during parent-teacher interactions regarding student *social* concerns. Parents and teachers interacted to achieve courses of action, level of pastoral care, and/or support, both at home and at school, for the student. In this study, parents and teachers were found to frequently engage the *discussion* strategy; however, it was revealed that a few parents experienced the *passive resistance* strategy during these types of interactions whereas the teachers did not.

Parents' Perspectives

The *discussion* strategy was used by slightly less than half of the parents in their interactions with teachers. This strategy facilitated parents and teachers to share perspectives, provide advice and/or reassurance, and participate in the decision-making process. In this study, parents predominantly wanted to know if, "… their child fits in with friends" (Interview 36, 2009 - Alkira). Other parents wanted to make sure their child's *social* skills were not impacting on their social standing within the school. Ashley said, "My daughter ... is a bit of a bossy boots ... but I also like to just check that she's not throwing her weight around" (Interview 9, 2009 - Ashley). This knowledge, obtained from the teacher, often persuaded parents on the level of support needed at home to develop their child socially. Similarly, parents also wanted to know how teachers dealt with student *social* concerns. "It's probably a range of things but one of them is how they deal with things that we perceive as issues" (Interview 24, 2009 - April). The provision of advice assisted some parents in supporting the child developing *social* skills whilst at home. The *discussion* strategy enabled mutual understanding about the child's *social* development and afforded a level of student support towards the child both at home and at school.

Eleven percent of parents employed the *pressure* strategy when they met with their teachers regarding student *social* matters. The findings highlighted that the *pressure* strategy was utilised by parents when they wanted the teachers to address specific student bullying concerns. April stated that, "She also had an issue last year,

and the year before about a bullying interaction type issue, so I met the teachers about that" (Interview 24, 2009 - April). She wanted the teachers to undertake a course of action in preventing further bullying of her child. Similarly, Angelina said, "I didn't feel that after three years, the school was addressing the bullying issue directly enough, so that is when I went in" (Interview 23, 2009 - Angelina). In these examples, parents insisted that the teachers activate their request and focus on these student bullying issues. The *pressure* strategy was utilised to obtain a course of action that supported the child's *social* needs.

Only eight percent of parents exercised the *authorities/experts* strategy with teachers when interacting over student *social* matters. Agatha explained that, "It is hard from the parent's point of view, how you can help your child ... that is why they brought the psychologist in" (Interview 30, 2009 - Agatha). The school psychologist informed the teacher on particular classroom practices and procedures that best assisted with the student's *social* development. In addition, Ariel explained that she spoke with the learning support teacher, instead of her class teacher because, "She [the learning support teacher] knew the bullying that was going on ... and said, 'Is there anybody you've got issues with?'" (Interview 26, 2009 - Ariel). The learning support teacher organised for Ariel's daughter to be placed in a class with a preferred group of students to enhance her *social* development. The use of the *authorities/experts* strategy resulted in the teachers changing their classroom practices that provided positive outcomes for the students, thereby enhancing their *social* development.

A small percentage of parents were identified applying the *evidence* strategy during their interactions with the teachers. A parent explained that they had to use documentation and facts to demonstrate to the teacher their child's *social* concern; especially regarding friendship issues. Ava felt that it was necessary for her child to register her version of an event, which was then given to the teacher to deal with accordingly. She then described her interaction with the teacher as, "I believe my daughter wrote you a letter ...What's going to happen? And she [the teacher] said, 'I'll be speaking to the children today'" (Interview 27, 2009 - Ava). This parent utilised the *evidence* strategy to obtain compliance from the teacher over her child's *social* concern.

Rarely did parents experience the *passive resistance* strategy being used by teachers in this study for student *social* concerns. However, one parent did describe

her experience of the *passive resistance* strategy where the school did not act upon her request. Angelina raised a concern regarding a social school event and reported it to the correct personnel, where she then experienced the *passive resistance* strategy. She said, "I was a bit upset because I spoke to the P&F [Parents' and Friends' Association] about what I didn't like ... and it didn't end up sort of happening or changing" (Interview 23, 2009 - Angelina). This parent experienced school personnel ignoring her appeal with no apparent rationale for not undertaking her request. The *passive resistance* strategy was the non-compliance to a request.

Teachers' Perspectives

Nearly all of the teachers (94 percent) utilised the *discussion* strategy for the purposes of student *social* matters. The *discussion* strategy facilitated parents and teachers with the sharing of perspectives, mutual understanding, and participation in the decision-making process. In this study, student *social* concerns were mainly focused on friendship matters. Tamara commented that parents wanted to know if their child was, "… playing nicely with other kids. Do they follow instructions?" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). Tiana also wanted to know, "… if they've got friends and ... what they can do to help at home" (Interview 38, 2009 - Tiana). Taj went further to say, "If it's a bullying thing .... You sort of listen to what they have to say, ask questions, to sort of tease out more information out of them ... as well as find out what they want you to do about it" (Interview 47, 2009 - Taj). Sharing experiences, exchanging knowledge, and listening underpinned the *discussion* strategy, which enabled teachers (and parents) to support each other in the development of the students' *social* skills.

Twenty-three percent of the teachers experienced the *evidence* strategy in their interactions with parents over student *social* concerns. Explanations were used to persuade the other person into adopting a perspective. Taneesha explained that parents were, "… wanting to talk more about *social* issues" (Interview 49, 2009 - Taneesha). She also experienced parents who wanted to explain their child's *social* development over the years in an attempt to change her (predisposed) attitude towards the child. She stated that, "Maybe, they feel that their kid was unfairly treated by another teacher ... parents who come in at the beginning of the year want to get their opinions across first" (Interview 49, 2009 - Taneesha). In this instance, the parents used the *evidence* strategy to persuade the teachers to support their child. On other occasions, parents wanted to obtain a course of action from the teacher, especially in relation to

playground incidents. Tahlia commented that, "Sometimes it is about friendships ... or so and so hurt so and so in the playground and he [the child] is a bit worried" (Interview 45, 2009 - Tahlia). The findings revealed that when teachers were provided with the facts surrounding the raised *social* concern, support could be provided for the child.

Only a few teachers applied the *authorities/experts* strategy during these types of interactions with parents. Tara explained that in her role, she would draw on other people's expertise to assist her with persuading parents over the student's *social* development. She explained, "We think a child is not achieving academically, what is happening in their social/emotional ... concentration is affecting their work ... need to see a paediatrician and look further" (Interview 52, 2009 - Tara). Tabitha also explained that she would recommend parents obtain further support for particular students. "I say, what we can do, and I say, we can actually put you in touch with the school psychologist ... or with someone" (Interview 44, 2009 - Tabitha) who can help the students develop their *social* skills. The *authorities/experts* strategy enabled an informed perspective to be provided to parents on the practices and strategies that would assist with developing the child socially both at home and at school.

Rarely did teachers apply the *pressure* strategy when they interacted with parents over student *social* concerns, however, it was utilised through engaging a member of the school's leadership team to assist with these types of parent-teacher interactions. At times, teachers used deputy principals, or primary principals to persuade parents into adopting a perspective, or their power and authority to coerce parents into considering a viewpoint. Tasha said, "If it is going to be about *social* issues, complaining about other children's parents, then I would have admin[istration] sit in again, as it is broader than the child" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha). Travis, however, after several meetings invited the parent to, "… get in touch with the primary principal" (Interview 51, 2009 - Travis) as the parent was continually contacting him over a student *social* matter that was better dealt with by someone from the school's leadership team. In these examples, the teachers engaged the *pressure* strategy through engaging the support of one of the school's leadership team to assist with these types of interactions.

Student support

Over half of the social influence strategies were found to occur during parent-teacher interactions for the purpose of *student support*. Parents and teachers interacted to obtain a level of support and/or courses of action to assist students with their learning. In this study, *student support* was primarily the want or need for extra school work or homework. The findings revealed that parents predominantly used the *discussion*, *passive resistance* and *pressure* strategies to obtain compliance to their requests, whereas teachers utilised *passive resistance*, *discussion*, *evidence*, *authorities/experts,* and *pressure* strategies. Tommy encapsulated the views' of teachers about homework as, "… one of those contentious issues ... you can't satisfy people because some people always want more" (Interview 40, 2009 - Tommy).

Parents' Perspectives

The *discussion* strategy was utilised by just over a quarter of the parents during their interactions with teachers regarding *student support* matters. Annette agreed that in her interactions with teachers she, "… would normally be asking about their [student's] homework" (Interview 11, 2009 - Annette). The *discussion* strategy included the sharing of information, which usually resulted in a proposed course of action often facilitating further at home support for the student. Alida described her use of the *discussion* strategy for homework as, "My daughter came home crying because she couldn't do a maths take away thing ... So I spoke to the teacher the next morning and she explained it ... I said to the teacher, 'Do you have any worksheets?', so she photocopied a worksheet, we took it home, my daughter did it in two seconds and we haven't had an issue since" (Interview 17, 2009 - Alida). Adriana said, "I go to them if I have a problem with my child, or if there's something I don't understand about the homework" (Interview 2, 2009 - Adriana). The exchange of knowledge assisted the parents' understanding of the homework, thereby alleviating student (and parent) stress levels. Furthermore, the *discussion* strategy resulted in Alma being able to support her son at home. She stated, "… just asking her [the teacher] how I can help him [the student] at home without going overboard. I don't want him smothered with extra homework" (Interview 35, 2009 - Alma). Parents utilised the *discussion* strategy to understand student homework concerns and to persuade the teacher to advise them on how to best support their child at home.

Parents rarely experienced the *passive resistance* strategy being employed in their interactions with teachers regarding *student support*. However, Aileen said that because her child came through the Language Development Centre she, therefore, needed to help her child with extra reading and mathematics activities. When she asked the teacher for homework, she was met with, "He doesn't need it! What does he need it for?" (Interview 31, 2009 - Aileen). The teacher denied the parents' request for extra work. Similarly, Amy's experience of asking the teacher for homework was also negated. She said, "I know they've got homework and stuff, like we've mentioned it with the teachers. They don't seem to really get a lot of language homework; it's always drawing this picture or Google this on the Internet. It's not structured. They have got homework grids, but there's nothing concrete" (Interview 10, 2009 - Amy). The teacher did not offer extra homework. These parents stated that teachers would not accommodate their requests for *student support* and experienced the teachers using the *passive resistance* strategy.

Only a few parents utilised the *pressure* strategy during their interactions with teachers in relation to *student support* matters. The use of insistence and perseverance was used to coerce teachers into undertaking a course of action. This parent presented a case to the teacher for reducing the amount of homework for her child. Addison found that for her son, the homework was overwhelming so she "made a contract with her [the teacher] ... where we were going with the homework, as he [the student] was not coping with the amount he had" (Interview 18, 2009 - Addison). The teacher then reduced the amount of homework for this particular child. Alicia however, wanted more homework and went directly to the teacher requesting him, "… to send home worksheets [as] we can work with her at home" (Interview 14, 2009 - Alicia). The teacher acquiesced to her request. When parents insisted that their child was given extra (or reduced) homework, teachers conceded to the parents' requests.

Teachers' Perspectives

Nearly half of the teachers provided stories of the *passive resistance* strategy being employed with parents during their interactions over *student support*. In this study, teachers generally negated parental requests for extra homework because it added to their teaching workload. Tommy's view on providing extra homework was, "I just say No! …. If you want to buy a book, I'm happy to look at the book for you and tell you if that book's suitable for your child" (Interview 40, 2009 - Tommy).

Tristan confirmed this with, "I learned pretty quickly that it's a massive workload to do that .... I give an open-ended task" (Interview 42, 2009 - Tristan). However, Tanya listened to parents' suggestions for extra homework, but maintained the view of, "… making them optional" (Interview 50, 2009 - Tanya) for the student. Teachers generally avoided parental requests for extra homework and engaged aspects of the *passive resistance* strategy during their interactions.

The *discussion* strategy was used by just over one third of the teachers during their interactions with parents. *Student support* usually included extra work to be completed at home to enhance student learning. The *discussion* strategy facilitated perspectives to be shared, often resulting in a compromise between the parents and the teachers on the amount and type of homework for the student. Tommy explained his position when parents communicated the needs of the students as, "… that he is happy to talk to the parents ... because some children ... we'll just write off that piece of homework" (Interview 40, 2009 - Tommy). Similarly, Taj concurred, "Johnny's not doing his homework ... really struggling in a particular area, then I'll call the parent up" (Interview 47, 2009 - Taj). This enabled Tommy and Taj to modify their homework practices, in conjunction with the parents, resulting in supporting the student's needs. Similarly, Taneesha described a parent's request for extra support as, "He came along and said, 'I would really like extra homework' and his daughter was with me ... and I turned to her straight away, 'Would you like extra homework?' , and she said, 'No' ... I said, 'Well, I don't really think you need to do any!' .... I tried to make it, let's not push for this extra homework, and I really made it a point that she doesn't really need extra work" (Interview 49, 2009 - Taneesha). Tish, on the other hand, found that, "I've had a child's mum come in and speak to me about the spelling words being too easy" (Interview 43, 2009 - Tish). In this case, the parent shared her perspective, thereby persuading the teacher to change the spelling words. Teachers, when interacting with parents about *student support*, used the *discussion* strategy to reach an amicable outcome.

Very few teachers described the *evidence* strategy being utilised during these interactions with parents. In some instances, the teacher had to have verification that the request for extra homework was in the best interest of the student. Teachers stated that they would assist with extra homework if it were, "… specific to a child's learning" (Interview 51, 2009 - Travis). Travis needed confirmation that the child

required extra work before he changed his homework practice. Tanya, however, subscribed to the parent's request for extra work, and on their homework sheet added, "… some challenges and extra work ... then parents felt that there was plenty and the others didn't have to do it. So that's how I dealt with that one" (Interview 50, 2009 - Tanya). The *evidence* strategy facilitated an explanation of the facts often resulting in the supply of extra work for students to assist student performance levels.

Rarely was the *authorities/experts* strategy utilised by teachers during their interactions with parents regarding *student support* matters. In this instance, the *authorities/experts* strategy usually related to external support and resources such as tutoring centres, computer software programs, or at home learning materials. Tommy found that his students, "… do Kumon outside school" (Interview 40, 2009 - Tommy). (Kumon is an after school tutoring service offering numeracy and literacy support for school-aged children). Similarly, teachers referred parents to their, "… Mathletics program" (Interview 54, 2009 - Taylor) to practice specific mathematical problems or, "… Wooldridge's" (Interview 40, 2009 - Tommy) to obtain learning material that can be used at home. (Mathletics is an online maths program that can be completed at home and Wooldridge's was a local retail educational and learning resource centre). These resources were used as forms of assistance to support student learning at home.

The *pressure* strategy was utilised by only a few teachers who used coercive forms of compliance in relation to *student support* matters. Teachers described using the school's homework policy, as a reason for obtaining compliance from the parents. Tommy summed up the use of the *pressure* strategy in relation to homework as, "… some people want more, some people want less ... we're given guidelines of how much homework children should have" (Interview 40, 2009 - Tommy). The guidelines provided parents with the school's perspective on homework. Tasha also found it easy to direct, "… them [the parents] to the office to have a look at the homework policy" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha). The policy explains the school's view on homework and was used by teachers to provide parents with a perspective (the school's) on the supply of extra work. This is how the *pressure* strategy was utilised during parent-teacher interactions in relation to *student support* matters.

In summary, parents and teachers interacted for the purposes of student *behaviour, cognitive* development, *emotional* well-being, *medical* issues, *social* concerns, and/or *student support*. Primarily, five of these social influence strategies

were employed by parents and teachers to adopt, share, obtain, and/or ignore a perspective thus facilitating compliance (or non-compliance) to a request through persuasive or coercive measures. Furthermore, the findings from this research identified that parents and teachers utilised nearly all of the social influence strategies (except the *relational* strategy) to obtain courses of action, levels of pastoral care, and/or support for the students during their interactions.

Non-Student Related Purposes

The data also revealed that parents and teachers interacted for non-student related matters where only the *relational* strategy was utilised. In the next section, non-student related purposes for parent-teacher interactions are explored. Two tables are also presented that outline the percentages of parents and teachers who provided examples of the *relational* social influence strategy being employed during their interactions. Furthermore, details of the findings are presented from the parents' perspectives and then from the teachers' perspectives. Comments made by the parents and teachers are also provided, which support the findings from this research.

The findings from this study also identified that parents and teachers interacted for non-student related purposes. *Courtesies, identity, information*, and *personal* matters were drawn from the data provided by the parents and teachers, as the reasons for these non-student related interactions. *Courtesies* were defined as civility and/or customary greetings between adults; *identity* was described as recognition and having meaningful contact with the other person; *information* was found to be the sharing of knowledge and family backgrounds; and finally, *personal* involved the collection and/or provision of private information. These purposes predominantly afforded parents and teachers with an affiliation to the other person, an insight into their nature, a level of trust, and determined the strength of their partnership.

The *relational* strategy was the only social influence strategy utilised during these parent-teacher interactions for non-student related purposes. The *relational* strategy firstly, enabled parents and teachers to obtain an insight into the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the other person through convivial and/or obsequious behaviours. Secondly, armed with this knowledge, parents and teachers would determine their approach to the other person primarily to manipulate (or appeal to) the nature of the other person, making compliance to requests more successful. The

findings revealed that benefits derived from the use of the *relational* strategy mainly included increased levels of pastoral care and support for the student.

The following tables (Tables 8.3 and 8.4) present data on the percentages of parents and teachers who used the *relational* social influence strategy for non-student related purposes. Firstly, Table 8.3 illustrates that nearly a third of the parents described incidences of the *relational* strategy being used for non-student related matters that were for *personal* purposes. This is followed by nearly one fifth of the parents using the relational strategy for *courtesies* and *information* purposes. However, parents used the *relational* strategy for *identity* less frequently than the other purposes, whilst *personal* purposes were found to be twice as common as *identity*.

Table 8.3   Percentages of Parents who Provided Examples of Social Influence Strategies for each Non-Student Related Purpose

Purpose	Authorities/Experts	Discussion	Evidence	Passive Resistance	Pressure	Relational
Courtesies	0	0	0	0	0	17
Identity	0	0	0	0	0	14
Information	0	0	0	0	0	22
Personal	0	0	0	0	0	29

Table 8.4 illustrates that one third of the teachers utilised the *relational* strategy for *personal* purposes and just over a quarter of teachers used this strategy for *information* purposes. In addition, teachers used the *relational* strategy less frequently for *courtesies* and *identity* purposes. Furthermore, *information* and *personal* concerns were used approximately five times more than *courtesies* and *identity* purposes.

Table 8.4   Percentages of Teachers who Provided Examples of Social Influence Strategies for each Non-Student Related Purpose

Purpose	Authorities/Experts	Discussion	Evidence	Passive Resistance	Pressure	Relational
Courtesies	0	0	0	0	0	6
Identity	0	0	0	0	0	6
Information	0	0	0	0	0	26
Personal	0	0	0	0	0	32

When comparing the two tables, parents interacted with teachers for the non-student related purposes of *personal, information, courtesies,* and *identity* respectively, whereas teachers predominantly interacted with parents for *personal* and *information* purposes. From the data, it can be construed that parents utilised these non-student related purposes to deliberately forge an affiliation and/or partnership with the teachers.

The *relational* strategy was the only form of social influence used during these types of parent-teacher interactions. This strategy utilised obsequious and/or convivial behaviours to obtain an insight into the nature of the other person. Non-student related purposes, however, were an opportunity for parents and teachers to exchange information about one another. The use of the *relational* strategy during parent-teacher interactions for non-student related purposes was summed up by a parent as, "I guess it's just relational, I like to chat with people, to get to know people. I think it's just relationship building" (Interview 28, 2009 - Azaria), whilst for teachers it was, "… from chatting with parents, I know about their families, are they going on holidays? ... it allows me to have a bit more background information" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). The findings from this current research highlighted that these non-student related purposes were mainly the exchange of information, and through the use of the *relational* strategy, they fostered connectivity and offered an insight into the nature of the other person. In the following section, the purposes of these meetings are presented and discussed from the parents' perspectives and the teachers' perspectives with supporting comments from the data.

Courtesies

Courtesies were described as greetings and casual conversations either at the beginning or end of the school day. The *relational* strategy employed convivial activities to foster this connectivity, obtain an insight into the nature of the person, and determine their approach when making requests.

Parents' Perspectives

Seventeen percent of the parents utilised the *relational* strategy for the purpose of *courtesies* in their interactions with teachers for non- student related purposes. Parents described customary daily greetings and cordial behaviours as being typical of these interactions. Adele stated that she would acknowledge the teacher each morning,

"I always go and say hello and see how they are going …. Just ask them how they went on the weekend" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). In addition, Anita also commented how she, "… go[es] in every morning and say[s] hello, if I've got any issues, I'll talk to her [the teacher]" (Interview 8, 2009 - Anita). Daily greetings and cordial behaviours enabled these parents to engage with the teacher, fostering a level of connectivity, and at times, leading to an exchange of knowledge. Furthermore, Alida would ensure that she connected with the teacher, "I will go into class every morning and have a chat to the teachers" (Interview 17, 2009 - Alida). Aida also stated the outcome of her use of *courtesies* and the *relational* strategy resulted in connectivity with the teachers, "… rather than just hello and goodbye, you will have more of a chat, so you will have more of that relationship" (Interview 15, 2009 - Aida). Azaria summed up the importance of her use of the *relational* strategy as, "I value someone who's friendly, someone who feels comfortable just to chat about life" (Interview 28, 2009 - Azaria). The non-student related purpose of *courtesies* facilitated connectivity, and the convivial activities (that underpinned the *relational* strategy) provided an insight into the disposition of the teacher facilitating future interactions.

Teachers' Perspectives

Rarely did teachers share stories on using *courtesies* during their interactions with parents for non-student related purposes. Tammy explained, "The parents that drop-off, it's just literally, a 'Hi', 'Bye', unless they've got something to tell you" (Interview 41, 2009 - Tammy). Terry also stated that in his school, "We don't walk through the school with our eyes shut ... we acknowledge them and say, 'Hello!'" (Interview 64, 2009 - Terry). Tamara found that her use of *courtesies* resulted in an affiliation with some of her parents. She said, "I'm quite close with a few parents from last year, and that's just because, it's just saying, 'Hi! How are you?', sort of thing" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). She also explained that her friendly manner with parents resulted in further exchanges. Tamara said, "Obviously when you pass them ... they ask about your weekend" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). Teachers described *courtesies* as positively impacting on their interactions with parents, and that the *relational* strategy provided an insight into their nature assisting with determining their approach to parents in future interactions.

Identity

In this study, *identity* was described as being the recognition and the meaningful contact between parents and teachers. The rationale from parents for these non-student related purposes included being known in the school as a parent who supported the teacher, the classroom, and/or the school. For teachers however, the rationale for *identity* as a purpose for their interactions was that familiarity assisted with working together and parent-teacher partnerships.

Parents' Perspectives

Fourteen percent of parents used *identity* as a purpose for their interaction with teachers as this was perceived as providing benefits to their child. Amanda summed up the purpose of *identity* as, "I guess ... just being known who I am" (Interview 5, 2009 - Amanda). The frequency of the interactions aided the connectivity according to Aida, "You see someone four times a week compared to once a week ... you will have more of a chat, so you will have more of a relationship" (Interview 15, 2009 - Aida). However, the reason for developing an association with the teacher was described by Azaria. She said, "I tend to think if they know who you are, that helps with their relationship with my child" (Interview 28, 2009 - Azaria). Azaria found that her involvement in the school had benefits for her daughter because, "I started liaising a lot more with the teacher and our relationship grew... and from that point ... my child was chosen to be part of the choir" (Interview 28, 2009 - Azaria). *Identity* was a purpose for these parent-teacher interactions where parents wanted to be recognised in the school; fostering an affiliation with the teachers; and in the parents' view, affording benefits to their children. The *relational* strategy however, was utilised by the parents to facilitate their recognition (through their obsequious activities), offer an insight into their nature, thereby informing the teachers of their disposition, and, therefore, how to approach (manipulate) them when making requests.

Teachers' Perspectives

Only a few teachers used *identity* during their interactions with parents that were for non-student related purposes. Teachers found that they recognised parents with whom they had daily contact, which resulted in more information being shared about that particular student enhancing their partnership with parents. For Tammy it was, "The parents that do walk their children to the classroom, I do know better

because I see them every day" (Interview 41, 2009 - Tammy). Travis stated that in his new school, he needed to work together with the parents and that by making contact with the parents enabled, "… you could get to know them from scratch" (Interview 51, 2009 - Travis). Recognising and having on-going contact with parents assisted with teachers developing an association with their parents. The *relational* strategy utilised convivial activities that provided an insight into the nature of the parents, and thereby how they worked together.

Information

The non-student related purpose of *information* was identified by parents and teachers as being the second most frequently used reason for these types of parent-teacher interactions. The *information* purpose was defined as the sharing of knowledge, exchange of facts, or the acquisition of details about the parent, teacher, family, and/or school.

Parents' Perspectives

Twenty-two percent of parents interacted with teachers for *information* purposes using the *relational* strategy. The *information* purpose was defined as the sharing of general facts and knowledge in relation to the parent, teacher, family, or school. Alison stated that she liked to, "… chat to her, if you need to let her know something ... it's just a bit more background … , just that general chit chat" (Interview 6, 2009 - Alison). Other parents wanted to be kept informed and made themselves available to the school so they could receive specifics. Alida said, "I will go in the class every morning ... always engage in a conversation because I want to know what's happening all the time" (Interview 17, 2009 - Alida). Amber described the purpose of *information* as, "… being able to chat professionally … and also to chat in a family way about things that aren't related to school" (Interview 21, 2009 - Amber). *Information* purposes provided parents with an opportunity to share/obtain specifics and general knowledge, and therefore, foster connectivity. The *relational* strategy, through the use of obsequious activities, facilitated the provision of this background information and resulted in a level of pastoral care and/or support for the student.

Teachers' Perspectives

Just over a quarter of the teachers interacted with parents using the *relational* strategy for *information* purposes. In this study, the *information* purpose was the exchange of knowledge, as well as family specifics. Tamara found that she liked to receive family background facts especially, "… about their family, are they going on holidays, …. I find it's very important" (Interview 48, 2009 - Tamara). Tammy also found that as a result of her developing an affiliation with her parents, they were happier to share, "… incidental things" (Interview 41, 2009 - Tammy) about the student which impacted on their learning. Tamsin valued the regular opportunities to exchange knowledge with parents as she, "… has six or seven little chats every morning ... so by the time it comes to conferences, they know you so well ... they know all the information anyway" (Interview 58, 2009 - Tamsin) about their child, which makes a more relaxed type of interaction. The non-student related purpose of *information* was the provision of external or background knowledge of the student or family, which fostered an affiliation between parent and teacher. The *relational* strategy, through convivial activities assisted with obtaining an insight into the background of the family, thereby informing teachers on their approach to their parent interactions.

Personal

The present research identified the non-student related purpose of *personal* as the most significant reason for parent-teacher interactions. The *personal* purpose was highlighted as the revelation of information about the other person, and/or events that usually occurred outside of the school. The rationale for parents and teachers interacting for the non-student related purpose of *personal* was to obtain an insight into the other person's nature.

Parents' Perspectives

Just over a quarter of the parents employed the *relational* strategy during their interactions with teachers during non-student related purposes of *personal*. Obtaining an insight into the nature of the teacher and acquiring privileged knowledge was described by parents as being important. Adele liked talking with the teacher as, "… just a bit of a chat ... about his family, he's got two kids" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). Anita explained how she had an insight into her child's teacher too, "You get to know

them ... she got married ... so we took the kids down to the church" (Interview 8, 2009 - Anita). In addition, Anna described her interactions as, "It's just that general conversation, getting to know you, incidental stuff" (Interview 7, 2009 - Anna). Furthermore, other parents described incidences where they conversed with teachers about being parents. Angelina shared her experience as, "We just end up talking about children, being parents and things like that" (Interview 23, 2009 - Angelina). However, Amber summed up the use of the *relational* strategy for the *personal* purpose facilitated connectivity. She said that you get, "… a good balance of being able to chat professionally about my child and also to chat in a family way about things that aren't school ... you can see that they're human and friendly" (Interview 21, 2009 - Amber). Furthermore, Adele described that the *relational* strategy manoeuvred the teachers into providing information, "… if there's any areas that they need to work on, if they need any extra help, that sort of feedback really" (Interview 3, 2009 - Adele). The benefits associated with *personal* purposes and the *relational* strategy were summed up by Azaria, "… teachers will approach the parents that they know" (Interview 28, 2009 - Azaria).

Teachers' Perspectives

Nearly a third of the teachers described how the *relational* strategy was used during parent-teacher interactions for *personal* purposes. Connectivity and shared understanding resulted from the use of this strategy during these parent-teacher interactions. Tasha explained the trust that was developed between her, and the parents, when she shared incidents about herself. She made the comment that parents wanted to know, "… what my life is about, and what I am like, [and] by talking about myself and my life, gives them a stronger feeling for who I am" (Interview 53, 2009 - Tasha). In addition, Tanya explained that having an insight into the nature of the parents facilitated shared understandings, "I think that's why you have to get to know them, just as individuals and just as people" (Interview 50, 2009 - Tanya). One teacher described how his association with parents resulted in external friendships. Taj stated that, "I've got a couple of really good friends now" (Interview 47, 2009 - Taj). These findings highlighted that when parents and teachers interacted for the non-student related purpose of *personal*, privileged information was shared, trust was developed, and connectivity ensued. In addition, the *relational* strategy utilised convivial activities to obtain this insight into the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the other

person, therefore, informing teachers on their methods of approach to parents during future interactions.

The findings from this study revealed that parents and teachers interacted for the non-student related purposes of *courtesies, identity, information*, and *personal* matters primarily to develop an affiliation with the other person. For each of these purposes, parents and teachers utilised convivial and obsequious activities (the *relational* strategy) to obtain an insight into the nature of the other person, which was used to inform their approach when making requests. Compliance was, therefore, achieved through manipulating or appealing to the nature of the other person. The *relational* strategy thereby, facilitated connectivity between parents and teachers, resulting in partnerships and benefits being afforded to the students.

Summary

The present investigation identified that parents and teachers interacted for student related and non-student related purposes. Student related purposes were *behaviour, cognitive, emotional, medical, social*, and/or *student support* matters. The findings from this study highlighted that the *discussion* strategy was utilised during all parent-teacher interactions for student related purposes, whilst the *pressure* and *evidence* strategies were used during some of the parent-teacher interactions for student related purposes. These social influence strategies used persuasive and coercive methods in order to obtain compliance to requests that resulted in courses of action, levels of pastoral care and/or support for the student.

Non-student related purposes were *courtesies, identity, information*, and *personal*. The findings identified that during parent-teacher interactions for non-student related purposes only the *relational* strategy was evident. The convivial and obsequious activities of parents and teachers resulted in obtaining an insight into the nature of the other person thus making appeals for requests more successful. This social influence strategy used manipulative (by appealing to) methods in order to obtain a resolution that resulted in increased levels of pastoral care and/or support for the student. This is how parents and teachers utilised the social influence strategies that were associated with these particular purposes.

The next chapter discusses the findings, revealed from this study, in relation to the nature of parent-teacher interactions, and the use of social influence strategies associated with these particular contexts and purposes for their interactions.

CHAPTER NINE
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present research investigated parent-teacher interactions and evidence of social influence strategies employed during these interactions. Utilising qualitative methodologies, data were collected from focus groups and interview sessions with parents and teachers from four low fee, independent, Protestant, metropolitan Perth primary schools. In this chapter, the key findings are discussed with reference to previous research, as well as revealing this study's contribution to the body of knowledge about parent-teacher interactions and social influence.

The first research question, which required an investigation into the nature of parent-teacher interactions, identified these interactions as being either collaborative or non-collaborative. The second research question was aimed at determining whether social influence strategies were evident within these parent-teacher interactions and revealed six social influence strategies. The second research question however, was divided into two sub-questions: firstly, were social influence strategies associated with particular contexts; and secondly, were social influence strategies associated with particular purposes for the parent-teacher interaction. Finally, a summary of the main findings that emerged from this investigation are reviewed, highlighting the contribution that this study brings to knowledge concerning parent-teacher interactions including parent-teacher communication, parent-teacher relationships, and parental involvement in schools. The summary also addresses the use of social influence strategies by both parents and teachers during their interactions within a school setting.

Key Finding 1: The Nature of Parent-Teacher Interactions

This key finding provides an insight into the nature of parent-teacher interactions, highlighting four key factors that impacted on these interactions. Firstly, parent-teacher interactions were classified as either collaborative (positive) or non-collaborative (less than satisfactory). Secondly, there were specific activities that underpinned these collaborative and non-collaborative practices; and thirdly, parents and teachers held different views about these activities that shaped their positive or less than satisfactory interactions. Finally, these collaborative and non-collaborative practices resulted in outcomes that mainly impacted on the student. It is these practices, activities, views, and outcomes that inform the current body of knowledge

on the key factors, which provided positive and/or less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions.

Previous research (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Crozier, 1999; Epstein, et al., 1997; Lasky, 2000; Miretzky, 2004; Porter, 2008; Thompson, 2008; Vickers & Minke, 1995; Vincent, 1996) on parent-teacher interactions and parental involvement highlighted firstly, the various directions that teachers/schools could adopt to engage parents with the school; secondly, teachers' perspectives of parent involvement activities; and thirdly, the differing types of communication processes between parents and teachers that assisted with forming parent-teacher partnerships. However, this study not only focused on parental involvement and parent help activities, noting the similarities to previous research, but also obtained the parents' and the teachers' perspectives on what activities impacted on their interactions. This study also addressed the important factors that influenced the communication process between parents and teachers, and the formation of parent-teacher partnerships. Such information contributes to the body of knowledge on parent-teacher interactions and parental involvement in schools.

The following sections explore key factors that were associated with the collaborative and non-collaborative practices of parents and teachers, from the perspectives of the parents and the teachers, as well as the activities that underpinned these practices and the impact on students. These findings are also discussed with reference to previous research and highlight new knowledge identified by this study.

Collaborative practices

The positive practices of parents and teachers that were defined as being collaborative included: *approachability*, *honesty*, *listening*, *relationships*, *sharing information*, *support and resources*, and/or *working together*. The findings, however, identified that parents, particularly, viewed *relationships*, followed by *working together*, as being central to developing collaboration with teachers. In contrast, teachers described *working together* then *relationships* followed by *sharing information* as practices that facilitated their collaboration with parents. These key practices exemplify the parents' and teachers' perspectives on which collaborative practices provided positive interactions and assisted with the communication process, fostering parent-teacher partnerships in order to provide outcomes that benefitted the student (see Table 9.1).

Table 9.1   **Collaborative Practices of Parents and Teachers with Key Activities and Noted Outcomes**

Practices	Activities	Outcomes
Relationships Practice	Rapport Insight into their nature Connectivity Levels of trust	Student support Pastoral care
Working Together Practice	Partnership Consultation Sharing ideas	Student support Pastoral care
Sharing Information Practice	Exchange of student related facts Communication (two-way and one-way)	Student support Pastoral care
Approachability Practice	Accessibility Embracing nature of the other person Comfortability	Student support

This study revealed that the *relationships* practice facilitated rapport between parents and teachers by presenting them with an empathetic insight into the other person's world. These understandings enhanced levels of trust within their affiliation, promoting benefits to the student in the form of care and support. These findings support those of Vickers and Minke (1995) who found that trust was a "Joining" (p. 144) factor in fostering parent-teacher relationships; and Lasky (2000) who explained that parents wanted to find out more about the teacher and his/her worldviews.

Teachers from this current study also stated that their association with the parents provided opportunities for information to be exchanged, assisted with their teaching practices, as well as affording levels of pastoral care to the student; findings that are consistent with those of Comer and Haynes (1991). Furthermore, parents and teachers exchanged varying degrees of personal information which was interpreted as assisting with the engagement of a relationship with the other person. Some teachers, however, found that some parents wanted to know too many personal details and so 'drew a line' in order to maintain a professional boundary. This need by parents was also reported by Crozier (1999). Therefore, this finding concurs with previous research and reinforces the importance of the *relationships* practice being associated with positive experiences of parent-teacher interactions.

One of the most significant outcomes from the *working together* collaborative practice was the formation of partnerships between parents and teachers. Consultation and the sharing of ideas underpinned the *working together* practice, resulting in support being provided to the students. Comer and Haynes (1991) and Epstein et al. (1997) found that parents were sources of information that could be used by teachers to strengthen the academic program. Teachers and parents conferring with each other, exchanging knowledge, as well as sharing in the provision of support for the student achieved this *working together* notion. This study's finding is also consistent with previous research; in addition, the *working together* practice facilitated the formation of parent-teacher partnerships and provided positive experiences for parents and teachers.

A further activity that defined collaborative parent-teacher interactions was the *sharing information* practice. Previous research (Lasky, 2000; Porter, 2008; Thompson, 2008; Vickers & Minke, 1995; Vincent, 1996; Walker, 1998) on parent-teacher interactions described positive parent-teacher communication as being regular, open, and either one-way or two-way; a finding similar to this study. However, this study also revealed that the *sharing information* practice was not just the communication process itself, but also an opportunity for all types of information to be exchanged, therefore, assisting the parents' and teachers' understanding of the other persons' needs and that of the student. This new understanding highlights the positive impact that the *sharing information* practice has on parent-teacher interactions and students. In addition, the literature emphasised that parents and teachers primarily discussed student progress and/or behaviour issues (Lasky, 2000); however, the findings from this research identified that the *sharing information* practice assisted with facilitating a range of subjects, including student progress and behaviour, being discussed. For example, the *sharing information* practice meant that reassurance was given to the parents (or the teachers) about their parenting styles (or teaching practices) and, therefore, parents (and teachers) continued with their supportive measures. This extends the current understanding of parent-teacher communication and the types of information being exchanged between parents and teachers.

Finally, the *approachability* practice was found to have encouraged a level of comfort between parents and teachers, which was achieved through the other person's accessibility and welcoming nature. The current research revealed that the

approachability practice facilitated more information being shared between parents and teachers, thus resulting in higher levels of support for the parents, teachers, and the student. Miretzky's (2004) research described parents' and teachers' "comfort levels" (p. 827) as positively impacting on their interactions. She stated that opportunities for parents and teachers to "talk to each other" (p. 842) assisted with their comfort levels and "enhanced [an] understanding of 'the other's point of view'" (p. 840). Furthermore, Miretzky concluded: "parents who feel comfortable and valued contribute willingly to a school's success" (p. 817). The findings from this study concur with Miretzky's finding that accessibility and embracing the nature of the other person encouraged parents and teachers to interact more, thereby exchanging more information, which in turn enhanced the development of the student.

In summary, four key collaborative practices (see Table 9.1) were described as providing positive parent-teacher interactions and supportive interactions: *relationships*, *working together*, *sharing information*, and *approachability.* The *relationships* practice developed connectivity and parent-teacher rapport; the *working together* practice encouraged consultation and parent-teacher partnerships; the *sharing information* practice provided the exchange of facts enhancing parent-teacher communication; whilst the *approachability* practice fostered levels of comfort through parents and teachers being more accessible which in turn improved parent-teacher relationships. However, this study noted that parents and teachers had slightly different preferences for these collaborative practices.

Overall, these four particular collaborative practices resulted in positive experiences for parents and teachers that were found to afford benefits to the student. The following section presents a discussion on the findings of the non-collaborative practices experienced during parent-teacher interactions. These were identified as providing less than satisfactory experiences for parents and teachers during their interactions. These are discussed with reference to previous research highlighting gaps in existing knowledge.

Non-collaborative practices

Non-collaborative practices were revealed as *emotive behaviour*, *lack of confidence*, *lack of information*, *lack of support*, *not listening*, *not working together*, and/or *unapproachability* (see Table 9.2). The findings, firstly, indicated that parents predominantly described *unapproachability* and *lack of information* as key non-

collaborative practices experienced with teachers, whilst teachers held a different perspective and identified *lack of support* and *emotive behaviour* as the main non-collaborative practices with parents. Secondly, the study highlighted the activities, as described by both the parents and the teachers, which underpinned these practices which led to their interactions being non-collaborative. Finally, the resulting outcomes derived from these non-collaborative parent-teacher interactions are identified in terms of the impact on the students. These findings contribute to an understanding of the key factors that provided less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions which were described as impeding parent-teacher communication and parent-teacher relationships.

Table 9.2   **Non-Collaborative Practices of Parents and Teachers with Key Activities and Noted Outcomes**

Practices	Activities	Outcomes
Unapproachability Practice used by teachers	Inaccessible Lacking in warmth Intimidation Brusque professional attitudes	Limited exchange of student information Low levels of student support
Lack of Information Practice used by teachers	Not enough information Does not recognise requests Poor communication	Limited exchange of student information Parents cannot support child at home
Lack of Support Practice used by parents	Provides no assistance to child Fails to carry out educational program at home	Reduced assistance to parent and decreased support for the student
Emotive Behaviour Practice used by parents	Aggression Shouting overtones Verbal abuse Intimidation	Limited exchange of student information

From the parents' perspectives, one primary non-collaborative practice used by the teachers was the *unapproachability* practice. In this study, parents described some teachers as not being accessible, or personable, and lacking in warmth during their interactions. This resulted in some of the parents withdrawing from the teacher, thereby withholding student information. Furthermore, the *unapproachability* practice resulted in barriers developing between parents and teachers, as parents described feeling intimidated and uncomfortable and, therefore, distanced themselves from the

teacher. Epstein and Becker (1982), Crozier (1999), Hoover-Dempsey (1987), Lasky (2000), and Miretzky (2004) researched barriers to parent-teacher interactions, as well as teacher attitudes that impacted on parents. They identified factors underpinning teacher attitudes such as the teacher's view of what role parents played in the learning process, power struggles between parents and teachers, levels of self-efficacy, and time available for such interactions. The present study concurs with their findings in that teacher attitude, a teacher's sense of power, and their level of self-efficacy impacted on parent-teacher interactions. However, this study did not reveal the teacher's view on the role of parents during the learning process, or 'time' as a factor of the *unapproachability* practice. The findings did, however, identify teachers' inaccessibility and their lack of warmth as underpinning less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions. Therefore, the *unapproachability* practice resulted in inhibiting parent-teacher communications and parent-teacher relationships, and limited student support, and/or levels of student pastoral care. This extends the current understanding on additional factors that created barriers for parents and teachers, thereby reducing the frequency of their interactions resulting in less than satisfactory outcomes for students.

Further activities that underpinned the *unapproachability* practice were power struggles and teacher self-efficacy. In this study, parents described how early career teachers utilised the *unapproachability* practice during their interactions. Parents described early career teachers as being less confident with brusque professional attitudes. Consequently, parents stated that during their interactions with these teachers they often felt powerless and, therefore, did not pursue minor concerns with them, thereby forming a barrier. Subsequently, these parents would address their more serious concerns with the school's deputy primary principal or primary principal instead of these early career classroom teachers. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1987) described barriers as being related to teacher self-efficacy, whilst Crozier (1999) indicated that from the parents' perspectives it was teachers who positioned themselves as "powerful professionals" (p. 323). The findings from the present study concur with these two studies in that both teacher self-efficacy and power struggles impacted negatively on parent-teacher interactions. However, in Hoover-Dempsey et al.'s (1987) and Crozier's (1999) studies, no reference was made to the teachers' years of experience in the classroom, or the parents' use of other school personnel to address

their concerns. This contributes a new understanding of the impact that early career teachers might have on parent-teacher communication and the parents' feelings of powerlessness during these types of interactions.

A second non-collaborative teacher practice was *lack of information*. Parents described this as teachers deliberately not communicating facts or knowledge, not contributing extra information that was later deemed necessary, and/or not recognising a parent's request. A consequence of the *lack of information* practice was that these parents were unable to provide the necessary support at home for their child. Katz (1996) suggested that communication should be frequent and open, whilst Lasky (2000), Thompson (2008), and Walker (1998) noted that communication should be regular and two-way. In this study, however, parents stated they experienced selective and/or non-existent communication with some teachers and this impeded their communication. Previous research (Lasky, 2000; Thompson, 2008; Walker, 1998) focused on communication processes being one-way or two-way, the present research however, has identified that, at times, it was non-existent; a finding that extends the knowledge about communication processes between parents and teachers.

As discussed above, this study has supported the findings examined in previous literature relating to the particular activities of teachers, which proved to be barriers to parent-teacher interactions. In addition, the research identified that these activities led to less than satisfactory experiences for parents interacting with the teachers, and that these types of interactions had a negative impact on the provision of support for the students. However, the study also revealed that teachers endured non-collaboration from parents, primarily in the form of *lack of support* and *emotive behaviour*.

In this study, teachers described the parents' use of the *lack of support* practice, as when teachers would organise extra help for a student (sometimes at the parents' request) only to realise that the parents did not follow through with the recommendations. Thus *lack of support* was characterised by the inactive nature of parents. The teachers also revealed that, at times, a consequence of the inactive nature of parents was limited future interactions with these parents and, therefore, limited assistance being provided for the student. Consequently, the *lack of support* practice was a barrier to some parent-teacher interactions. Previous research on parental involvement, however, focused on the benefits that were afforded to students when parents did participate in the learning program. Hughes and Kwok's (2007), Lareau's

(1987), and McWayne et al.'s (2004) research on student achievement found that when parents sought and provided educational assistance for their child this resulted in improved student performance levels. In contrast, this study revealed the occasions when parents were not involved in the educational process, which therefore, resulted in reduced parent-teacher communication, and limited assistance being provided to the student. *Lack of support* acted as a barrier and provided less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions. Furthermore, the literature noted family barriers to parent-teacher interactions included social, (Lareau, 1987), cultural (Crozier & Davies, 2007), and/or economic (Hughes & Kwok, 2007) factors; subsequently, these factors were not revealed as barriers during this study. Thus, the *lack of support* practice was defined as the inactive nature of parents, which inhibited future parent-teacher interactions, thereby limiting student achievement. This new knowledge reveals an additional factor that had a negative impact on parent-teacher interactions.

A final, but previously not identified non-collaborative practice was the *emotive behaviour* of parents towards teachers. Teachers described particular incidences of parents being aggressive towards them, threatening them with assault, and using verbal abuse, leaving the teachers feeling intimidated and in danger. Consequences of this *emotive behaviour* included less frequent parent-teacher interactions and the emergence of barriers to future interactions, thereby reducing support or assistance to the student.

The literature on work-related violence in schools and parents' assaults on teachers was relatively limited, and was noted as being a neglected area of research (Dickinson, 2007). Phillips (2011) stated that the threatening behaviours of parents and/or assaults on teachers usually resulted in the parents being banned from the school. No parents in this study were identified as having been banned from the school. The findings, however, revealed that when teachers experienced the *emotive behaviour* practice, consequences included limited future parent-teacher interactions and communication, impaired parent-teacher relationships, and the use of a third person to help with impending interactions. It was found that on most occasions, teachers engaged a member from the school's leadership team to intervene or arbitrate their interactions with these particular parents. Threatening language and physical assault towards a teacher is not new information; however, the use of the *emotive behaviour* practice and subsequent activities to impede an interaction with a parent

extends the current knowledge surrounding work-related violence in schools. In addition, it has been revealed that the role of a third person was to mediate and intercede during these parent-teacher interactions as teachers constructed barriers hindering future parent-teacher relationships.

Overall, both parents and teachers described non-collaborative practices as those activities that led to less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions (see Table 9.2). Furthermore, these practices provided less than satisfactory outcomes for students. The *unapproachability* and *lack of information* practices by the teacher were barriers for the parents; whilst the *lack of support* and *emotive behaviour* practices used by the parents produced barriers for the teachers. Parents described the activities that underpinned these non-collaborative practices as: inaccessible teachers, teachers who lacked warmth, and/or teachers who failed to provide them with relevant information. Subsequently, teachers described parents who neglected to assist them with the educational program for the student, and/or parents who demonstrated hostility towards them as examples of non-collaborative practices. These factors were described as restricting future parent-teacher interactions and consequently, levels of support afforded to the student. This aspect of the research has highlighted parent and teacher behaviours that negatively impacted on parent-teacher communication and parent-teacher relationships, which resulted in impeding student achievement levels and parent-teacher partnerships. These findings contribute new knowledge on the activities of parents and teachers that led to less than satisfactory experiences for both parties.

Summary

The stories collected from the parents and teachers highlight that they both described the nature of their interactions as being either collaborative or non-collaborative. Each discussed the activities that underpinned these practices from their own perspectives, which contributed to fostering positive and/or providing less than satisfactory experiences of their interactions. The findings from this study have similarities to previous research however; additional factors were identified as impacting on parent-teacher interactions, thereby expanding the body of knowledge on parent-teacher communication, parent-teacher relationships, as well as positive and negative influences on student achievement levels.

Key Finding 2: Evidence of Social Influence Strategies Employed during Parent-Teacher Interactions

The second research question was designed to determine if parents and teachers employed social influence strategies during their interactions. The findings from this study firstly, identified six social influence strategies being used during their interactions; secondly, the aim of the social influence strategy used by parents and teachers during their interactions; thirdly, the function of the various activities that underpinned these social influences strategies; fourthly, the techniques used to obtain (or negate) compliance to a request by both parents and teachers; and finally, the resulting outcomes when parents and teachers used any of these six social influence strategies.

Social influence was defined as "a change in beliefs, attitudes and/or behaviour of one person (the target of social influence) that can be attributed to another person (the influencing agent)" (French & Raven, 1959, p. 118). The literature claimed that this change in belief, attitude, or behaviour was attributed to various forms of pressure as a compliance strategy, which included persuasion, manipulation and/or coercion (Cialdini, 1984; Hewstone & Martin, 2008). The findings from this present research concur with these definitions however; this can be extended to include three new understandings. Firstly, compliance strategies were employed by both parents and teachers (as targets and agents); secondly, these social influence strategies had an impact on a third person (the student); and thirdly, a non-compliance strategy featured during these parent-teacher interactions.

In this study, six social influence strategies were identified as being used by parents and teachers. These were designed to persuade, manipulate, coerce, and/or negate the other person into sharing, adopting, obtaining, or ignoring a perspective in order to acquire (or negate) a course of action, level of pastoral care, and/or support for the student. The key findings revealed that these six strategies were used by both parents and teachers to change the belief, attitude, or behaviour of the other person in order to obtain benefits for a student. This knowledge makes a significant contribution to understanding the dynamics of social influence as used by parents and teachers in co-status dyadic relationships.

Previous research into social influence (Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Kipnis, et al., 1980; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl, et al., 1995; Yukl &

Tracey, 1992) focused on hierarchical environments, investigating the use of social influence strategies by managers in an upward, downward, and/or lateral direction. The current investigation, however, only examined the use of social influence strategies within a school system between parents and teachers who were viewed as being co-equals in a lateral direction. Previous research (Erchul & Raven, 1997; Kipnis, et al., 1980; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Yukl & Falbe, 1990) on social influence concluded that social influence strategies were utilised by the managers, bosses, co-workers, and subordinates in different ways, which were dependent on their position within the organisation, and the objective for their request. This study has, however, identified how persuasion, manipulation, coercion, and/or negation were used by both parents and teachers in the particular schools. The conclusion from this study makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on social influence, by highlighting new information on the aims, functions, and techniques underpinning social influence strategies used by parents and teachers, and the outcomes afforded to the students through their implementation (see Table 9.3).

Table 9.3   Summary of How Social Influence Strategies were used to Obtain an Outcome during Parent-Teacher Interactions

Social Influence Strategy	With the aim to	With the function to	Using the technique of	Resulting in
Discussion	Share a perspective	Advise Obtain mutual understanding Participate in the decision-making process	Persuasion	A course of action Pastoral care Support for the student
Evidence	Adopt a perspective	Present a reality Explain the facts Provide reasons	Persuasion	A course of action
Relational	Obtain a perspective	Connect Obtain an insight into their nature and their worldviews	Manipulation	Pastoral care Support for the student
Pressure	Adopt a perspective	Persevere Insist Use power and authority	Coercion	A course of action
Authorities/ Experts	Share/ Adopt a perspective	Inform Advise	Persuasion Coercion	A course of action Support for the student
Passive Resistance	Ignore a perspective	Avoid Negate Absent themself	Negation	Limited or no action Limited or no support for the student

Social influence strategies

This section highlights the six social influence strategies employed by parents and teachers during their interactions, the preferred social influence strategies used by parents and teachers, as well as the activities that underpinned these strategies, and the outcomes afforded to the students. Reference to previous literature is provided, highlighting gaps in the current understanding on the use of social influence strategies in lateral directions between parents and teachers in a co-status dyadic relationship.

The findings firstly revealed that parents and teachers predominantly utilised the *discussion* strategy as a form of social influence during their interactions. The *discussion* strategy used persuasion as a form of pressure to gain compliance to a

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request by sharing a perspective. Obtaining mutual understanding, and/or participating in the decision-making process were the activities carried out by parents and teachers that served as functions of the *discussion* strategy. The use of persuasion was similar to Kipnis et al.'s (1980) "rationality" (p. 445), and both Yukl and Falbe's (1990) "rational persuasion tactics" and "consultation tactics" (p. 133). These three social influence strategies were predominantly used by managers in order to persuade the boss, co-worker, or subordinate through the use of logical arguments. The findings of this investigation concur with the existing literature however, differences were noted where parents and teachers had a strong preference for the use of the *discussion* strategy during all types of interactions. Parents and teachers would advise each other of their points of view and come to a consensual understanding. Furthermore, the outcome of parents and teachers using this strategy was to obtain courses of action, levels of pastoral care, and/or support for the student; a finding not made evident in previous research. This study has, therefore, identified the different ways in which parents and teachers utilised the *discussion* strategy, as well as the main objectives for the implementation of this strategy. Overall, the *discussion* strategy facilitated parents and teachers to share perspectives that resulted in positive outcomes for the students.

The *evidence* strategy was found to be the second most frequently used social influence strategy by parents and teachers. Providing facts and/or reasons were the activities that functioned to persuade the other person into adopting a perspective. This finding also has similarities to Kipnis et al.'s (1980) "rationality" (p. 445), and Yukl and Falbe's (1990) "rational persuasion tactics" (p. 133). They described managers presenting facts and logical reasons in order to persuade their bosses, co-workers, and/or subordinates into complying with their requests. This current study has similar findings to Kipnis et al. (1980), and Yukl and Falbe (1990) however, differences were also observed. Firstly, parents and teachers utilised the *evidence* strategy irrespective of their position, and secondly, parents and teachers had similar objectives to each other during these types of interactions. This study revealed new ways in which parents and teachers used this *evidence* strategy (persuasion through facts and/or reasons) to obtain a course of action that favoured the student. The findings identified that the *evidence* strategy assisted parents and teachers to adopt a perspective that resulted in a positive outcome for the student.

A further revelation was the use of the *relational* strategy by parents and teachers during their interactions. The *relational* strategy was employed to manipulate the nature of a person in order to gain compliance to a request. Parents and teachers explained that obtaining a person's perspective was achieved by employing convivial or obsequious activities that afforded them an insight into the attitudes, beliefs, and/or values of the other person. This personal information was then used to assist their knowledge on how to approach the other person when making their appeals. Kipnis et al. (1980) described "ingratiation" and "exchange of benefits" (p. 445), whilst Yukl and Falbe (1990) found "ingratiating tactics" and "inspirational tactics" (p. 133) assisted these managers to obtain compliance by making a personal connection with their bosses, co-workers, or subordinates, followed by appealing to and/or manipulating their values. This study concurs with the existing literature where parents and teachers would make a personal connection with each other in order to manipulate their values when making requests. However, the findings have also found that by using the *relational* strategy benefits were afforded to the student. Previous research explained that the objectives of influence were predominantly to receive assistance with a task (Kipnis, et al., 1980; Yukl & Falbe, 1990); the current study, however, has identified parents and teachers as using the *relational* strategy to obtain levels of pastoral care and/or support for the student. In addition, the *relational* strategy facilitated connectivity and working together between the parents and teachers, which resulted in positive benefits for the students. Overall, the *relational* strategy assisted parents and teachers in gaining knowledge of the other person, and therefore, the approach to use to obtain compliance to a request.

Moving from the more frequent forms of social influence, *discussion*, *evidence,* and the *relational* strategies to the *pressure* strategy, we can observe the changing nature of parent-teacher interactions. The *pressure* strategy used coercion to obtain compliance to a request. Insistence, perseverance, power, and authority were activities employed by both parents and teachers that served as functions of the *pressure* strategy. Previous research by Kipnis et al. (1980) highlighted "assertiveness" (p. 445) and "upward appeals" (p. 446), whilst Yukl and Falbe (1990) identified "pressure tactics" and "coalition tactics" (p. 133). Managers were described as making demands, using intimidation tactics, or engaging higher levels of management (their bosses) over co-workers and subordinates to compel them to

acquiesce. Similarly, the findings from this research support Kipnis et al.'s (1980) and Yukl and Falbe's (1990) research where parents and teachers made demands, used intimidation, as well as members from the school's leadership team to compel the other person into complying with the request. The significance of this finding being that both parents and teachers utilised this strategy in similar ways; however, teachers utilised this more frequently than parents. In addition, the use of the *pressure* strategy resulted in a course of action undertaken by the parent or the teacher that impacted on the student. This study identified that the *pressure* strategy forced a perspective into being adopted in order to provide a positive outcome for the student. This reveals a new understanding on the positive impact that the *pressure* strategy can have on parent-teacher interactions.

The *authorities/experts* strategy was the least frequently used social influence strategy. Parents and teachers described employing persuasive or coercive techniques in order to obtain compliance to a request during these types of interactions. Parents and/or teachers employed the services of an 'other' person (including the deputy primary principal, primary principal, and/or medical personnel) to share their expertise either formally or informally. The 'other' person could assist with informing or advising the parent or the teacher about adopting or sharing a perspective. Managers were identified in the literature as utilising Kipnis et al.'s (1980) "upward appeal" or "coalitions" (p. 446), and Yukl and Falbe's (1990) "upward appeals tactics" or "coalition tactics" (p. 133) with their bosses, co-workers, and/or subordinates to obtain compliance to a request. Their research indicated that these appeals/tactics used another person as a support mechanism, and/or their position of authority to either persuade or coerce the other person into complying with a request (Kipnis, et al., 1980; Yukl & Falbe, 1990). Similarly, the findings from the current research identified parents and teachers as using another person to either offer their knowledge on the matter (persuasion) or to assert their authority (coercion*)*; however, in these instances, with the aim of sharing a perspective or changing the other person's point of view to their own. Furthermore, this current study revealed that the parents and teachers used the *authorities/experts* strategy to obtain a course of action and/or support for the student. This 'other' person was identified as assisting with applying a form of pressure to parents or teachers in order to have their request met. However, the *authorities/experts* strategy was primarily used by parents and teachers to assist with

achieving an outcome for the student. Schools now have an understanding on the differing roles that a third person has during parent-teacher interactions.

This present study identified six social influence strategies, of which five were used by both parents and teachers in an attempt to obtain compliance to a request however, only one strategy was found to have resulted in no resolution being achieved. The *passive resistance* strategy was identified as being employed by parents and teachers as a form of non-compliance with the aim of ignoring a perspective where parents and teachers demonstrated avoidance behaviours, absenteeism, and/or did not act on a request. This resulted in less than satisfactory experiences of their interactions and limited or no support offered to the students. In addition, the *passive resistance* strategy was utilised more often by teachers than parents. Kipnis et al. (1980) described this as the "blocking" strategy (p. 466) because compliance was achieved by making things difficult for the manager. In these situations, co-workers, or subordinates usually reduced the speed at which they worked. However, parents and teachers did not make things difficult for a hierarchical figure, nor did they reduce the speed at which they worked. They just did not participate in further interactions with the other person. Parents also refused to follow the teachers' recommendations and teachers' refused to provide extra homework requested by the parent. Consequently, little or no action or support was being afforded to the student. Therefore, the *passive resistance* strategy did not facilitate parent-teacher interactions, and resulted in a negative impact on the student. This new understanding highlights the strategy employed by parents and teachers for non-compliance, the occasions in which they were utilised, and the activities that underpinned their ignoring a request. The present research suggests that schools become aware of this non-compliance strategy, and realise the negative impact this has on parent-teacher communication and parent-teacher relationships, as well as student achievement levels.

Overall, the frequency of incidences described by parents and teachers highlighted that they both preferred using the *discussion* strategy, followed by the *evidence* strategy. In addition, this study has identified that the *discussion, evidence*, *relational* and *authorities/experts* strategies resulted in a resolution being achieved. Three key strategies were found to have provided parents and teachers with positive experiences of their interactions. Furthermore, the *passive resistance* strategy was utilised by both parents and teachers, the outcome being that no resolution was

achieved and no or limited support was granted to the student. The *passive resistance* strategy resulted in less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions. This information adds to the body of knowledge on the dynamics of social influence, as parents and teachers were identified as mainly using social influence strategies during their interactions in order to encourage the other person to change their point of view, and to provide a level of assistance for a student. However, the findings have revealed new information that can now inform schools of the six social influence strategies used by parents and teachers during their interactions. In addition, the findings revealed the aims and timing of each strategy, the activities that underpinned these strategies, and the techniques used by parents and teachers during their interactions in order to apply various forms of pressure to achieve an outcome that benefitted the student.

Summary

This study identified six social influence strategies that parents and teachers employed to either obtain compliance to their requests or negate a request. These strategies used different forms of pressure including the techniques of persuasion, manipulation, coercion and/or negation. The positive aims of these social influence strategies were for the other person to share, adopt, or obtain a perspective; however, a negative aim was to ignore a perspective. Various activities served as functions for each social influence strategy, which resulted in courses of action, levels of pastoral care, and/or support for a student. In addition, this study revealed that parents and teachers employed these social influence strategies in similar ways irrespective of their position within the school. Furthermore, the objectives for the use of social influence strategies were related to advancing student performance. This research extends the body of knowledge on the use of social influence.

This study provides a new understanding of the use of social influence strategies in a school environment by both parents and teachers in a co-status dyadic relationship. It has revealed new information on the aims, functions, techniques, and outcomes when parents and teachers employed these social influence strategies during their interactions. It is anticipated that this information could be used by schools to understand how various forms of pressure are applied during parent-teacher interactions and the consequences afforded to students.

Key Finding 3: Parent-Teacher Interactions: Contexts Associated with Social Influence Strategies

Further to identifying if social influence was employed during parent-teacher interactions, this study also investigated whether these six social influence strategies were associated with particular contexts in which parent-teacher interactions occurred. The key findings identified that parents and teachers interacted in five different contexts, which were categorised as either formal or informal; and that parents and teachers were found to have preferences for using social influence strategies during these particular contexts. These findings reveal new information on the occasions when a social influence strategy was used by parents and teachers during their interactions. It also extends our understanding on the use of social influence strategies that resulted in positive and/or less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions.

The contexts in which parents and teachers interacted during this study were categorised as either formal or informal. However, Lasky's (2000) and Walker's (1998) research primarily noted the formal contexts on which parents and teachers interacted, suggesting that there was a need for more informal opportunities for parents and teachers to interact. Lasky (2000) also suggested that these informal opportunities were needed so that parents and teachers can obtain each other's worldviews. The findings from this study concur with their research, however, it has identified three formal occasions in which parents and teachers interacted and two informal contexts where they exchanged worldviews. These findings add to the body of knowledge on the contexts in which parents and teachers interacted however, the study has also identified the use of social influence strategies during these various contexts that assisted with obtaining an insight into the nature of the other person. This new information can be used to highlight the occasions where social influence strategies are used by parents and teachers.

Previous research (Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Kipnis, et al., 1980; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl, et al., 1995; Yukl & Tracey, 1992) on social influence concentrated on the managers' use of strategies towards their bosses, co-workers and/or subordinates in a business setting. Little research was found on the various contexts in which these social influence strategies were used. The current study, however, has focused on the use of social influence strategies in various contexts by parents and teachers in a school setting. The findings have firstly, revealed

five different contexts in which parents and teachers used social influence strategies; secondly, the preferred social influence strategies used by parents and teachers in these particular contexts; and finally, the resulting satisfactory and/or less than satisfactory experiences of the interactions. This contributes a new understanding on the differing contexts in which parents and teachers used social influence strategies during their interactions.

The following section discusses the formal and informal contexts where parents and teachers were found to have interacted, as well as the parents and teachers preferred social influence strategies used during their interactions. These were found to provide parents and teachers with positive and/or less than satisfactory experiences of their interactions.

Formal parent-teacher interactions

In this study, formal parent-teacher interactions were identified as being parent-teacher interviews (school mandated meetings usually regarding student reports); parent-teacher meetings (scheduled interactions); and parent-teacher meetings using a third person (use of medical personnel or an 'other' person to share their expertise) (see Table 9.4). These formal interactions were opportunities for parents and teachers to converse over matters that were mainly focused on student performance. Lasky (2000) and Walker (1998) also identified that these formal interactions were usually related to student progress. However, there was very little research on the contexts for these formal parent-teacher interactions; suffice to say Walker's (1998) research highlighted parent-teacher evenings in a secondary school setting, whilst Lasky (2000) identified the formal means of communication. These were classed as being either face-to-face parent-teacher meetings for student progress, or via electronic communication in relation to student issues. However, the current study identified three separate occasions where parents and teachers interacted in a face-to-face formal context, contributing something not discussed in the current literature, and reveals new knowledge about parent-teacher interactions. Furthermore, Key Finding 4 reveals the non-student related nature for these parent-teacher interactions.

Table 9.4   Parents and Teachers Use of Social Influence Strategies Associated with Formal Contexts

Contexts	Parents	Teachers
Formal Parent-Teacher Interviews *(mandated meetings to discuss school reports)*	Evidence Strategy Discussion Strategy	Evidence Strategy Discussion Strategy
Formal Parent-Teacher Meetings *(non-mandated meeting to discuss student related issues)*	Evidence Strategy Discussion Strategy Authorities/Experts Strategy	Evidence/Discussion Strategies Authorities/Experts Strategy Relational Strategy
Formal Parent-Teacher Interactions with a Third Person *(non-mandated meeting to discuss student related issues with the assistance of another person)*	Pressure Strategy Discussion Strategy	Pressure Strategy Discussion Strategy

In addition to the contexts for these parent-teacher interactions, the findings also indicated that during these formal interactions, a variety of social influence strategies were used by parents and teachers (see Table 9.4). Previous research (Kipnis, et al., 1980; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Yukl & Falbe, 1990) on social influence strategies did not highlight the contexts in which bosses, co-workers, and/or subordinates interacted; therefore, the findings from this study present new information on the contexts associated with the use of these social influence strategies. The literature did highlight, however, the more frequently used social influence strategies in a lateral direction: "consultation tactics", "rational persuasion tactics" and "inspirational tactics" (Yukl & Falbe, 1990, p. 138). Yukl and Falbe's (1990) social influence strategies have similarities to this study's *discussion*, *evidence,* and *relational* strategies. However, the findings from the current investigation differ from their findings in that parents and teachers mainly utilised the *discussion* and *evidence* strategies and not so much the *relational* strategy during these particular formal contexts. This information now highlights the preferred forms of social influence used in a lateral direction in a co-status dyadic relationship. The findings identified that parents and teachers had a preference for sharing their points of view and receiving advice (the *discussion* strategy), or explaining the facts or having the facts explained to them (the *evidence* strategy) during formal parent-teacher interactions. This knowledge was viewed as enhancing the communication processes for parents and teachers, as well as fostering positive parent-teacher interactions.

A further finding was the way in which parents and teachers used a third person to enact the *pressure* or *discussion* strategies during their formal parent-teacher interactions. Yukl and Falbe (1990) described similar occasions when managers would utilise a third person as a form of social influence by employing "upward appeals tactics" or "coalitions tactics" (p. 133) in an attempt to obtain compliance. "Upward appeals" obtained the support from higher management, whilst "coalitions" used other co-workers or sub-ordinates to assist with persuading the target person (Yukl & Falbe, 1990, p. 133). This study found that in these schools, participants mainly used the third person as a way to coerce or persuade the other person to comply with their requests. Furthermore, whilst higher levels of management, such as primary school principals or deputy primary principals, were involved in these interactions, their role was to either exercise their influence formally through coercive techniques or informally through persuasive measures. This provides an insight for social influence research into how one person can employ a third person to coerce or persuade the other person in order for the first person to have their request met. Schools can now use this new information to understand the role of a third person during parent-teacher interactions, as well as the formal/informal nature of their presence during these interactions.

The current research firstly, identified the formal contexts of parent-teacher interactions highlighting the preferred social influence strategies within these contexts. In addition, this study revealed that parents and teachers predominantly used the *discussion, evidence,* and *pressure* strategies during these types of interactions to achieve an outcome for the student. Such knowledge makes a contribution to understanding the role of social influence strategies during parent-teacher interactions, and the differing contexts in which they are employed. With this new knowledge, schools can now be informed about the strategies used by parents and teachers during their face-to-face formal interactions in order to obtain compliance to their requests. This is currently being viewed as strengthening parent-teacher communications. Following on from formal parent-teacher interactions was the informal contexts in which parents and teachers interacted. Informal parent-teacher interactions were the occasions when parents and teachers were more casual with their interactions, and at times, their conversations were unrelated to students and school.

Informal parent-teacher interactions

Informal parent-teacher interactions were identified as occurring within two different contexts (see Table 9.5). The first context was classified as general parent-teacher interactions, which were viewed as being unscheduled interactions that involved a casual, more social exchange of words. The second context was non-verbal parent-teacher interactions, where parents and teachers observed the behaviours of the other person during these informal occasions. There has been very little prior research that identified the particular informal contexts in which parents and teacher interacted; parents and teachers use of non-verbal communication during their interactions; or the rationale for such interactions. The findings from this study highlight the informal contexts for parent-teacher interactions, and the relevance to parent-teacher communication, parent-teacher relationships, and student achievement.

Lasky (2000) defined informal interactions between parents and teachers as being generally less organised; occurring at "pick-up or drop-off times, when parents were volunteering in the classroom or through school events such as sporting carnivals and fund raising activities" (p. 847). This study's findings concur with Lasky's (2000) research where informal parent-teacher interactions happened before and/or after school, or during parent-help times. However, this current study has also identified the rationale for these types of interactions and brings to light a new understanding about some 'hidden agendas' of these informal contexts. The study revealed that parents and teachers used their informal interactions to obtain the other person's perspective of the world, or an insight into the other person's attitudes, beliefs, and/or values. This was achieved by observing the other person's behaviours, as well as the way they interacted with other people including the students. Furthermore, these informal interactions were described as having a positive impact on parent-teacher communications and parent-teacher relationships, resulting in benefits being afforded to the student. The findings suggest that schools should be made aware of the significance of informal parent-teacher interactions, and the informal contexts in which parents' and teachers' exchanged their worldviews.

Table 9.5   **Parents and Teachers Use of Social Influence Strategies Associated with Informal Contexts**

Informal Contexts	Parents	Teachers
Informal Parent-Teacher Interactions - General	Discussion Strategy Relational Strategy	Discussion Strategy Relational Strategy
Informal Parent-Teacher Interactions - Non-Verbal	Relational Strategy Evidence Strategy	Evidence Strategy Relational Strategy

In the context of informal general parent-teacher interactions, this study identified that parents and teachers mostly utilised the *discussion* and *relational* strategies as a form of social influence (see Table 9.5). The *discussion* strategy enabled the sharing of perspectives and mutual understanding, whilst the *relational* strategy facilitated connectivity and an insight into the other person's attitudes, beliefs, and/or values. Yukl and Falbe (1990) described that "inspirational appeals tactics" (p. 138) assisted managers to obtain compliance from their bosses, co-workers, or subordinates by appealing to or manipulating their values. In this study, parents and teachers utilised informal parent-teacher interactions and the *relational* strategy to obtain each other's worldviews. This knowledge about their disposition facilitated the manipulation of the other person's values when making a request, which has not been discussed previously in the literature on parent-teacher interactions.

The *relational* strategy was identified as employing convivial or obsequious behaviours that facilitated parent-teacher connectivity, which then provided an exchange of views offering an insight into the other persons' attitudes, beliefs and/or values. The findings have revealed that parents and teachers wanted to know who they were dealing with, and therefore, how to progress (manipulate) their appeal to achieve their outcome. The various activities of parents and teachers that underpinned their use of the *relational* strategy, as well as the rationale for these informal contexts where this strategy was employed, offer a new insight into parent-teacher interactions. The findings have highlighted the 'need and want' of parents and teachers to foster a relationship in order to obtain each other's worldview, thereby knowing how to approach the other person in such a way that could result in a more favourable outcome (mostly benefitting the student). The current research has identified that during informal contexts, the *discussion* strategy facilitated the sharing of perspectives, whilst the *relational* strategy provided an insight into the nature of the other person. From this new understanding, it is recommended that schools provide

more informal opportunities for parents and teachers to interact, with the knowledge that the rationale behind this type of interaction is the exchange of worldviews. Lasky's (2000) suggestion of providing more occasions for informal parent-teacher interactions, because this would result in enhancing parent-teacher communications and parent-teacher relationships, has been validated by the findings from this current research. However, it was the informal contexts and the use of the *relational* strategy that assisted with the exchange of worldviews resulting in satisfactory experiences of their interactions and positive outcomes for students.

Finally, in the context of informal non-verbal parent-teacher interactions, parents and teachers mostly used the *relational* and *evidence* strategies. There has been very little previous research on these informal contexts, especially on the non-verbal communication between parents and teachers, and subsequently, the findings from this research provide new knowledge. The *relational* strategy facilitated an insight into the nature of the other person, whilst the *evidence* strategy was the presentation of a reality to another person. These were achieved by parents and teachers either observing the other person's behaviour, allowing assumptions to be made as to the nature of the person and facts about their demeanour, or by exhibiting a set of behaviours in order to influence the other person's views. Either way, parents and teachers were informed about the other person's disposition and, therefore, the level of trust that was afforded to their relationship. In turn, this impacted on benefits being afforded to the student.

This study has provided a new understanding on the way that parents and teachers used these non-verbal parent-teacher interactions to obtain a perspective of the other person and/or present a perspective of themselves. Schools can now have an understanding of the magnitude of non-verbal communication, and the objectives of some of the activities of parents and teachers. Furthermore, the study identified that particular parents regularly volunteered in the school in order to promote themselves as being active and supportive of the school. The rationale was that an association with various teachers often developed that resulted in benefits being afforded to these parents' students in the form of 'favouritism'. This concept of parents being visually present within the school, and the ensuing association resulting in benefits to the student is new knowledge, and further highlights the magnitude of non-verbal communication in and around schools.

In addition, some teachers described that when parents were in the classroom, they were conscious of presenting themselves as being professionals, as well as providing opportunities to 'model' specific teaching skills and behaviour management strategies so that parents could emulate at them home. This new understanding also reveals that teachers would project an image directed at parents that could positively impact on the student. Overall, non-verbal parent-teacher interactions facilitated parents and teachers with observing and exhibiting behaviours to influence the other person's perspectives. This is a significant finding, and one which schools need to be made aware of, on how parents and teachers have utilised public relations skills.

In review, parents and teachers utilised the *evidence* and *relational* strategies as forms of social influence during their informal non-verbal parent-teacher interactions. Parents and teachers were able to share perspectives and/or obtain an insight into the nature of the other person. This facilitated parent-teacher communication and parent-teacher relationships, resulting in increasing their levels of trust, and positive outcomes for the students.

Summary

This study has identified that parents and teachers interacted in five different contexts that were categorised as formal or informal. During formal contexts, parents and teachers primarily employed the *evidence* and *discussion* strategies, whilst during informal interactions, the *discussion* and *relational* strategies, followed by the *evidence* strategy were mostly used. However, parents and teachers had similar preferences for using these social influence strategies during these formal and informal interactions. This study has revealed the occasions for which these social influence strategies were used, as well as the contexts in which parents and teachers employed social influence. Significantly, parents and teachers obtained mutual understandings and/or utilised facts during formal parent-teacher interviews and parent-teacher meetings (general). However, when a third person was involved in the interaction (or the *authorities/experts* strategy used), parents and teachers employed either persuasion and/or coercion in order to obtain compliance to their requests. Furthermore, parents and teachers either shared or obtained a perspective during informal parent-teacher interactions that were general in nature. However, during non-verbal parent-teacher interactions, parents and teachers also employed persuasion and/or manipulation techniques by observing or exhibiting sets of behaviours in order to influence the other

person's perspective. The various contexts for these parent-teacher interactions facilitated parent-teacher connectivity, the exchange of worldviews, and increasing levels of trust, thereby positively impacting on parent-teacher communications and parent-teacher relationships and student achievement levels.

Key Finding 4: Parent-Teacher Interactions: Purposes Associated with Social Influence Strategies

This investigation also examined the data for evidence of social influence strategies associated with particular purposes during parent-teacher interactions. The key findings firstly identified that parents and teachers interacted for 10 different purposes, which were classified as student related or non-student related purposes; secondly, parents and teachers had preferences for using particular social influence strategies during these types of interactions; and finally, parents and teachers utilised various non-student related interactions as a method of obtaining the other person's worldview. The differing purposes, and associated social influence strategies, provide information on the factors that contributed to positive and less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions.

Lasky (2000) and Thompson (2008) highlighted that parent-teacher interactions were usually focused around student related matters such as student progress or behaviour. However, the current research identified that parent-teacher interactions extended beyond student progress, and also included matters that were non-student related. This study highlighted six student related and four non-student related purposes that were associated with these parent-teacher interactions, thereby adding to the current understanding on parent-teacher communication. However, this present research particularly revealed that parents (mainly) wanted to 'get to know' the teacher in order to understand the teacher's worldview. This was achieved through using social influence strategies.

Previous social influence research (Kipnis, et al., 1980; Yukl & Falbe, 1990) focused on the use of strategies in an upward, downward, and/or lateral direction, highlighting the reasons for managers, bosses, co-workers, and subordinates using social influence strategies. The current study, however, focused on the use of social influence strategies by parents and teachers in a lateral direction identifying the reasons for their use: obtaining courses of actions, increasing levels of pastoral care,

and/or gaining support for the student. Little research was found on the various purposes for which parents and teachers interacted and their subsequent use of social influence strategies; therefore, the findings from this study provide a new understanding on the reasons why parents and teachers used social influence strategies during these types of interactions. In addition, the findings identified that parents and teachers predominantly used the *discussion, evidence,* and *relational* strategies to obtain compliance to their requests, as well as the *passive resistance* strategy to ignore a request.

The following section discusses student related and non-student related purposes for parent-teacher interactions; the preferred social influence strategies used by parents and teachers; and the reasons for parents and teachers employing these strategies during their interactions. These were found to contribute to parents' and teachers' positive and less than satisfactory experiences of their interactions, as well as benefits being afforded to the students.

Student related purposes

Student related purposes were identified as *behavioural, cognitive, emotional, medical, social concerns*, as well as *student support* (see Table 9.6). The physical development of a child was not identified as a purpose within the scope of this study. Lasky (2000) and Thompson (2008) highlighted that parent-teacher interactions were usually focused around educational matters, which is similar to the findings of this present study.

Table 9.6   Parents and Teachers Use of Social Influence Strategies Associated with Student Related Purposes

Student Related Purposes	Parents	Teachers
Behaviour	Discussion Strategy	Discussion Strategy Evidence Strategy
Cognitive	Discussion Strategy Evidence Strategy	Discussion Strategy Evidence Strategy
Emotional	Discussion Strategy	Discussion Strategy
Medical	Discussion Strategy	Discussion Strategy
Social	Discussion Strategy	Discussion Strategy Evidence Strategy
Student Support	Discussion Strategy	Passive Resistance Strategy Discussion Strategy

The findings indicated that firstly, for student related purposes, parents and teachers primarily used the *discussion* and *evidence* strategies as forms of social influence and secondly, that the *passive resistance* strategy was found to only occur for the purpose of *student support* (see Table 9.6). In this study, the *discussion* strategy enabled parents and teachers to obtain an understanding of the issue at hand, and through sharing their perspectives on the matter, courses of actions, pastoral care, and/or student support was obtained. The *evidence* strategy, however, facilitated parents and teachers to be presented with a reality through facts and reasons. This resulted in either party adopting a perspective in order to provide the student with a suitable course of action. In addition, the *relational* strategy enabled connectivity between parents and teachers through obtaining a perspective about the other person. This connectivity assisted with levels of pastoral care and/or support being afforded to the student. Previous research (Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Kipnis, et al., 1980; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl, et al., 1995; Yukl & Tracey, 1992) on social influence highlighted that managers utilised various social influence strategies in order to obtain compliance from their bosses, co-workers, and subordinates. "Consultation tactics", "rational persuasion tactics", and "inspirational appeals tactics" were utilised most frequently in lateral directions (Yukl & Falbe, 1990, p. 138). These are similar to the *discussion, evidence,* and *relational* strategies identified in this current investigation. However, the findings from this study differ from their research

in that parents and teachers did not seem to use a variety of strategies during their interactions; they predominantly utilised the *discussion* and *evidence* strategies for student related purposes. Therefore, this study has revealed new information about which social influence strategies parents and teachers selected during their interactions for these student related purposes. The findings revealed that parents and teachers had a preference for obtaining mutual understanding and/or having the facts explained to them during these types of interactions.

A significant finding of this current study, however, is the use of a social influence strategy to ignore a person's request. The study identified that the *passive resistance* strategy was utilised during specific student related parent-teacher interactions, namely *student support*. This included any extra work that was to be completed at home mainly to enhance the student's academic achievement levels. The literature on social influence strategies identified that "blocking tactic" was used when subordinates wanted to have an impact on their boss by "slowing down and the threat of stopping work" (Kipnis, et al., 1980, p. 447). These employees demonstrated their non-compliance through inactivity, a finding similar to this study. However, parents and teachers demonstrated their inactivity through absenteeism or by avoiding or ignoring a request. This was deemed as enacting the *passive resistance* strategy. Parents and teachers were found to simply ignore the other person's perspective and as a consequence, no action or support was given to the student. This revelation makes a significant contribution to understanding the activities of parents and teachers when becoming non-compliant. Furthermore, this study has now identified the particular occasion (*student support*) in which parents and teachers particularly negated the other person's request, and the resulting outcome (no assistance given to the student). Schools can now utilise this information in order to determine how to support parents and teachers in their requests, especially in relation to extra work to be completed at home so that successful outcomes can be achieved.

Overall, this study has identified that parents and teachers had a preference for obtaining mutual understanding (the *discussion* strategy), and/or the presentation of a reality (the *evidence* strategy) during their interactions for student related purposes. However, parents and teachers also avoided complying with a request (the *passive resistance* strategy) by being inactive particularly in relation to extra work to be completed at home, as well as following recommendations. This knowledge

contributes an understanding of the preferred social influence strategies used by parents and teachers for these student related purposes.

The following section discusses the use of social influence strategies by parents and teachers for non-student related purposes. The findings identified that only the *relational* strategy was evident during these parent-teacher interactions.

Non-student related purposes

Parents and teachers interacted for non-student related purposes, which were described as *courtesies, identity, information,* and *personal*. In addition, only the *relational* strategy was employed during these interactions (see Table 9.7). The findings revealed that *courtesies* included daily greetings between the parents and the teachers; *identity* was developing a personal profile within the school community; *information* was the exchange of knowledge; *personal* was related to the parents' and/or teachers' private information; whilst the *relational* strategy fostered parent-teacher connectivity.

Table 9.7   Parents and Teachers Use of Social Influence Strategies Associated with Non-Student Related Purposes

Non-Student Related Purposes	Parents	Teachers
Courtesies	Relational Strategy	Relational Strategy
Identity	Relational Strategy	Relational Strategy
Information	Relational Strategy	Relational Strategy
Personal	Relational Strategy	Relational Strategy

Lasky (2000) suggested that schools should be encouraged to provide more opportunities for parents and teachers to converse on topics unrelated to scholastic achievement as it fostered parent-teacher relationships. This study has identified four such occasions where parents and teachers interacted on matters that were unrelated to students and their performance in school. The findings revealed that informal parent-teacher interactions occurred before and after school, volunteering in the classroom, and/or during the schools' social and/or sporting events. In addition, it was during these informal contexts that parents and teachers usually interacted for non-student related matters. This knowledge will add to the current understanding on parent-teacher communications.

This study has primarily revealed four occasions where parents and teachers interacted for non-student related purposes: *courtesies, identity, information,* and *personal.* Firstly, *courtesies* were the day to day greetings between parents and teachers which facilitated familiarity resulting in parent-teacher connectivity. Secondly, *identity* was the method used by parents and teachers to project an image or obtain a perspective of the other person usually through non-verbal communication, thus providing both parents and teachers with an insight into the other person's nature. Thirdly, *information* was the exchange of knowledge or conversations held on any topic between parents and teachers which were described as the exchange of worldviews. Finally, *personal* was freely sharing private information about oneself with the other person that fostered increased levels of trust mainly between parents and teachers. This research has provided new knowledge on the occasions when parents and teachers interacted for non-student related purposes.

The findings also identified that during these parent-teacher interactions for non-student related purposes, only the *relational* strategy was used as a form of social influence (see Table 9.7). The *relational* strategy utilised convivial or obsequious behaviours that made possible an affiliation with the other person, providing an insight into their nature and an understanding of their worldviews. This information was later used to assist parents and teachers with their approach to making requests. Yukl and Falbe (1990) highlighted that "inspirational appeals tactics" and "ingratiation tactics" (p.138) used personal connection, appeals, and/or manipulation of the person's values in order to obtain compliance. Their research identified that managers particularly used these approaches moderately in upward, downward, and/or lateral directions towards their bosses, co-workers, and/or subordinates. In contrast, this study found that parents and teachers used the *relational* strategy frequently in a lateral direction for all non-student related purposes, in order to manipulate the other person into providing increased levels of pastoral care, or support for the students. This new understanding highlights the strategies used by parents and teachers to obtain compliance to their requests.

The current research has identified that parents and teachers interacted during these non-student related purposes in order to firstly, foster an affiliation with the other person, and secondly, to obtain an insight into the nature of the other person. Lasky (2000) and Miretzky (2004) suggest that parents and teachers should obtain each

other's worldviews in order to enhance parent-teacher communications and parent-teacher relationships however, this research has extended current understanding by revealing the particular occasions and subsequent activities undertaken by parents and teachers to achieve this. In addition, the findings identified that from these non-student related parent-teacher interactions, positive working relationships were developed, thereby enhancing parent-teacher communication and parent-teacher relationships. The research suggests that schools be made aware of the importance of these non-student related parent-teacher interactions, the magnitude of parents and teachers obtaining an insight into the nature of the other person, and the differing occasions where worldviews are exchanged. This new knowledge highlights the need and want of parents and teachers to interact for non-student related matters and the positive outcomes of such interactions.

In review, the key findings from this study have identified significant factors that encompassed these parent-teacher interactions. Firstly, parents and teachers interacted for four non-student related purposes; secondly, seemingly benign conversations between parents and teachers actually provided key information about the nature of the other person; thirdly, the *relational* strategy facilitated connectivity and the exchange of worldviews; and finally, when parents and teachers interacted for non-student related matters, it resulted in positive relationships. This new information contributes an understanding of parent-teacher communication, parent-teacher relationships, and the use of the *relational* strategy as a form of social influence to achieve benefits for the student. From the findings, schools can now understand why it is important to provide opportunities for parents and teachers to interact on a wider range of topics than simply ones related to students and their performance in school. It results in satisfactory parent-teacher interactions and positive outcomes for students.

Summary

This study has identified that parents and teachers interacted for student related and non-student related purposes. For student related purposes, parents and teachers had a preference for using the *discussion* and/or *evidence* strategy to share or adopt a perspective, resulting in a positive outcome for the student. However, for non-student related matters, parents and teachers preferred the *relational* strategy to obtain an insight into the nature of the other person, resulting in connectivity between parents and teachers. In addition, the *passive resistance* strategy was also used for the student

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related purpose of *student support*. However, this was found to have resulted in less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions as parents and teachers ignored the other's requests. With this information, schools can now be made aware of the social influence strategies employed by parents and teachers for student related and non-student related purposes, and the subsequent outcomes for themselves and the students.

Overall, this study has highlighted the differing purposes for parent-teacher interactions, and the associated social influence strategies employed by parents and teachers. The findings present new information on factors that resulted in providing positive and/or less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions, which can now be utilised to further enhance parent-teacher communication and parent-teacher relationships in schools.

Summary of Key Findings

In the literature, parent-teacher interactions were described as involving tensions and challenges (Lewis & Forman, 2002; Moore & Lasky, 1999) for both the parent and the teacher. The findings from this research, by exploring social influence strategies, identified some of the tensions and challenges that impacted on the positive and/or less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions. Figure 9.1 encapsulates the findings from this study on the nature of parent-teacher interactions and the dynamics of social influence.

This study firstly revealed that there was a set of activities that underpinned the collaborative and/or non-collaborative practices of parents and teachers, which resulted in positive and/or less than satisfactory experiences of their interactions. The findings also indicated that parents and teachers held similar views on what practices led to collaboration, yet dissimilar views on those that led to non-collaboration.

The second aspect of this research found evidence of six social influence strategies that were employed during these parent-teacher interactions. The findings revealed that parents and teachers had a preference for exchanging information (*discussion* strategy), followed by the presentation of facts and/or reality (*evidence* strategy) during their interactions. The *relational* strategy, however, played a significant role by assisting parents and teachers with obtaining an insight into each other's worldviews and subsequently building connectivity. Finally, the study

identified that both parents and teachers utilised the *passive resistance* social influence strategy as a form of non-compliance, which resulted in less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions.

The third aspect of this study highlighted the formal and informal contexts in which these social influence strategies were utilised by parents and teachers. The findings showed that the *evidence*, *discussion*, and *authorities/experts* strategies were frequently utilised during their formal interactions, whilst the *discussion* and *relational* strategies were prevalent during their informal interactions. These were the particular contexts in which parents and teachers employed social influence.

The final aspect of this research was that parents and teachers interacted for both student related purposes and non-student related purposes where social influence strategies were utilised. The main findings revealed that parents and teachers had a preference for the *discussion* and *evidence* strategies during their interactions for student related purposes. However, only the *relational* strategy was employed during their interactions for non-student related purposes.

Overall, parents and teachers employed various forms of social influence to persuade, coerce, manipulate or negate the other person's request. These strategies were utilised to share, adopt, obtain, or ignore a person's perspective with outcomes that obtained courses of action, pastoral care, and/or support for the student. However, the passive resistance strategy resulted in little or no action/support being afforded to the student. Moreover, parents and teachers described *relationships*, *working together,* and *sharing information* practices as resulting in satisfactory experiences of their interactions, as well as positive outcomes for the student. Consequently, the practices of *unapproachability, lack of information*, *lack of support,* and e*motive behaviour* resulted in less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions and less than satisfactory outcomes for the students. The current study has defined these factors as being the nature of parent-teacher interactions and the dynamics of social influence.

The following chapter concludes this research into the nature of parent-teacher interactions and the use of social influence strategies with a model that conceptualises the findings from this investigation.
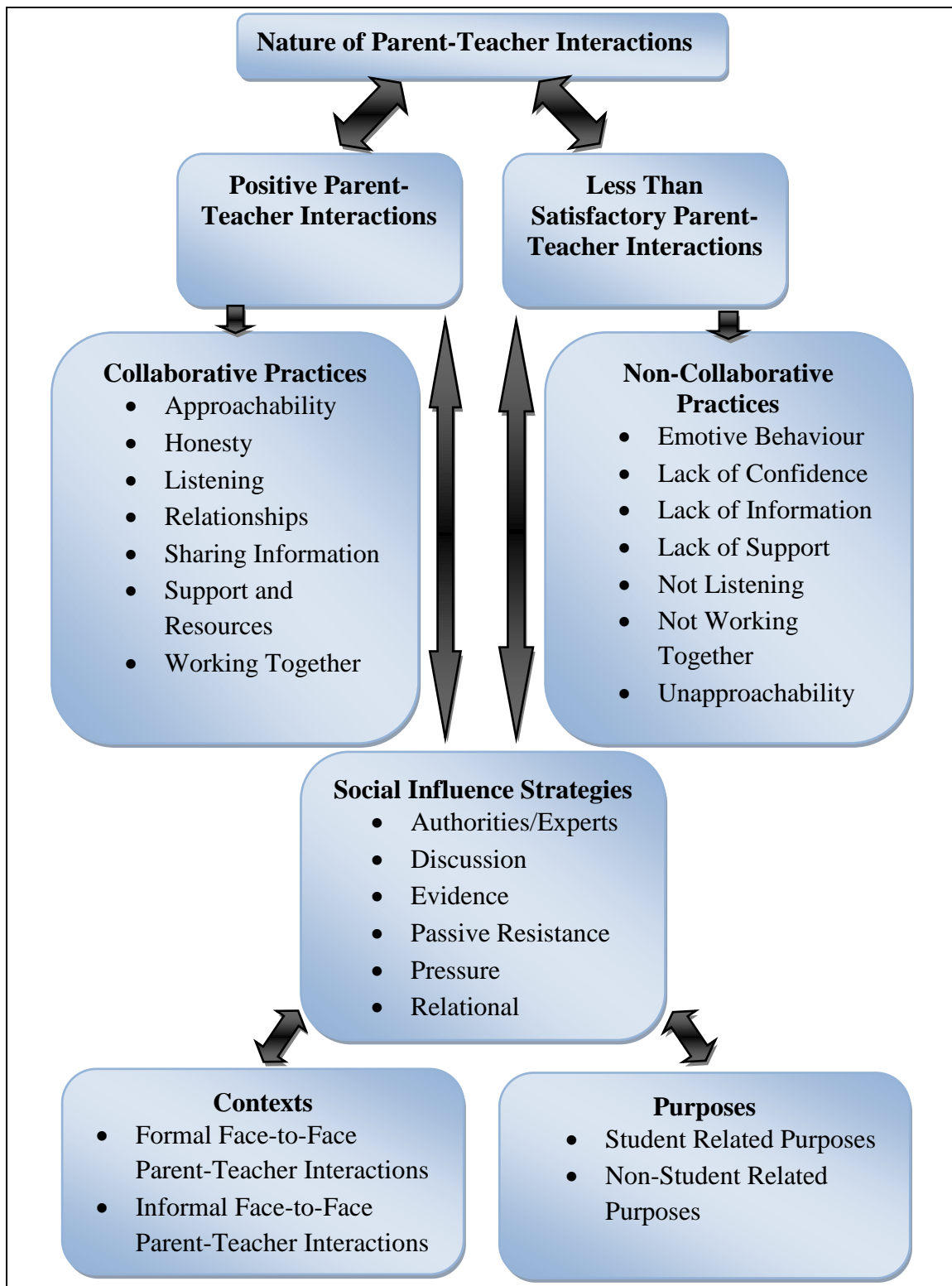
Figure 9.1   **The Nature of Parent-Teacher Interactions and Evidence of Social Influence Associated with Particular Contexts and Purposes**

CHAPTER TEN
CONCLUSION

In 2008, the Australian Government responded to the report on *Family-School and Community Partnerships* and established a bureau to "build bridges between families, communities and schools" (Australian Council State Schools Organisation (ACSSO), 2008a, p. 1). The rationale was that family-school partnerships led to improvements in student achievement levels (Muller & Saulwick, 2006). Subsequently, as part of the Australian Government's *National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality* (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2008), the Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership (AITSL) developed the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (2011).

> "The National Professional Standards for Teachers is a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality. The Standards define the work of teachers and make explicit the elements of high-quality, effective teaching in 21st Century schools, which result in improved educational outcomes for students" (Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership (AITSL), 2011, Overview, Purpose of the Standards, para 1).

The findings from this current research support the aims of AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers,* particularly parents and teachers working together resulting in effective teaching and positive outcomes for students.

The recommendations developed from this research aligns with AITSL's Professional Practice and Professional Engagement domains (2011). In reviewing these domains, elements across Standards 3, 5 and 7 specifically refer to teachers engaging with parents/carers across the graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead career stages (Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership (AITSL), 2011). In addition, three focal points found within these Standards have been located in the Professional Practice and Professional Engagement domains relating to the recommendations derived from this study. The *National Professional Standards for Teachers* requests teachers to:

- Engage parents/carers in the educative process.

- Report on student achievement clearly, accurately and respectfully to students and parents/carers about student achievement, making use of accurate and reliable records.

- Engage with the parents/carers.

(Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership (AITSL), 2011, Standards 3.7, 5.5 and 7.3).

The current research realises that AITSL's (2011) Standards can be supported by undergoing professional development on the practices and strategies identified in this study, which resulted in satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions and positive outcomes for students. Furthermore, the recommendations derived from this research fulfil the request for "Teachers [to] demonstrate respect and professionalism in all their interactions with students, colleagues, parents/carers and the community. They are sensitive to the needs of parents/carers and can communicate effectively with them about their children's learning" (Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership (AITSL), 2011, Standards, Professional Engagement, Overview, para 2).

The purpose of the present research is to identify factors that impacted on parent-teacher interactions in terms of them being positive and/or less than satisfactory experiences. It was noted from previous experiences of the researcher, who worked in primary schools, that whilst some parents and teachers worked well together, others had difficulties finding common ground. The researcher's personal professional reflections led her to want to improve the quality of parent-teacher interactions.

The current study was located in four low fee, independent, Protestant, metropolitan Perth primary schools, where 67 parents and teachers shared their stories. These schools were selected for this research as they had strong parental involvement programs that encouraged frequent parent-teacher interactions. Through the use of focus group sessions and interviews, the participants provided examples of positive and/or less than satisfactory experiences of their parent-teacher interactions, which were understood as being their reality. The results were interpreted through the rich descriptions provided from both the parents' and the teachers' perspectives, revealing the nature of parent-teacher interactions, and evidence of social influence strategies, as well as the contexts and purposes associated with these social influence strategies. Five conclusions were derived from the current research:

1. Parents and teachers reported satisfactory and/or less than satisfactory experiences of their interactions.

2. Collaborative and/or non-collaborative practices underpinned their experiences of these parent-teacher interactions.

3. Various forms of social influence were utilised during their interactions.

4. Parents and teachers had specific intentions to their interactions and employed various forms of social influence to obtain compliance to their requests.

5. Parent-teacher interactions resulted in positive and/or less than satisfactory outcomes for students.

Conceptual Model

Parent-teacher interactions were found to be complex in nature with significant characteristics that underpinned their positive and/or less than satisfactory experiences. The current research also ascertained that parents and teachers utilised various social influence strategies to achieve an outcome that usually benefitted the students. In addition, these social influence strategies were recognised as being associated with different contexts and purposes for the parent-teacher interactions. From the findings, a conceptual model has been devised to illuminate the complexities of parent-teacher interactions and the use of social influence during these interactions (see Figure 10.1).
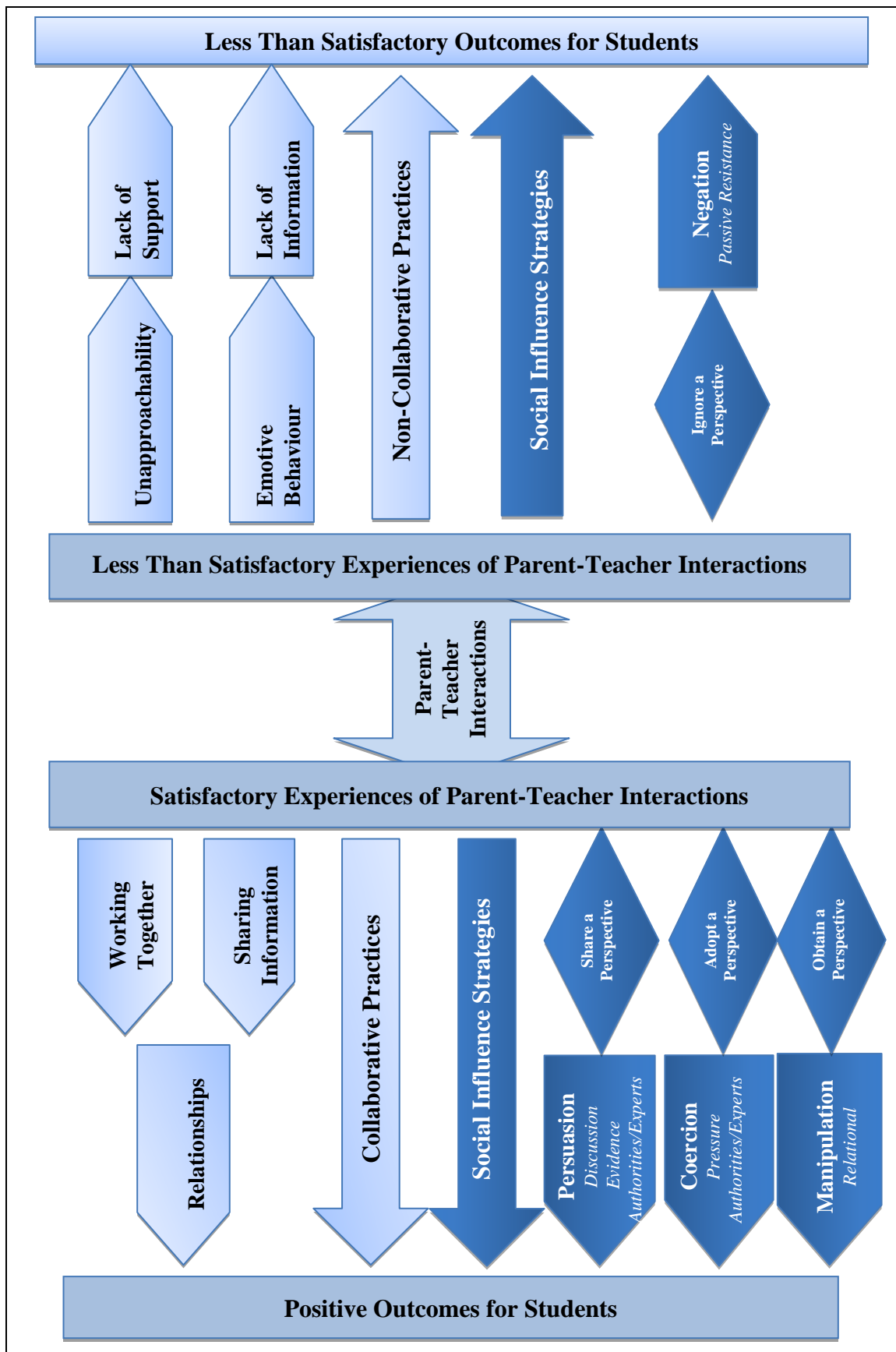
Figure 10.1   A Conceptual Model of the Nature of Parent-Teacher Interactions and the Dynamics of Social Influence

The conceptual model is based on the premise that parents and teachers interacted to achieve an outcome for the student. The findings indicated that these interactions resulted in benefits for the students however, on occasions they did not. To understand this conceptual model, the various components that underpin parent-teacher interactions need to be examined.

The nature of parent-teacher interactions and the use of social influence

Firstly, as shown in the conceptual model to achieve positive outcomes for the student, satisfactory experiences of the parent-teacher interaction have to occur. In this study, these experiences were the collaborative practices of *relationships, working together,* and *sharing information*. These practices were identified as assisting with parents and teachers engaging with each other, making connections, and exchanging knowledge; thereby, aligning with Standards 3.7, 5.5 and 7.3 of AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers*. In addition, the conceptual model illustrates that these collaborative practices resulted in benefits being afforded to the student, meeting the purpose for the *National Professional Standards for Teachers,* "improved educational outcomes for students" (Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership (AITSL), 2011, Overview, Purpose of the Standards, para 1).

Secondly, when parents and teachers employed specific forms of social influence, satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions transpired. The findings revealed persuasion, coercion and manipulation were used by both parents and teachers, which resulted in increased levels of assistance provided to the student. The benefits derived from these social influence strategies, therefore, also support Standards 3.7 and 7.3 from AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers*. Furthermore, the use of social influence strategies provided positive outcomes for students, which is also congruent with AITSL's (2011) purpose for these standards: "improved educational outcomes for students" (Overview, Purpose of the Standards, para 1). Moreover, this research highlighted that five of the six social influence strategies assisted with positive communication, relationships and involvement between parents and teachers. Communication, relationships and parental involvement aligns with AITSL's (2011) call for teachers to "report on student achievement", as well as "demonstrate professionalism in all their interactions", and "engag[e] with parents/carers" (Standards 5.5, 6 and 7.3 respectively).

Thirdly, the conceptual model highlights that positive outcomes being achieved for the student were also dependent on the intention of these parents and teachers, thus supporting "improved educational outcomes for students" (Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership (AITSL), 2011, Overview, Purpose of the Standards, para 1). In this study, the explicit aims of the social influence strategies were revealed as the sharing or adoption of a particular perspective, and/or obtaining a perspective about the other person. The intended outcome for using the *authorities/experts, discussion, evidence* and/or *pressure* strategies was, therefore, in relation to either parents or teachers encouraging their perspective to be embraced thus affording benefits to the student. The *relational* strategy, however, had the intention of obtaining a perspective about the other person that also resulted in positive outcomes for students. Parents and teachers utilised social influence strategies to obtain assistance for the student, thereby, enhancing student performance levels.

In summary, the conceptual model illustrates that when parents and teachers specifically utilised the collaborative practices of *relationships, working together,* and *sharing information*, satisfactory parent-teacher interactions resulted. At the same time, when parents and teachers employed the *authorities/experts*, *discussion, evidence, pressure* and/or *manipulation* social influence strategies, satisfactory parent-teacher interactions were facilitated. AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers* encourages teachers to work effectively, develop a relationship and foster strong communication with parents. Subsequently, these collaborative practices and social influence strategies assist with meeting the elements found in AITSL's (2011) Standards 3, 5 and 7. Furthermore, the present research revealed that the use of these practices and strategies resulted in benefits being afforded to the student, which also supports AITSL's (2011) aim of "improving educational outcomes for students" (Overview, Purpose of the Standards, para 1).

Factors inhibiting positive parent-teacher interactions

The conceptual model also identifies that less than satisfactory outcomes for students resulted from less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions. In particular, the non-collaborative practices of *unapproachability*, *lack of information*, *lack of support* and *emotive behaviour* were found to have negatively impacted on parent-teacher interactions. This appears to contradict the previously mentioned collaborative practices, as well as AITSL's (2011) Standards 3, 5 and 7.

The present research revealed that when parents and teachers were distant, uncommunicative or incensed during their interactions, these actions resulted in them being dissatisfied, thereby affording little or no benefits to the student. This finding challenges the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* which states "improving teacher quality is considered an essential reform as part of Australia's efforts to improve student attainment" (Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership (AITSL), 2011, Overview, The Crucial Role of the Teacher, para 2).

Finally, parents and teachers were identified as employing one specific form of social influence (*passive resistance* strategy) that resulted in less than satisfactory experiences of their interaction. This is inconsistent with AITSL's (2011) request for graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead teachers to "engage with parents and/carers" (Standard 7.3). In addition, the *passive resistance* strategy was employed by parents and teachers to negate the other person's request, resulting in no benefits being afforded to the student, thereby, once again opposing AITSL's (2011) aim of "improved educational outcomes for students" (Overview, Purpose of the Standards, para 1). The present research identified that when parents and teachers utilised the *passive resistance* strategy, less than satisfactory experiences of their interactions transpired, as well as providing little or no benefits to the student.

In summary, when parents and teachers used the *unapproachability*, *lack of information*, *lack of support,* and/or *emotive behaviour* practices, less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions resulted. Similarly, when parents and teachers employed negation as a form of social influence, less than satisfactory experiences of their interactions also occurred. These practices and forms of social influence resulted in little or no benefits for the student. Overall, these factors inhibited positive parent-teacher interactions, which is inconsistent with AITSL's (2011) purpose for teacher quality and improved educational outcomes for students located in the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*.

Closing comments on the conceptual model

This study has not defined the interrelationship between collaborative (and/or non-collaborative) practices and social influence however, it has provided evidence of the impact that these factors have on satisfactory (or less than satisfactory) experiences of parent-teacher interactions. Reference has also been made to the resulting benefits (or less than satisfactory outcomes) afforded to the students when parents and teachers

have satisfactory (or less than satisfactory) interactions. This research has now identified specific collaborative practices and forms of social influence that resulted in satisfactory parent-teacher interactions and positive outcomes for the students. In addition, the particular non-collaborative practices and one form of social influence resulted in less than satisfactory parent-teacher interactions and less than satisfactory outcomes for the students. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

1. The collaborative practices, demonstrated in this study, facilitated a progressive attitude between parents and teachers, thereby supporting AITSL's (2011) Standards 3, 5 and 7, specifically, the engagement of parents/carers. In addition, this tolerant attitude enabled particular techniques that underpinned these social influence strategies such as persuasion, coercion, and manipulation, to be aligned with positive outcomes and satisfactory experiences rather than less than satisfactory outcomes and experiences for parents, teachers and students. Overall, these practices and strategies yielded positive outcomes for students. This also supports ATISL's (2011) purpose for the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* is: "high quality and effective teaching", and "improved educational outcomes for students" (Overview, Purpose of the Standards, para 1), as well as "teachers demonstrate respect and professionalism in all their interactions with students, colleagues, parents/carers and the community. They [teachers] are sensitive to the needs of parents/carers and can communicate effectively with them about their children's learning" (Organisation, Domains of Teaching, Professional Engagement, para 2).

2. The non-collaborative practices, and the one form of social influence, furnished a separation of parents and teachers, thereby opposing AITSL's (2011) Standards 3, 5 and 7. This parting was identified as impacting negatively on future parent-teacher communication, parent-teacher relationships, and parental involvement in these schools. Therefore, these practices, and the *passive resistance* strategy, oppose the purpose for AITSL's (2011) Standards constituting teacher quality and improved educational outcomes for students.

Finally, the literature suggests that the use of social influence was to change a belief, attitude, and/or behaviour of the other person (French & Raven, 1959), and that this was brought about by the use of various forms of pressure (Cialdini, 1984;

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Hewstone & Martin, 2008). When reviewing negation as a form of social influence, this study has noted that there was an initial absence of pressure when parents and teachers interacted. However, the findings of the present study identified that after a request was negated, the person who initiated the request was left to find alternative ways to have their request fulfilled. This, however, remained a less than satisfactory experience of a parent-teacher interaction.

Overall, the conceptual model highlights that parent-teacher interactions, and the use of social influence strategies, resulted in satisfactory or less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions, as well as either positive or less than satisfactory outcomes for students. In reviewing the aims of AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers,* and the subsequent domains, this conceptual model can be utilised "to guide professional learning, practice and engagement" (Overview, Professional Standards for Teachers, para 1) in schools, specifically, encouraging teachers across the differing career stages to engage with parents/carers. The findings from this study can now be used by schools to further enhance parent-teacher communication, parent-teacher relationships and parental involvement in order to advance student achievement.

Recommendations

Schools selected for this study were engaged with parental involvement programs and viewed themselves as businesses, having a strong customer focus with both the students and the parents. With this in mind, the recommendations have been developed with an understanding of this particular parent-teacher partnership linking with a focus on customer service. In addition, the recommendations support the aims for AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers.*

The following recommendations are based on the premise of fostering greater levels of communication, parent-teacher relationships and parental involvement in schools in order to further enhance student performance. These recommendations, however, are more relevant for teachers, as schools rarely provide professional development programs for parents. Nevertheless, information evenings and school publications can be provided for the parents to further enhance parent-teacher interactions. AITSL's (2011) Professional Engagement domain specifically states for teachers to "demonstrate respect and professionalism in all their interactions with

students, colleagues, parents/carers and the community. They [teachers] are sensitive to the needs of parents/carers and can communicate effectively with them about their children's learning" (Standards, Professional Engagement,Overview, para 2), therefore, these recommendations have been developed to support AITSL's (2011) view of teacher professionalism found in the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*.

Recommendation One: **Teaching staff and members of the school's leadership team develop and/or reflect upon the activities that facilitate collaborative practices between parents and teachers.**

The *approachability, honesty, listening, relationships, sharing information, support and resources*, and *working together* collaborative practices were identified as being fundamental to providing positive parent-teacher interactions. In addition, particular activities underpinning these practices such as being warm, open, and nurturing in nature; truthful; demonstrating active listening skills; fostering connections; providing advice and reassurance; exchanging information; explaining what can or cannot be provided; and consulting with each other assisted parents and teachers to increase levels of communication, foster a relationship and become more involved in the school. Furthermore, if AITSL (2011) declares that teachers need to "engage with the parents/carers" (Standards 3.7, 5.5 and 7.3), then undertaking professional development based on these collaborative practices, and underpinning activities will enable schools to meet these Standards in the Professional Practice and Professional Engagement domain.

This study recommends that schools firstly review their current practice of how teachers foster a relationship with their parents, provide good two-way communication and involve their parents in the school. Secondly, schools should offer professional development opportunities for teachers and parents on these particular collaborative practices. Some schools, however, may choose to focus on specific collaborative practices meeting their individual school needs. Finally, schools should set targets for teachers to attain AITSL's (2011) graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead career levels (Standards 3, 5 and 7) and relate these to particular collaborative practices, therefore meeting specifically Standards 3.7, 5.5, 6 and 7.3.

Recommendation Two: **Teaching staff and members of the school's leadership team develop and/or reflect upon social influence strategies used in teacher-parent interactions.**

This research revealed *authorities/experts, discussion, evidence, passive resistance, pressure* and *relational* social influence strategies were used to change the attitude, belief, and/or behaviour of the other person in order to obtain compliance to a request. The data also identified that when parents and teachers were informed, participated in the decision-making process, were provided with facts, persevered and/or developed connectivity to each other that this resulted in positive outcomes for the student. However, when parents and teachers practiced avoidance and/or absenteeism towards each other, this occasioned less than satisfactory outcomes for students. Furthermore, the use of these social influence strategies caused parents and teachers to have satisfactory and/or unsatisfactory experiences of their interactions. In summary, five of these six social influence strategies facilitated parent-teacher communications, parent-teacher relationships and parent-teacher partnerships advancing student performance levels, whilst the one (the *passive resistance* strategy) did not.

The findings are the basis for this second recommendation. Schools should provide professional development, for teachers and members of the school leadership team, on these social influence strategies, highlighting the activities that underpinned them; and secondly, examine the aim, function and techniques of these strategies as five of these strategies afforded benefits to students. The aims of AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers* include "teacher quality" (Overview, Purpose of the Standards, para 1), "improved educational outcomes for students" (Overview, Purpose of the Standards, para 1) and that teachers "are sensitive to the needs of parents/carers and can communicate effectively with them about their children's learning" (Standards, Overview, Professional Engagement, para 2). Undertaking professional learning of these social influence strategies will assist schools to meet the expectations set out by AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teaching,* specifically Standards 3.7, 5.5, 6 and 7.

Recommendation Three: **Teachers and members of the school's leadership team examine non-collaborative practices and develop strategies to minimise their use in schools.**

Emotive behaviour, lack of confidence, lack of information, lack of support, not listening, not working together and *unapproachability* were identified by parents and

teachers as being non-collaborative practices. Parents and teachers described the strong manner in which the other person conducted themselves, levels of self-efficacy, the provision of inconsistent or inaccurate information, feeling disregarded and/or misunderstood, as well as determined, standoffish and/or uncooperative behaviours led to less than satisfactory experiences of their interactions. In addition, the findings from this study has revealed that parents and teachers, however, held different views on what practices determined these less than satisfactory experiences.

AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers* specifically, states that teachers should "Engage parents/carers in the educative process" (Standard 3.7). However, these non-collaborative practices would prohibit this Standard being met. If schools are to provide "opportunities for parents/carers to be involve in their children's learning" (Standard 3.7, Proficient), then undertaking professional development on the activities that result in less than satisfactory experiences is paramount. Consequently, this study recommends that teachers and members of the school's leadership team explore the activities that underpin these non-collaborative practices as this would enhance teachers meeting Standards 3.7 and 7.3 of AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers*. Secondly, schools examine the occasions where these practices occurred and offer professional learning on ways to manage these non-collaborative practices. Such strategies should result in schools accomplishing AITSL's (2011) recommendations stated in Standard 3.7, 5.5, as well as "engage with parent/carers" (Standard 7.3).

Recommendation Four: **Teachers and members of the school's leadership team examine social influence strategies that lead to less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions and less than satisfactory outcomes for students.**

This research revealed that the *passive resistance* strategy was used by parents and teachers to ignore a request, more specifically pertaining to the provision of support for students. The findings identified that the *passive resistance* strategy was prevalent when parents and/or teachers requested extra work (homework) for the student. Teachers and members of the school's leadership team should be made aware of the specific parent-teacher interactions where the *passive resistance* strategy was implemented and of the particular occasions where the *passive resistance* strategy was prevalent. Data from this study suggest that schools examine their position on the

provision of extra school work for students, and the methods used by teachers to negate such parental requests. With this knowledge, and understanding, it is assumed that schools will be able to reduce the frequency of the *passive resistance* strategy being implemented, thus decreasing the incidence of less than satisfactory experiences of parent-teacher interactions and, therefore, less than satisfactory outcomes for students. This recommendation aligns with AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers* assisting teachers to not only meet the requirement "engage in professional learning" (Standard 6), but also "engage with parents/carers" (Standard 7.3) in a more positive manner.

Recommendation Five: **Teachers and members of the school's leadership team reflect upon the role of a third person during parent-teacher interactions.**

This study identified that a third person could be invited by either a parent or a teacher to have an impact on the interaction. This person could be someone with a medical background or an expert in their field, the deputy primary principal or the primary principal. Their role would be to either formally or informally persuade or coerce the other person into a perspective. It was evident from this study's findings that the third person was used as a form of pressure. Therefore, it is firstly recommended that teachers, and members of the school's leadership team, be aware of the role that a third person plays within the parent-teacher interaction; and secondly, the aim of the person who invited the third person into the meeting. With this knowledge, parents and teachers can ensure positive outcomes are achieved for the students and satisfactory experiences are derived for the parents and/or the teachers, thereby addressing the engaging with parent/carers elements located in Standards 3, 5, 6 and 7 of AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers*.

Recommendation Six: **Teachers and members of the school's leadership team examine early career teachers interactions with parents, and the occasions where a third person is used during such interactions.**

In this study, parents predominantly engaged the services of a third person to assist their interactions with early career teachers. The *National Professional Standards for Teachers* refer to early career teachers as "Graduates" (Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership (AITSL), 2011). Parents explained that they would try to persuade the early career teacher into complying with their request, and found that at times, their request was negated. Furthermore, parents described a

feeling of 'powerlessness' that resulted from the less than satisfactory experience of their interaction. However, these parents then often sought the assistance of the deputy primary principal or the primary principal to persuade or coerce the early career teacher into complying with their original request.

This finding is the basis for the following recommendations. Firstly, key school staff members should examine early career teachers and parent interactions. This would enable schools to identify the practices and strategies employed during these interactions and, therefore, what professional development would be required for early career teachers to promote future engagements with parents/carers. Secondly how and when a third person was utilised during an interaction between an early career teacher and a parent. A focus could be on the use of social influence strategies that resulted in satisfactory parent-teacher interactions and positive outcomes for students. Finally, offer support/mentoring to early career teachers before, during, and after parent-teacher interactions in order to enhance early career teachers understanding on the use of social influence strategies during parent-teacher interactions. These recommendations reflect AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers* specifically, the aims for Graduate teachers in Standards 3, 5, 6 and 7.

Recommendation Seven: **Teachers and members of the school's leadership team develop and/or reflect upon fostering informal opportunities for worldviews to be exchanged.**

Informal parent-teacher interactions that were for non-student related purposes have been identified as significant to achieving satisfactory parent-teacher interactions and positive outcomes for students. The findings revealed that parents and teachers wanted to obtain an insight into the nature of the other person, and their worldviews, as this facilitated their communication and afforded parent-teacher relationships an increased level of trust. Parents and teachers required this information about the other person in order to foster satisfactory parent-teacher interactions. This study, therefore, recommends that teachers should interact more often with parents before, during, and after school in order to foster higher levels of trust within their relationship, and secondly, leadership group members provide opportunities for parents and teachers to interact informally, share worldviews, and obtain insights into each other's disposition. Occasions for these informal interactions would support AITSL's (2011),

"Engage with the parents/carers" (Standard 7.3), thereby advancing parent-teacher relationships, parent involvement, and thus, improving student achievement levels.

Recommendation Eight: **Teachers and members of the school's leadership team develop and/or reflect upon specific public relations activities for teachers, and provide more opportunities for parents and teachers to interact.**

The data from this study identified that informal non-verbal parent-teacher interactions were important to achieving satisfactory parent-teacher interactions and positive outcomes for students. These types of interactions featured parents and teachers obtaining a perspective about the other person, through their observations or projecting an image creating observations. The findings highlighted that these non-verbal parent-teacher interactions were personal public relations exercise. Through observing or projecting particular behaviours, information was procured about the other person and, therefore, a perspective was adopted.

This present research recommends that professional learning is offered to key leadership group members and teachers on public relations aimed at methods to enhance their public image within the school community. This not only satisfies ATISL's (2011) Professional Learning domain, but also the matter of teachers "engaging with parents/carers" that fosters "quality teaching practices" and "improved educational outcomes for students" (Overview, Purpose of the Standards, para 1). Secondly, teachers utilise informal interactions such as pick-up and drop-off times using the *approachable* and *relationships* collaborative practices to enhance their public profile. Parents and teachers used these opportunities to engage with each other, develop connectivity and share information. These informal non-verbal parent-teacher interactions were significant to developing higher levels of trust and the ensuing satisfactory parent-teacher interactions and positive outcomes for students, thereby meeting AITSL's (2011) focus for Standards 3.7, 5.5, and 7.3.

In summary, these eight recommendations have been suggested for schools to employ in order to increase the number of satisfactory parent-teacher interactions and, therefore, increase positive outcomes for students. In addition, the study assumes that school personnel, who are aware of these affirmative actions, are likely to experience significantly enhanced parent-teacher communication, parent-teacher relationships, and parental involvement in schools, as well as positively affecting student achievement levels. Schools that want to strengthen their parental involvement and/or

parent-teacher partnerships can now use this new knowledge to understand the factors that positively impact on parent-teacher interactions delivering higher levels of customer satisfaction. In addition, the recommendations support AITSL's (2011) Professional Practice and Professional Engagement domains of the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* specifically, the focus for Standards, 3, 5, 6 and 7 addressing the element of engaging with parents/carers.

Future Directions for Research

This research was focused on parents' and teachers' experiences of their interactions from four low fee, independent, Protestant, metropolitan Perth primary schools. Several suggestions for future research have been developed from the findings of this study.

The first direction for future research is the use of a wider range of participant schools. Schools from the remote, rural, and/or country regions of Western Australia and other parts of Australia; primary schools from the different educational sectors; and/or schools from socio-educational advantaged areas could be included. Comparisons could then be made between the various findings illuminating significant similarities (or differences) in the practices that provided satisfactory (or less than satisfactory) experiences of parent-teacher interactions, as well as the positive (or less than satisfactory) outcomes for students.

A focus for this current research was face-to-face parent-teacher interactions. Further studies could investigate the non face-to-face aspects of parent-teacher interactions: for example, electronic communication such as email, telephone, and/or SMS (short message service), or other forms such as the use of student homework/communication diaries. This could highlight other forms of collaborative and/or non-collaborative practices that are used during parent-teacher interactions. Similarly, the studies could explore the parents' and teachers' use of social influence during their non face-to-face parent-teacher interactions highlighting further examples of strategies used to obtain compliance to requests.

A third direction for future research includes investigating the roles undertaken by a third person during parent-teacher interactions. In this study, parents and teachers were identified as using a third person, on occasions, to assist with particular parent-teacher interactions. The research revealed that the third person was utilised during the

parent-teacher interaction to provide advice or assistance (resulting in a collaborative practice), as well as persuade or coerce the other person into complying with a request. Thus, the role of the third person (particularly the deputy primary principal and/or the primary principal) appeared to be quite complex. A suggestion for further research is to investigate the occasions where parents and teachers used a third person and to discern the underlying reasons for its implementation. This could provide further knowledge on the third person's role in providing supportive interactions and/or resolutions to parent-teacher requests.

A further area for future research is related to the use of the *passive resistance* strategy. The results from this study revealed a non-compliance strategy used by parents and teachers during their interactions. The *passive resistance* strategy resulted in both parents and teachers ignoring or avoiding a request thereby, creating barriers to future interactions. It is suggested that further research examine the use of the *passive resistance* strategy (or other forms of non-compliance) during parent-teacher interactions, along with the underpinning activities, the consequences of non-compliance from the parents', teachers' and students' perspectives, as well as the impact on future parent-teacher interactions and student achievement. This could assist with understanding the tension or discord experienced between parents and teachers.

A final area for future research is the use of social influence by middle managers in schools. This study focused on the lateral use of social influence strategies between parents and teachers in a co-status dyadic relationship. An area for further research is to use Kipnis et al.'s (1980) empirical study to examine the directionality of social influence from the deputy primary principals', and/or the primary principals' perspectives as middle managers of K-12 schools with line managers, colleagues, and peers. Finally, it would be interesting to note any similarities and/or difference between this proposed study and Kipnis' et al.'s (1980) original findings.

These suggested future directions for research could add to the body of knowledge surrounding parent-teacher interactions, parent-teacher communications, and parent-teacher relationships, as well as social influence, thereby, encouraging greater parent-teacher partnerships in schools and in turn, positively enhancing student achievement levels.

Concluding Comments

In considering the nature, context and purposes of parent-teacher interactions, the study identified particular practices and strategies that facilitated or impeded parent-teacher interactions.

Finally, the nature of parent-teacher interactions was found to have been either collaborative or non-collaborative where parents and teachers had preferences for these practices. Furthermore, six social influence strategies were identified as being employed by parents and teachers to persuade, manipulate, coerce and/or negate a request. Moreover, these social influence strategies were used in various contexts for the parent-teacher interactions and purposes of the interactions resulting in satisfactory (or less than satisfactory) experiences of parent-teacher interactions and benefits (or less than satisfactory outcomes) for the students. The findings from this present study, support the Australian Government's aim to enhance the quality of teaching in Australian schools through its application of AITSL's (2011) *National Professional Standards for Teachers,* more specifically the Professional Practice and Professional Engagement domain in order to advance student achievement levels.

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APPENDIX A

Socio-Economic Scores (SES) and Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) Scores of Participant Schools

This study utilised low fee, independent, Protestant, metropolitan Perth primary schools which were categorised according to their socio-economic scores (SES) in 2008. Based on 2008 and 2009 figures, two groups of schools represented the greatest number of schools for Western Australia (see Figure A.1). There were 58 schools with a SES of 91-100 and 36 schools with a SES of 101-110, totalling 94 independent primary schools from 134 listed with the Association of Independent Schools Western Australia (AISWA). At the time when I approached schools for this study, they had an average mean SES between 91 and 110.
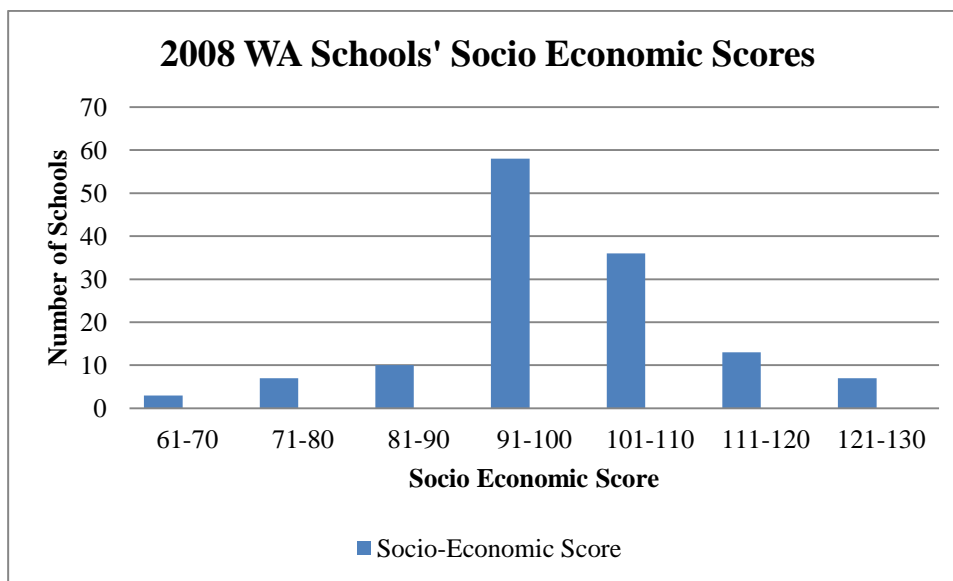

Figure A 1. **Distribution of Socio Economic Status in WA Schools for 2004 – 2009 (Associated Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA), 2008)**

However, in 2010, the Australian federal government changed the rating of schools from SES to the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA).

The variables that make up ICSEA include socio-economic characteristics of the small areas where students live (in this case the Australian Bureau of Statistics census collection district), as well as whether a school is in a regional or remote area, and the proportion of Indigenous students enrolled at the school. It has been developed specifically for the My School website for the purpose of identifying schools serving similar student populations. The average ICSEA value is 1000 (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2010).

With the government having restructured the ratings of schools, there was a notable change of schools that previously fell into the mean score. The average ICSEA

value is 1000 and each quartile represents 25 percent. East Point School had an index of community socio-educational advantage of 1005, which shows it as an average school. Approximately a quarter of the school's population is represented in each quartile, again indicating that there is an even spread across the quartiles. South Boulevard School, however, had a higher value, 1102, indicating the schools population has a higher socio-educational advantage than an average Australian school. In addition, the school's population was skewed towards the top quartile, where nearly half of the students were grouped.

Table A 1.   2010 ICSEA scores for East Point School (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2010)

School ICSEA value	1005		
Bottom quarter	Middle quarters		Top quarter
26%	24%	29%	21%

Table A 2.   2010 ICSEA scores for Queen Street School (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2010)

School ICSEA value	1050		
Bottom quarter	Middle quarters		Top quarter
19%	20%	36%	24%

Table A 3.   2010 ICSEA scores for Jarvis Lane School (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2010)

School ICSEA value	1057		
Bottom quarter	Middle quarters		Top quarter
18%	23%	31%	27%

Table A 4.   2010 ICSEA scores for South Boulevard School (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2010)

School ICSEA value	1102		
Bottom quarter	Middle quarters		Top quarter
8%	15%	33%	42%

These new figures impact on the results of the study; firstly, more parents may have been marginalised from availing themself to the study than first predicted; secondly, generalising this to similar schools becomes a lot more difficult as there is now unequal distribution, and the resources in these schools are unevenly allocated.

Focus Group Session Script used for Parents and Teachers

Researcher - Thank-you for volunteering your time to participate in today's focus group session. Just a reminder that this session will be recorded and that all information is confidential. You can leave this session at any time and anonymity will be guaranteed, as everyone will be given a pseudonym in place of his or her name so that only I can match you to your name.

Researcher - Let us introduce ourselves by:-

1. Offering our names

2. How long have you been a parent in the school?

3. How many children attend the school?

4. What years are your children in?

5. Are you involved with the school in any form apart from being just a parent in the school? Yes/ No.

6. In what capacity?

Researcher - Positive Experience
I want you to think back to a time when you had a meeting with a teacher regarding your child that was a positive experience.

Take some time to think about the meeting.

Here are some things that might help you:-

1. Who initiated the meeting?

2. What was the purpose of the meeting?

3. Where was it?

4. What did you talk about?

5. What happened during the meeting?

6. How did you feel about it?

7. What made it a positive experience?

Researcher - Negative Experience
I want you to again think back to a time when you had a meeting with a teacher regarding your child that was a negative or you feel was less than satisfactory.

Take some time to think about the meeting.

Here are some things that might help you with your writing:-

1. Who initiated the meeting?

2. What was the purpose of the meeting?

3. Where was it?

4. What did you talk about?

5. What happened during the meeting?

6. How did you feel about it?

7. What made it a negative experience?

Researcher - I would like to now open up the discussion about parent-teacher meetings.

1. Tell me about parent-teacher meetings. What stands out foremost in your mind?

2. How did you and the teacher take on board each other's ideas/suggestions?

3. Describe the circumstances of the meeting?

4. What was the purpose of the meeting?

5. What general topics were discussed?

6. How was your goal of the meeting achieved?

7. If you had to have the meeting again, what would you do differently?

Individual In-Depth Semi-Structured Interview Questions used for Parents and Teachers

Parents

1. Tell me a story about the time you had a positive meeting with a teacher?
2. Tell me another story about the time you had a significant meeting with a teacher?
3. Describe the influences that led up to the interactions?
4. Describe the outcome of the experience?
5. What was the meeting about?
6. Was it a formal meeting?
7. If it was informal did you deliberately want it to be informal?
8. Who initiated the interaction?

Other questions to be added

1. How did you feel?
2. Who did you talk to about the results?
3. What was their reaction or advice? Did you follow it up?

Teachers

1. Tell me a story about the time you had a positive experience with a parent?
2. Tell me another story about the time you had a not so positive meeting with a parent?
3. Describe the influences that led up to the interactions?
4. Describe the outcome of the experience?
5. What was the meeting about?
6. Was it a formal meeting?
7. If it was informal did you deliberately want it to be informal?
8. Who initiated the interaction?

Other questions to be added

1. How did you feel?
2. Who did you talk to about the results?
3. What was their reaction or advice? Did you follow it up?

APPENDIX D

Sample Parent Interview Questions

Researcher: So if you can just introduce yourself.

Researcher: How long have you been at the school?

Researcher: Okay, well you are quite familiar with the school. Now as a parent, there are many ways in which the school asks for parents to be involved in the school. What are some of the things that you do that ... how do you get involved in the school?

Researcher: Why do you want to make yourself known?

Researcher: I just want to go back to a point you just said about that they are nicer to your children. What other sort of things do you see that happens, so that if a teacher knows you, and you know the teacher, that reflects back to your child? What kind of ...?

Researcher: So how does it make you feel when you want to get to know the teacher? What sort of feelings do you have once you get to know them?

Researcher: You also said that when you come into the school, you like to see who is around. What does that sort of mean?

Researcher: So when you have your chats, what is the purpose of the chats?

Researcher: So at the beginning of each year you make a point of going to see the teacher.

Researcher: And if you have a parent interview or a parent-teacher meeting, does he ... if he is home or if he is available, does he try to come along?

Researcher: Can you just run through for you what they're like and what would you like out of them? What did you not get out of them? What would you have liked to get out of them?

Researcher: When you chat ... the other thing is that you say, when you come in of a morning, is that you like to chat with the other parents. What kind of things do you like to chat with them about?

Researcher: So you have had, what, six, eight years for one child and four to six years for the other child so that's what, 15 different teachers, so share with me some of the different experiences that you've had when you've met with the different teachers? Some of them are easy going, some of them less easy going, just explain some of the differences that you've found?

Researcher: What about some of the other parents? What have they found … in some of your conversations that you may have had?

Researcher: So when you meet a teacher, what sort of things are you looking for in the relationship?

Researcher: So if you've got new parents coming into the school, knowing what you know, what are some of the things that you share with the parents about teachers here?

Researcher: So when you meet a teacher, you want to get to know them more as a person?

Researcher: And what sort of things do you value in a teacher whom you are having a relationship with?

Researcher: So how do you go with those ones who are not so open?

Researcher: And when you saw her doing it, what did you see? What did you observe in the teacher's behaviour? What sort of things did you see?

Researcher: Do you think that is one of the reasons why you sort of tried to develop the friendship more so, so that they are not that scary person or they are, you know, I don't know, you are sort of on a more level playing ground?

Researcher: If there is a new teacher ..., what would be the process for you of getting to know them?

Researcher: What about other specialist teachers, how do you get on with them, or what do you do?

Researcher: Do you have anything else that you want to add about parent-teacher meetings, interactions, conversations, relationships that you see as being pretty important, high on your priority?

APPENDIX E

Sample Teacher Interview Questions

Researcher: Just a little bit about who you are, how long you have been teaching, what year levels you teach, and how long you have been at the school?

Researcher: Tell me about your experiences of parent-teacher meetings.

Researcher: So you would have a fair amount, being in the early years, you would have quite a lot of parent-teacher interactions? What about in a formal or informal context?

Researcher: Okay. Do you want to just sort of run through those that are informal meetings that you had and what sort of things are chatted about?

Researcher: You have talked about some of the informal meetings, just sticking with that, how important is it for you to have those chats with the parents in the morning or the afternoon - as a teacher, and as a professional?

Researcher: So you have got parent-teacher meetings and organised meetings with parents as well? What is the process for you?

Researcher: You just said that you might say to a parent, I need to see you, what happens in that sort of situation? What's some of the processes, reactions, comments, or any other further discussions that occur in these meetings?

Researcher: What do you think are some of the more common topics that you discuss with parents?

Researcher: My question that I have asked is what do you think some of the milestones have been for you over the years of holding parent-teacher meetings?

Researcher: Going back to milestones for you, so what are some things that you have progressed through and you think, yes, that has kind of helped me on the way with more satisfactory parent teacher-meetings?

Researcher: So parent-teacher meetings, you have a parent that organises a meeting with you, and you have processes in place. Can you just sort of run through what happen when a parent wants to meet with you?

Researcher: What about the other 5%? Do you have some stories or experiences of those kind of more difficult parent-teacher meetings?

Researcher: Is there anything else that you would do when a parent asks for a meeting with you?

Researcher: What happens if a parent asks for one [meeting] off the cuff?

Researcher: What would be your golden rule for parent-teacher meetings? Or rules?

Researcher: For you, what would be a difficult parent-teacher meeting?

Researcher: What sort of things do you mentor with them [other teachers] in regards to parent-teacher meetings?

Researcher: How important is that teacher PR?

Researcher: A couple of things there: you said that the car park gossip, which has come up a couple of times, and you are a parent as well, what do you make of it [car park gossip] or what do you think about these conversational times, or what do you know about them [car park gossip]?

Researcher: So you have this parent who can operate negatively, about a teacher, can you just explain that, and are there, you know, the converse?

Researcher: So parents volunteering are important because of the PR?

Researcher: True. Okay, so parent-teacher meetings, just as a summary, for you, what do you feel about parent-teacher meetings?

Researcher: What about being a parent, how has it impacted on your teaching and your relationship or parent-teacher meetings?

Researcher: Is there anything else that you would like to add about parent-teacher meetings that stand out in your mind? Or any experiences that you have had that stand out in your mind?